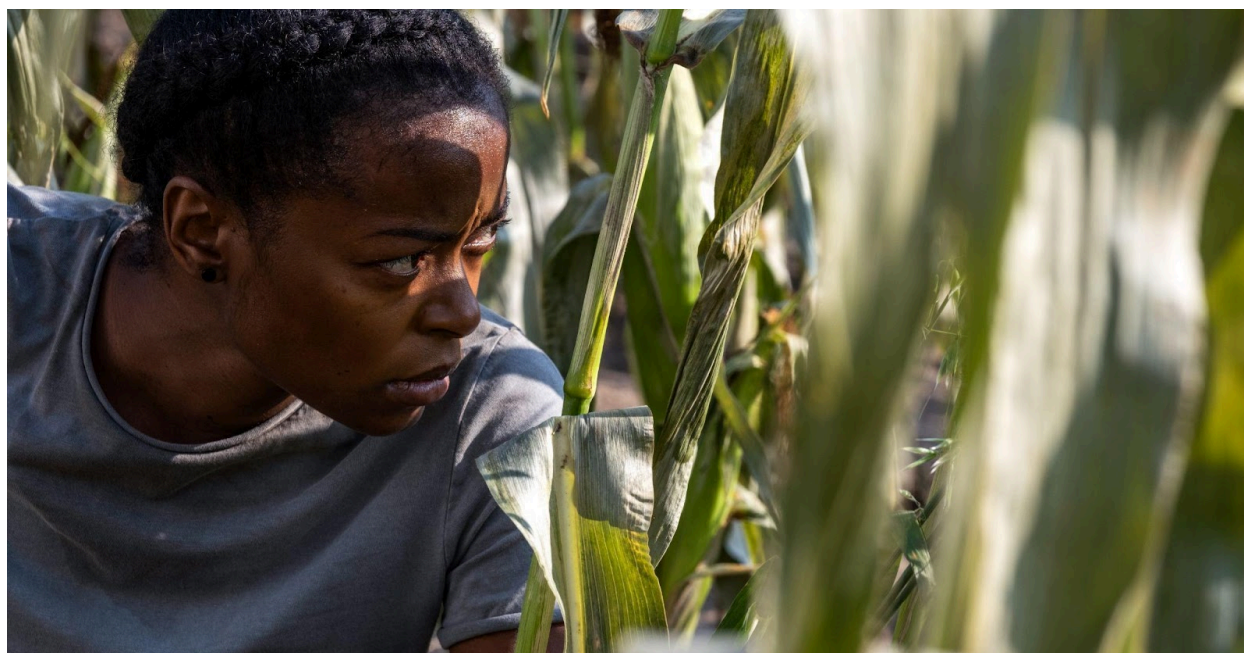


40 ACRES

A film by R.T. Thorne
113 mins, Canada, 2024
Language: English and Cree with English subtitles



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LOGLINE

In a famine-decimated near future, Hailey Freeman and her family struggle to safeguard their generational farm as they make one last stand against a vicious militia hell-bent on taking their 40 Acres.

SYNOPSIS

In a near future where the only measure of wealth is food production, Hailey Freeman (Danielle Deadwyler), an African American military veteran, must protect her family in the aftermath of a pandemic that collapsed the global food chain and threatens to envelop her farm in rural Canada.

Hailey is haunted by the murder of her father, a tragedy that has left her certain of three things: first, there's only one person outside of the family she trusts, war vet Augusta Taylor (Elizabeth Saunders), who helped her rebuild after her loss; second, never again will she allow anyone to take what's hers; and third, alongside her Indigenous partner Galen (Michael Greyeyes), she will do anything to protect their blended family of four children. On the cusp of manhood, Emmanuel (Kataem O'Connor) sneaks out to explore his surroundings when he encounters a girl, Dawn Clever (Milcania Diaz-Rojas), from a distant property whose farm is full of life.

