

'Blood Stripe' tells the powerful story of one woman's struggle with post-war PTSD

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From Minnesota's Northwoods comes a searing portrayal of a female soldier who, after returning from Afghanistan, struggles to deal with the crippling effects of PTSD.

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“It’s a story ripe to be told,” says Remy Auberjonois, an actor best known for roles in *Mad Men* and *Weeds*

. He's making his directorial debut with *Blood Stripe*

. “There is coverage of this issue out there,” he continues, “but you don’t hear about it from a female soldier’s perspective.”

Starring his wife, Minnesota-born actress Kate Nowlin, as Sarge, the film highlights the difficulties returning veterans often face while attempting to reintegrate into society. In one scene, Sarge mows the lawn in the middle of the night. In another, a welcome home party becomes overwhelming. Knowing the significant wait there will be to receive treatment at the VA, she instead escapes to a camp on Lake Vermilion, where she used to go as a child.

“The lake is really a character in the film,” says Auberjonois. “My wife and I have spent a lot of time up there, and it’s one of the most peaceful places I’ve ever been. But what happens when you bring this mindset that doesn’t allow you to enjoy it?”

With slow, sweeping nighttime shots and the serenity pierced only by the call of a loon, the darkness becomes a metaphor for PTSD. Is there something lurking beneath these quiet, calm waters?

The movie was shot near Cook, Minnesota, on an incredibly tight schedule over three weeks in August and September 2014 (“We got extremely lucky with the weather,” Auberjonois recalls).

The filmmakers have no familial connections to the military, but got the idea for *Blood Stripe*

while reading an article in the local newspaper about a female soldier who had lost her husband in the war. They had a female Marine on set as a production assistant, and have heard from many in the military who have seen the film.

“We wanted to make the movie as authentically as possible to honor those who have served,” says Auberjonois. “I remember one screening where an audience member came up to me and said, ‘I’m a vet, and you’ve really got something there.’”

Auberjonois also hopes that the film reaches non-military audiences.

“As a nation, we really don’t understand what members of the military have gone through, so we haven’t come to terms with issues like PTSD,” he continues. “With the communal process of getting together, having to shut off your phone for a couple of hours, and watching this film, perhaps we can feel some sense of impact and responsibility.”

Blood Stripe

has its Midwest premiere at the Twin Cities Film Fest this Wednesday, October 19. There is an additional screening on Friday, October 28. Remy Auberjonois is also currently playing Colonel Brandon in the Guthrie Theater’s production of *Sense and Sensibility* through October 29.

