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PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

Join Raymond Wallace and Stuart Parks II, as they attack their most ambitious film to date.

Parks and Wallace give a crash course in sci-fi effects.
Photo: Chris Bickford. Digital Work: Rayolight



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Kevin Smith. Richard Linklater. Robert Rodriguez. Christopher Nolan. Just a few of the many now-famous creators who launched their careers far from Tinseltown. Smith shot *Clerks* in a Garden State convenience store, funding his film on maxed-out credit cards. (Note to aspiring young artists: producing movies on plastic is not a particularly good life strategy.) Nolan, known for blockbuster hits *The Dark Knight* and *Interstellar*, made his debut crime thriller, *Following*, on weekends, relying on friends and family for free locations.

Who will be next? Across the globe, countless would-be directors hope to reach the same heights. Few will bust through the atmosphere, but damn it, they'll try.

Two such filmmakers, Raymond Wallace, 36, of Manteo, and Stuart Parks II, 41, of Kill Devil Hills, are determined to make the Outer Banks their launch pad, and early returns are promising. Their 2017 short film, *Lost in Buffalo City*, won "Best Horror" at 2019's ConCarolinas Film Festival. And

two more — 2018's *Boy!* and *Night of the Fluffet* — recently won "Best in Show" at Carolina Fear Fest and "Audience Favorite" at Underground Indie Film Festival.

Four years ago, Wallace and Parks hit it off at a pool party, connecting over a shared love for Outer Banks history. "After that, [Raymond] asked me to do a part in *Lost in Buffalo City*," says Parks. "And then he hit me up for script ideas, and I had a few..."

"Great ideas," interjects Wallace.

"Why thank you," responds Parks.

Wallace and Parks somehow stumbled on a seemingly perfect partnership, one built on both complimentary attitudes and complementary skills. Parks, who studied English at ECU, acts as a kind of creative director, and Wallace, whose day job is channel manager for Dare County's *CURRENT*tv, serves as the team's production director, handling technical details. As Parks puts it: "[Raymond] takes my ideas and makes them real."

Stuart Parks II always dreamed of writing tales — for movies or otherwise. He has collaborated on scripts, as well as performed for local theatre productions like *Ghosts of the Lost Colony* and OBX Mystery Theatre. Still, until he met Wallace, any dream of writing for the screen was fading fast.

"Four years ago," he admits, "I was sitting on my ass, playing video games."

But the seeds were there, waiting for the right soil, and once the partnership gave purchase, the seeds grew wild. Animals and children started going missing, and — sorry, I got lost in a horror-movie metaphor there. Where was I? Oh yes, seeds. And soil.

Wallace and Parks are technically transplants to Outer Banks territory — Wallace came from Lynchburg, VA, and Parks from Deep Run, NC — yet, while both think of the beach as home, they draw inspiration from the full range of nearby locations.

"It's not just the sandbar," says Parks. "Eastern NC has swamps, fields — if you want

something surreal and otherworldly, leave the towns. There are places where you see nothing but fields forever."

For *Boy!* — the story of a haunted, tortured man cursed to run errands for an ancient evil spirit — the team took full advantage of the wild area around East Lake. They chose February to film, hoping to avoid bugs, but had to return for more shots in April.

"It was yellow fly season," says Parks. "Driving through the swamp was like driving through hail. A neighbor testing out shotguns told us there were several bears in the area, which is off-putting when you're out filming at midnight in the middle of the woods."

For the interior shots, they made a makeshift studio out of Parks' garage, filming different scenes between dank corners and a DIY green screen for digital backdrops. But bugs and beasts aside, the duo remains dedicated to showing what the area has to offer.

"I want to showcase the Outer Banks," says Wallace. "Growing up, Steven Spielberg was my hero. Now, I'm not sure I'd take a million bucks to do a project in LA. There's something here that you can't get out there, something I didn't have until I came here — a real community."

That's where Parks' connections come into play. As an actor and board member with Theatre of Dare, he's starred in numerous community theater productions over the past decade — from *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* to *Spamalot* to *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. And when not on stage, he's often helped with set design or dialogue. He knows how to get things done with limited resources — when your primary asset is other people's time and effort.

"You address problems as a group, solve problems as a group, and everyone

contributes something, whether it's an idea for a scene or a line or an action."

That mindset has helped the team compete in the *48-Hour Film Project*, a global challenge to make a film over a single weekend. And *Night of the Fluffet* — the story of one family's fight for survival after their daughter brings home a wild, Muppet-like creature — has been making the festival rounds from Long Beach to London.

"We're working on a sequel," says Parks, who dreamed up the story way back in high school. "And Fluffet will make a cameo as an alien species in *The Battle for Space*."

The Battle for Space is their biggest challenge yet. It's the story of a crew of intergalactic outlaws as they fight to overthrow an evil empire and bring peace to the known universe. Ambitious? Sure. But Wallace and Parks have a plan, of course.

They've already started making scale models of spacecraft and landscapes — the same techniques that made the original *Star Wars* films work. For costumes, they've turned to Jason Hill, who is the commanding officer of 501st Legion's Carolina Garrison, OBX StormTroopers, a dedicated fan group that constructs screen-ready *Star Wars* regalia.

But to fully succeed, they'll need your help securing resources.

"We're not just looking for money," says Wallace. "We need extras, locations, warehouse space for building sets, more costumes. Of course, we're going to need a lot more spaceships by the end."

Parks adds a few more requests: "If you've got some funky old computer thing with all the tubes coming out of it, or some junk lying around that looks space-aged, we'd love to borrow it.

"Also, if anyone has a good space prison, we need that, too." — **Dave Holton** 📍

Want to be part of bringing *The Battle of Space* to life? Check out Rayolight Productions on Facebook and www.rayolightproductions.com to rent, buy, and watch their films. And stay tuned for the upcoming crowdfunding campaign.

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