With attacks on surrounding farms escalating, Emmanuel discovers the same girl injured and attempts to keep her hidden from his shoot-first-ask-questions-later mother. This sets the stage for an explosive clash between mother and son. With their birthright in the balance, they must come together as a family and make a stand against a ravenous militia hell bent on claiming their land. "40 Acres" is a stunning, post-apocalyptic thriller that grapples with universal themes of xenophobia, fear, and generational trauma through the lens of a future where trust no longer exists.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Raised by a single mother, I grew up quickly in a world that saw me differently. She taught me to be vigilant, as the color of my skin meant I had to look out for myself because "not many people out there are trying to save little Black boys." Her words shaped Hailey Freeman's militant philosophies in "40 Acres". This film explores how fear of the "other" can infect our homes, families, and communities. It is also a meditation on the legacy of generational trauma many Black mothers carry. Emmanuel's coming-of-age journey redefines Black masculinity to include empathy, loyalty, and vulnerability. Ultimately, "40 Acres" proclaims the importance of Black and Indigenous sovereignty in a world that often seeks to erase them.

As I developed this project over several years, I became disillusioned with our increasingly polarized society. The stark world of "40 Acres" is a warning of where we could be headed, but even in darkness, there's power in laughter, community, hope, and family. My desire is to tell the legend of a blended Black & Indigenous family led by a mother and son that fights, loves, and survives together against all odds.

The film's title, "40 Acres", refers to the historic promise of land ownership made by Union General William Tecumseh Sherman on January 16, 1865, to formerly enslaved Black farmers. The promise, backed by the Federal government, was to grant 40 acres of farmland and a mule to freed enslaved people of African descent. However, this promise was tragically reversed during the Reconstruction era, denying the Black community once again. Hailey Freeman and

her family are the last descendants of generational African American farmers who settled in Canada after the Civil War. In a world that has imploded, the land they live on represents their legacy, freedom, and heritage.

For our film, we sought a unique location that would capture the essence of the story. We needed a farm with vast acreage, fields, and a sense of isolation, yet surrounded by forest areas. Our incredible location manager, Doug Brisebois worked tirelessly to find the perfect fit. We were fortunate to discover a stunning farm in northern Ontario, in the Sudbury area, which exceeded our expectations.

The farm's remote location, far from roads, was essential to creating an atmosphere of seclusion. We were warmly welcomed by the farm's owner, Connie, who was an absolute pleasure to work with. Shooting on location was crucial to me, as it allowed us to harness the natural beauty of the landscape and add depth to the narrative.

My journey in filmmaking is deeply rooted in music as I started in the music video industry. It is a universal language that transcends boundaries and is a vital element that has shaped my creative vision as a filmmaker. Growing up, music was my escape, much like the protagonist Manny in our film. It sparked vivid images in my mind, which I sought to bring to life through drawing and eventually, filmmaking. As a director, I've always been inspired by iconic collaborations between directors and composers who created unforgettable cinematic moments, such as Spike Lee's work with Terence Blanchard, and Christopher Nolan and Hans Zimmer's work in "Interstellar".

Working on the film score for our movie was a dream come true. I was privileged to collaborate with the talented Todor Kobakov. He created an incredibly organic, intimate, but epic score that is inextricably linked to our family's journey. The experience was truly soul-enriching, and I hope to repeat it in future projects.

In creating this film, I sought to bring to life a family I'd never seen on screen before - a blended Black and Indigenous family fighting for survival. The connection between these two communities, marked by a shared history of colonial trauma, resonated deeply with me. I wanted to tell a story that honors this legacy, showcasing a family that, despite the darkness they face, is uniquely equipped to thrive due to their collective experiences.

I was eager to explore the cultural elements that this family would preserve in a dystopian world, such as food, literature, music, and language. These aspects are integral to their identity and play a vital role in their resilience. Additionally, I drew inspiration from my own upbringing, led by a strong mother figure, and sought to create a family dynamic that is both authentic and empowering.

Our story follows a family that is both beautiful and flawed. They are a patchwork of individuals from previous unions, with a son and daughter from past relationships, and two children born into this new, blended family. Together, they navigate a world ravaged by famine, relying on their military background and deep love for each other to survive. They are imperfect, making tough choices, but ultimately, they are a family that will capture your heart, just as they have mine.

DIRECTOR BIO

R.T. THORNE

DIRECTOR | CO-WRITER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

R.T. Thorne is a Canadian filmmaker known for his bold visual style and commitment to equality in the industry. As a dynamic and diverse visual storyteller, Thorne has evolved from directing music videos to directing, screenwriting, and producing. His notable works include the Emmy-nominated, 12-time Canadian Screen Award winning series "The Porter" for CBC & BET, and the award-winning Hulu original "Utopia Falls." His bold visual style and character-driven approach have earned him multiple award wins across short film, music videos and television, including being named the 2023 Playback Magazine Director of the Year.

