



MARILYN'S DARK PARADISE

When I read about this film project, I was very curious: many people from the Marilyn community like Gary Vitacco-Robles and Scott Fortner whom I met on our visit in Palm Springs are involved. The trailer for *Marilyn's Dark Paradise* was released on the cusp of Marilyn's 96th birthday, on June 1, 2022. It offers beautiful inside views in a short film by director Remi Gangarossa who also stars in the movie as an adventurous time traveler who befriends Marilyn Monroe and struggles with adhering to the rigid rules of time travel. The style looks beautiful, and the scenes look familiar to every Marilyn fan. Marilyn is wearing jeans and a white blouse in a scene for *The Misfits*, on the beach in a cardigan like in the photo shoot with George Barris and wrapped in white sheets like we saw her in the Douglas Kirkland photos. It is a beautiful tribute that focuses on many details. Marilyn is portrayed by Stephanie Stuart whom I follow on social media and who is a dear person who understands Marilyn very well. Stephanie is also a co-producer of the film.

All these aspects made me curious, and I wanted to learn more about the movie. I got in touch with Remi Gangarossa. He is very kind and we had a wonderful conversation. Remi even became a member of our fan club which I am very happy about. In an interview, I asked him all about his movie project.

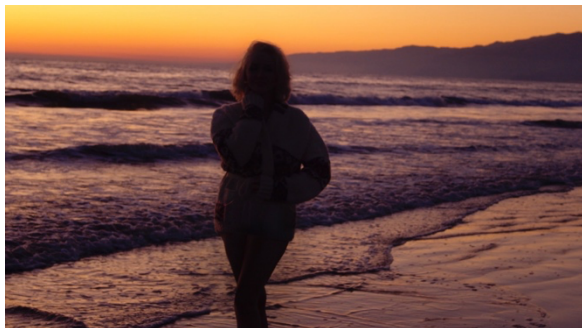


Photo: Rob Watt

Hello Remi, I am so glad we met through Marilyn. Would you please introduce yourself to our members?

Hello everyone! I am honored to be a member of your club. I guess I can start by saying I am a filmmaker who has a strong passion for Marilyn Monroe. I was born in Buffalo, New York, went to school in Los Angeles, and I have now settled down in Chicago. As an avid Marilyn fan, I am dedicated to protecting Marilyn's legacy.

How and when did she come into your life?

I've had an interest in Marilyn since I was a child. However, my enthusiasm for understanding the details of her life started at the beginning of this film project, which was about seven years ago.

I was going through a very difficult period of my life back then. A family member had been in a terrible accident, and another had just passed away. I tried to find an escape through film and, in my heart, I felt drawn to Marilyn. So, I decided to research her life and watch all of her movies. She saved me during some of my darkest moments.



Photo: Remi Gangarossa

What aspect about Marilyn appeals the most to you?

Marilyn is the epitome of resilience. Her fight started at a very early age in the orphanage and through multiple foster homes. She trailblazed her way through life to anchor herself into history as one of the most fascinating, beautiful, and inspirational humans to ever exist. The details of which, I touch on in my film.

Which photo or film captures Marilyn best for you?

Depending on how I read your question, I find myself landing on different answers. I think Marilyn's method acting is really on display in *The Misfits*. She is phenomenal in that picture. As Roslyn, I think Marilyn really lets her guard down. The audience gets a unique insight into her spirit. She openly reveals what lies behind the façade of her public persona and delivers a performance with depth and texture. The dramatic script offered her a wider opportunity than some of her prior comedic roles. As a result, we get to see Marilyn as a human and a serious actress.

Visually, I enjoy *Niagara* the most. I may be slightly biased since I'm from Buffalo (and I had



Niagara Falls in my backyard for a good part of my life).

Regardless, Marilyn dazzles in that film. I have a deep appreciation for good color grading, and that film is a color feast for the eyes.

I also really like *Don't Bother to Knock*. Marilyn always had the propensity to be a serious actress, even in her early days. The movie is a slow burn, and that's definitely my style.



Photo: Remi Gangarossa

What was your intention to make a movie about Marilyn? What did you want to show?

It's been 60 years since she died, and most filmmakers fall into the same trap of sensationalism (accidentally or willingly). Sadly, it still happens to this day. Whenever a new film about Marilyn is released, I ask myself, "Is the intent here to honor Marilyn, or is this another attempt to be radical at Marilyn's expense?"