As Chair of the Director's Guild of Canada BIPOC members committee, Thorne advocates for equality in the film and TV industry.

He makes his debut as a feature film director with "40 Acres," bringing a fresh and authentic perspective to the genre.

CO-WRITER BIO

GLENN TAYLOR

Glenn Taylor, born in Mississauga, is a writer, creator, and author. He has spent years creating and ghostwriting scripts, books, comics, and cartoons with co-creators.

Glenn excels at world-building, creating vivid, intricate settings that serve as backdrops for emotionally rich, character-driven narratives.

PRODUCER BIO

JENNIFER HOLNESS

Jennifer Holness is a powerhouse and highly respected and accomplished producer, known for her exceptional work in scripted drama series, films, and documentaries. Her extensive and impressive body of work includes critically acclaimed projects such as the five-time Canadian Screen Award winning docuseries "BLK: An Origin Story," which earned her a Best Director Award, and the award-winning film "Home Again" starring Tatyana Ali and Stephan James, which she co-wrote and produced.

Heralded by The Hollywood Reporter as one of the most powerful women in Canadian Entertainment, Jennifer Holness is committed to authentic storytelling. Her partnership with R.T. Thorne on "40 Acres" promises a rich, thought-provoking narrative, one that is both engaging and rooted in her dedication to craft and passion for storytelling.

CAST

DANIELLE DEADWYLER

AS HAILEY FREEMAN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

BAFTA Nominee, Deadwyler is a multidisciplinary performance artist, actor, and filmmaker. Deadwyler recently completed the Blumhouse/Universal feature "Woman in the Yard", in which she stars and serves as executive producer. Her upcoming projects include Netflix's feature adaptation of August Wilson's "The Piano Lesson" and the action-thriller "Carry On".

Deadwyler is best known for her starring role in the award-winning film "Till", portraying Emmett Till's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley. Her performance garnered her the 2022 Gotham Award for 'Outstanding Lead Performance', the 2022 Critics Choice Association's Celebration of Black Cinema & Television Actress Award for Film, and the 2022 National Board of Review Breakthrough Performance Award.

Deadwyler can also be seen in A24's "I saw the TV Glow", the Netflix limited series "From Scratch", and the Emmy-nominated limited series "Station Eleven" for HBO Max, for which she was nominated for a 2023 Film Independent Spirit TV Award in the category of 'Best Supporting Performance in a New Scripted Series'. Additionally, she appeared in the acclaimed Netflix feature "The Harder they Fall" and was nominated for the NAACP Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance.

CAST

KATAEM O'CONNOR

AS EMMANUEL

Kataem Enoth-Luwunzu O'Connor was born and raised in the Toronto area, but has always maintained strong ties to his Ugandan and Trinidadian heritage. He began his acting and modeling career at the age of 10, with the support of his family, and has since experienced rapid success.

O'Connor attended Wexford Collegiate School for the Arts, where he honed his musical talents and performed in front of large audiences, while simultaneously building his television career. He is a talented triple threat artist, with acting at the core of his passion. O'Connor is a humble and dedicated young performer who is no stranger to hard work.

Recently, O'Connor has appeared in recurring roles on CBC's "Murdoch Mysteries" and Hallmark's "The Way Home". His other television credits include "Deglassi", "L.A Complex", "Stephen King's 11.22.63", "Raising Expectations", "The Expanse", "Hudson & Rex", and CBC's critically acclaimed "Kim's Convenience". Additionally, he played the recurring role of Adam Parker on Canada's long-running television show "Heartland". O'Connor has also ventured into film, appearing in "Bloody Hell" and the Lifetime feature "72 Hours: The Carlesha Gaither Story".

CAST

MICHAEL GREYEVES

AS GALEN

Michael Greyeyes is a multi-talented actor, director, choreographer, and scholar whose diverse career from stage to screen spans over 25 years.

Greyeyes is currently filming the first season of Kurt Sutter's "The Abandons" for Netflix, opposite Lena Headey and Gillian Anderson, premiering in 2025. He also stars in R.T. Thorne's "40 Acres", premiering at TIFF 2024, alongside Danielle Deadwyler.

Greyeyes recently appeared in the thriller "Wild Indian", which premiered at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival, earning him a Film Independent Spirit Award and Gotham Award nomination for his leading performance. On television, he received a Film Independent Spirit Award and Gotham Award for his role as Terry Thomas in "Rutherford Falls", making history as the first Native Actor with two nominations in the same year.

Greyeyes plays Rainbird in the Universal/Blumhouse adaptation of Stephen King's "Firestarter". His other credits include HBO's "True Detective" and "I Know This Much is True", Tyler Sheridan's "1923", and the independent horror film "Blood Quantum", for which he won Best Leading Actor at the Canadian Screen Awards.

Additional film credits include "The King Tide", "Wildhood", "Togo", "Woman Walks Ahead", "The New World", "Skipped Parts", "Passchendaele", "Smoke Signals", and "Dance Me Outside". On television, Greyeyes has appeared in "Home Before Dark", "V-Wars", "Fear the Walking Dead", "Law and Order: Criminal Intent", "Crazy Horse", "Tecumseh's Vision", "Klondike", "Saints and Strangers", and "Dreamkeeper".

Born and raised in Canada, Greyeyes is Nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) from the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. He holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts from Kent State University and is a graduate of The National Ballet School, where he later joined The National Ballet of Canada and danced in New York City with choreographer Eliot Feld.

CAST

MILCANIA DIAZ-ROJAS

AS DAWN

Milcania Diaz-Rojas is a Toronto-based actor and writer of Dominican descent. She is an alumna of the CBC Actors Conservatory (Class of 2023-2024) at the Canadian Film Centre, where she showcased her talents in the short film "Zury", which is an official selection in Canada at TIFF 2024.

Diaz-Rojas has also appeared in supporting roles in notable productions, including HBO/A24's "Share" (Sundance 2019), Universal Television's "The Bold Type", and the Roku series "Slip". Her leading roles in various Canadian independent films and the Lifetime "Homekilling Queen" demonstrate her versatility as an actress.

Upcoming projects include starring roles in the post-apocalyptic thriller "40 Acres" (world premiere at TIFF 2024) and the indie film "Fat Lady Sriracha". Diaz-Rojas's dedication to her craft and authentic storytelling has established her as a talented and committed artist.

CAST

LEENAH ROBINSON

AS RAINE

Leenah Robinson is an Indigenous Canadian actress, notably recognized for her role as Baapuxti in Paramount's "1923", where she worked alongside Aminah Nieves, Harrison Ford,

and Helen Mirren. She is of Mohawk descent from Six Nations of the Grand River, Haisla from Kitamaat, BC, and Heiltsuk from Bella Bella, BC.

Robinson's other notable roles include "Fakes" for CBC/Netflix, "Bones of Crow" for CBC, and "Skymed" for Paramount+. She is excited about the upcoming release of "Don't Even", directed by Zoe Hopkins, where she plays Violet, a bright young girl uncertain about her future. Additionally, she is proud of her work on the feature film "40 Acres", directed by R.T. Thorne, starring Danielle Deadwyler and Michael Greyeyes.

In her free time, Robinson enjoys adventuring, hiking, snowboarding, and swimming with her cousins in Kitamaat.

CAST
JAEDA LEBLANC
AS DANIS

Jaeda LeBlanc was born in Barrie, Ontario, Canada, where she learned to speak English and French as a child, coming from a mixed ethnic background. From a very young age, LeBlanc has always had a passion for the arts, enjoying activities such as singing, music, digital and physical art, photography, and creative writing. However, acting has always been her true calling.

Having acted professionally since the age of 5, LeBlanc has had the opportunity to train with some of the best coaches in the industry, including Ron Leach, Jack Turnbull, Tom Todoroff, Rae Ellen Bodie, and Anik Matern. Through her acting career, she has become a member of the Young Artist Academy and has been studying in the Drama Program of her arts-based school.

Despite her youth, LeBlanc has already achieved significant recognition, with numerous nominations and wins from the Joey Awards and Novastar Awards. Her notable awards include Best Principal & Recurring Role in a TV Series, 2017 Joey Awards Best Actress, and Best Supporting Role in a Feature Film.