Too often, Marilyn's narrative is distorted and twisted, which robs the public of getting to intimately know her incredible life and amazing accomplishments. If they took a moment to really understand Marilyn, they would see that there is a remarkable amount of genuine material that can be used to tell an accurate accounting of her time on this earth. I spent seven years on this film for a reason. Marilyn and her fans deserve a film that honors her legacy. I think we've accomplished that with Marilyn's *Dark Paradise*.

Many Marilyn fans have discussed and wished they could have saved her. From what I see from the trailer of your movie, is this an aspect you thought about too?

That's a very good question. To be clear, the time travel plot line was only written to make the engagement with the viewer more intimate. You are correct—the film does actualize the fan fantasy of being able to spend time with her, but it also explores the cognitive dissonance that would come from trying to save her. This concept of "changing the past" is depicted literally, but in many respects, I also mean it metaphorically. It should make more sense when you see the film. All good time-travel movies have a set of rules the time traveler should adhere to. My film is no exception.

The time-travel theme is secondary to Marilyn's story. I've had to be careful on this topic, particularly to respect the events of Marilyn's life, without having too many deviations caused by the appearance of the time traveler. The time-travel theme and any consequences of time travel are the only fictional elements about the film.



Photo: Timothy "Teemo" Chon

How do you think Marilyn's life and career could have continued if she would have lived longer?

I probably won't be ready to answer this question for a few years. I haven't spent enough time thinking about it to respond appropriately.

There are many familiar names of the Marilyn community involved in your production. Did you know all those people before? Tell us about your connection.

I've officially been a part of the Marilyn community for as long as I've been working on the film. After acquiring some important Marilyn lots at Julien's Auctions, Scott Fortner welcomed me into the community. At around the same time, I befriended Gary Vitacco-Robles, who has since become like a brother to me. As I continued the production, I met many amazing people from the Marilyn circle, some of whom have been involved in the film. Marilyn is exceptional for so many reasons, but particularly after death, for bringing people together from all over the world.

How did you find Stephanie Stuart to play Marilyn?

Most would agree that genuinely replicating Marilyn is an impossibility. She is truly unique.

A critical part of this process was to find someone who could embody Marilyn as accurately as possible, keeping in mind and appreciating that no one will ever be an exact clone of her.

As fate would have it, during my research, I stumbled onto a video of Stephanie online. I instantly said to myself, "That is her." I believe it was Marilyn pushing me in Stephanie's direction. The video wasn't tagged, so it took me almost a year to find and get in contact with Stephanie. Looking back now, I probably could have just



asked the question to the Marilyn community to help me get connected. Doing that might have saved me a year. If only I had a real way to travel through time!

For Marilyn, I needed someone who would unquestionably dedicate themselves to the project. It was important that the person playing Marilyn would be willing to give their heart to the work, in order to get the best possible outcome for Marilyn. Stephanie was and still is that person. I have an incredible amount of respect for the sacrifices she made to get this film to the finish line. Without Stephanie, this film never would have been made. Period.

Also, as a co-producer, Stephanie was a great thought partner for me. We built a fantastic professional relationship and friendship through this project. Again, this is Marilyn bringing people together!



Photo: Remi Gangarossa

Please tell us about the shooting. How did you choose the locations and scenes?

There is a special energy that comes with being in the precise locations where Marilyn stood decades ago. I did my best to film, literally, in those same exact spots. We were able to capture some magical moments from doing that! I don't want to spoil any surprises, but I can't wait to show you!

Where can we see the movie?

The short film will be participating in film festivals throughout the world. I will have a better idea of the official schedule in the fall of 2022. My plan is to bring the film to all of the places where the real Marilyn fans can see it. This film is for Marilyn and for them!

What message do you have to the members of "Some Like It Hot", the international Marilyn Monroe fan club, based in Germany?

I really hope the members get together in Germany sometime soon. I would fly out to meet this amazing group!

(in German) Ich freue mich darauf, Euch alle eines Tages persönlich zu treffen!

(I am looking forward to meeting you all in person someday).



Photo: Remi Gangarossa

Thank you very much for the interview, Remi! I can't wait for your movie to watch.

You can watch the trailer of *Marilyn's Dark Paradise* on YouTube and follow the official Instagram account @marilynsdarkparadise, on Facebook "Marilyn's Dark Paradise" or the website www.marilynsdarkparadise.com



Photo: Remi Gangarossa