CAST
HAILE AMARE
AS COOKIE

Haile Amare is a vibrant 10-year-old Toronto-born actor of Ethiopian and Caribbean descent. As an award-winning competitive dancer with the Artistic Edge Dance Company, her extensive dance training, particularly in ballet, hip-hop, and jazz, has proven invaluable in her acting career.

Amare made an impressive debut as a lead in the film "40 Acres", directed by R.T. Thorne and produced by Jennifer Holness, where she played the role of Cookie. Reflecting on her experience, Amare said, "Playing Cookie was an amazing experience. I found parts of myself in the character, and the stunts were a lot of fun." The rigorous stunt work required for the role perfectly matched Amare's agility, coordination, and discipline, honed through years of dance. She has also trained in piano from a young age, adding to her versatile skill set.

Between Toronto and Los Angeles, Amare continues her journey in the entertainment industry and is already making waves as a young actor who can tackle any role with determination and skill.

CAST

ELIZABETH SAUNDERS AS AUGUSTA

Renowned for her grounded truthfulness and range, Saunders has an extensive career in stage, screen, and voice work. Currently, she can be seen in "From" (MGM+, Season 3), "The Shrouds" (Cannes premiere), "40 Acres" (RT Thorne), and "Big Oil Alliance" (ARCA).

Other credits include "Mary Kills People" (Cameron Pictures), "Smokebreak" (Benchmark Pics, Actra Award), "Surrealestate" (Syfy), "Clarice" (CBS), and "Orphan Black" (BBC America). Saunders has also had a successful voice acting career and has played leading roles on stages throughout Canada. She holds a BFA and MA in theatre and performance.

CREW

TAJ CRITCHLOW EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Taj Critchlow is a versatile entrepreneur, producer, and talent manager, representing a roster of influential filmmakers. As Founder and Executive Producer of Fela, he has produced a range of globally acclaimed content, including the feature film "Superfly", the documentary "Underplayed", and the short film "Motherland", which won Best Canadian Short at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival and Best Live Action Short at the Canadian Screen Awards.

With a keen eye for talent and a passion for nurturing creative vision, Critchlow brings significant value to the "40 Acres" team, ensuring the film's production values are of the highest standard.

CREW

SUDZ SUTHERLAND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Sudz Sutherland's love for storytelling began in grade one, when he wrote a western about a Black cowboy on his mother's Smith-Corona typewriter. This early spark has grown into a career dedicated to crafting stories that matter. He founded Hungry Eyes Media with his partner Jen Holness, a production company passionate about creating diverse content across various genres.

With a drive to fill the representation gap he experienced growing up, Sutherland has directed two award-winning feature films and over 75 hours of television, including notable shows such as "Batwoman", "The Flash", "Blindspot", "Designated Survivor", "Reign", "Murdoch Mysteries", and more. His accolades include an International Emmy Award "The Phantoms" and four Canadian Screen Awards for Best Director, including one for "BLK: An Origin Story" (2023). Additionally, he has co-created several series, including "She's the Mayor", "Shoot the Messenger", and "Guns".

Sutherland resides in Toronto with his wife, three daughters, and two dogs. His dedication to storytelling and representation continues to fuel his creative endeavors.

CREW
MARK GINGRAS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Mark Gingras is a seasoned film and television industry expert, co-owner of Urban Post Production Inc., and founder of Vigilante Productions Inc. He has delivered high-quality content to prominent clients, including Netflix, Amazon, and Lionsgate.

Gingras has worked with esteemed directors and supervised post-production for notable franchises like "Saw" and Emmy award-winning "The Kennedys". He has received 50 nominations and 16 wins for various industry awards, including Emmys and Canadian Screen Awards.

As Executive Producer, Gingras has credits on over 50 productions, including "The King Tide", "My Animal", "Alice, Darling", and "The Witch". His expertise and leadership in the industry are evident through his extensive experience and accomplishments.

CREW
JOHN LAING
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Co-Owner and Manager of Urban Post Productions.

CREW
PETER COSCO
PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Peter Cosco is a renowned production designer in film and television, collaborating with esteemed directors since 1997. His feature film credits include "Women Talking", "Kit Kittredge: An American Girl", and "The Lesser Blessed". In television, he's worked on notable series like HBO's "Tell Me You Love Me" and "Sensitive Skin".

Cosco's work has received critical acclaim, with "The Hollywood Reporter" praising his "subtle production design" in "Women Talking". He's earned nominations from the Director's Guild of Canada and the New Zealand Film Award for Best Design. Cosco is dedicated to developing the visual language to bring each project's unique story to life.

CREW
JEREMY BENNING
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Jeremy Benning is an award-winning Director of Photography with a diverse and impressive filmography. His credits include the feature film "40 Acres" with Director R.T. Thorne for Hungry Eyes Media/Mongrel Media, as well as work on the TV series "Cross" for Paramount/Skydance/Amazon, the anthology series "Accused" for Sony/Fox, and two episodes of "Guillermo Del Toro's: Cabinet of Curiosities" for Netflix, which earned him nominations for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography and Best Dramatic Series Cinematography. Additionally, he has worked on the Disney+ feature film "Spin", all six seasons of Amazon's "The Expanse", season two of the MGM/Audience series "Condo", the mini-series "The Long Road Home" for National Geographic Studios/Fuzzy Door Productions, and the National Geographic/Scott Free Television film "Killing Lincoln", which won the 2018 ASC Award for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography in a Television Movie/Mini-Series.

Benning is represented by SESLER.

CREW
DEV SINGH
EDITOR

Dev Singh is a versatile, award-winning editor with a diverse range of credits across film and television genres. His work includes horror films like "Spiral" (Chris Rock, Samuel L. Jackson, Max Minghella), "Resident Evil - Welcome to Raccoon City" (Johannes Roberts, Constantin Films, Screen Gems), and "Incident in a Ghostland" (Pascal Laugier, "Martyrs"). He has also edited TV drama series such as "The Porter" (nominated for Best New Series at the 2022 Independent Spirit Awards), "Accused" (Showrunner Howard Gordon, "Homeland", "24"), and "Essex County" (based on the graphic novels by Jeff Lemire). Additionally, Dev has worked on comedies and festival films like "People of Earth" (Greg Daniels, Conan O'Brien), "Cinema of Sleep", "Backcountry", and "Picture Day", as well as "40 Acres" (Director R.T. Thorne, Producer Jennifer Holness, Mongrel Media). Currently, Dev is editing the Netflix series "Wayward" starring Mae Martin, Sarah Gadon, and Toni Collette.

CREW
SANDY PEREIRA
EDITOR

Sandy Pereira is an award-winning editor recognized for her exceptional work on critically acclaimed films and television series. Her notable credits include "Mean Dreams" (2016 Cannes Film Festival Directors Fortnight, DGC Craft Award for Best Editing), "Giant Little Ones" (2017 TIFF, VIFF, Busan FF, DGC Craft Award Nominee for Best Editing), "Cardinal: Until The Night" (CSA Award for Best Editing, Drama and DGC Craft Award for Best Picture Editing Television, Drama), "The Porter" (2022, CSA Award for Best Editing, Drama), "Slip" (2023, SXSW TV Premiere), and "Essex County" (2023, CSA Award Nominee for Best Editing Television, Drama). Recently, she completed editing on José Lourenço's feature film "Young Werther" (starring Douglas Booth and Allison Pill) and R.T. Thorne's "40 Acres" (starring Danielle Deadwyler and Michael Greyeyes), both premiering at TIFF 2024. Currently, Sandy is working on Alex Winter's feature film "Adulthood" (starring Josh Gad, Kaya Scodelario, Billie Lourd, and Anthony Carrigan).

CREW
MARY JURIC
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Mary Juric is a versatile VFX Editor and 1st Assistant Picture Editor with a BFA from York University's Film & Video program. She has worked on a range of projects in feature films, television, and documentary, collaborating with notable directors such as Guillermo Del Toro, David Cronenberg, Kevin Reynolds, Zoe Lister-Jones, Alex Winter, Ron Nyswaner, and R.T. Thorne. Juric has had a long-standing collaboration with Guillermo Del Toro, working on "The Strain", "Crimson Peak", "The Shape of Water", and "Nightmare Alley". Currently, she is working on Alex Winter's feature film "Adulthood", starring Josh Gad, Kaya Scodelario, Billie Lourd, and Anthony Carrigan.

40 ACRES CREDITS

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End Of Opening Credits

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