

A FILM BY JOEL KOERNPSCHILD | WRITTEN BY CHRIS SCHIEFFLIN

VARMINT

[VARR - MINT] INFORMAL. RASCAL. DIRTBAG. SCUM.



Set Photography by Joshua Giroux
Cinematography Stills & Book Layout by Randy Wedick

This book is dedicated to our generous supporters who funded "VARMINT" through direct donations Kickstarter, as well as all of the cast & crew who became the VARMIN'T Family.

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VARMINT was a film created in many stages. Chris's original script went through a million revisions of his own and then another series of months with Joel before they would even show it to me. Eventually, I took the script and worked with Joel to break it up into a shotlist. We had some storyboards made, but the main guidepost for us was our live-action animatic.

When Joel, Chris, Vanessa & I went up to Scribe Winery, in Sonoma, CA to do location scouting a month before principal photography. We brought a Sony EX3 camera with us, acted out various parts in the film and recorded it on this camera. Shooting with this video camera, we tested out every camera position in the entire shot list on the real locations and read through the entire story of the film. When we returned to LA, Joel cut the live action animatic into a very early version of what the film would be. We managed to see that the majority of the script and shot list worked, but some key scenes had to be changed up. It also got us intimately familiar with the shooting locations.

Of course, once we were on location with our cast and crew, and working around the hours required when you are shooting a film with kids and night scenes, things changed, but it was quite surprising how close some of these scenes were to the inspiration. The live action animatic provided a nice backup plan whenever we needed one, but we always wanted to play to our talented actors and see if we could create something spontaneous first.

After we shot the film, Barry began the editing process and any one involved in that process will tell you, that was like making a whole film all over again. Slowly but surely, the cut progressed, and all of us went through the entire range of emotions watching our little film come to life. Watching the final cut of the film was incredibly satisfying, similar to seeing your kid excel in a sports game or a piano recital after months of growth. All of the hard work, long nights, blood, sweat & tears was beginning to pay off.

The rest of the process, the color correction, the VFX, the sound design, all took on much more significance in this film than any I have been involved with. Once we saw the cut and realized that we had an actual movie, we trod very carefully over the next phases, not being satisfied with good work, but constantly seeking perfection. Much of the polish and finishing touches are owed to Jeff Brue.

I hope you enjoy watching the film as much as we enjoyed making it. The only thing that scares me about turning this film into a feature is trying to top the wrap party we had at Motel 6.

This book is a record of some of the finest days and nights I ever had in my life.

Randy Wedick - Cinematographer

LOCATION SCOUTING





Chris holding the final shooting script of VARMiNT on our location scout at Scribe Winery.

The final version of this scene left a lot of this dialog on the cutting room floor, but kept the subtext and the underlying meanings, which you can see scribbled and outlined in different colors on this page from Joel's shooting script.

Holding ← Cops

Cory: what did he say beforehand.
 "You couldn't kill one even if you tried."
 "even if it were right in front of you!"

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Two flashlight beams scan the tall grass. CORY and TREVOR, hayseeds, brothers, maybe 13 and 14, hunt carrying rifles with flashlights taped to the stocks. The older, Trevor carries a .22, moves hesitantly, chewing nervously on a grass stalk. The smaller, Cory moves forward brazenly, carries "Geraldine" a larger bore rifle, has a black eye and chews tobacco.

someone older. Maybe 16 or 17. they look up to him.

TREVOR
 ...Coolley's cousin damn near blew one's head clean off. Still ran 'round for goin' on twenny minutes with no head, jus' like a chicken.

they look up to Coolley.

CORY
 Coolley couldn't pour piss outta boot if directions was on the heel. He's a asshole. **C'mon.** Me an ol' Geraldine here gonna put two in the chest just to make damn sure. She hates fuckin', disgustin', no 'count varmints.

TREVOR
 (spits) *one of their buddies.* maybe he's a *crash on her.*

I heard **Colton Gracie's** *sister* got bit by one. Now she got the **cyclosporititus**. Could ask her yourself 'cept she's in quarantine. **Caint nobody see her!** **Lem Merchant** told me hisself.

CORY
deal friend
Lem Merchant buttfucks goat peckers. (looking at Trevor)
 You goin' chicken shit?

TREVOR
 Trevor stops.
 (pauses)
 It's prolly half way to Timbuktu by now.

CORY
 Nah, caint got far. It's round here somewhere. **Goddam!** I hate me some fuckin' **varmint!**

varmint is top dog.

Cory motions toward a **conspicuous lone bush.**

He knows it's there.

MUST FIND SHAMS

TREASURING
 People he looks up to, or likes.

MUST HAVE OBJECTIVE!!!

defending himself

Evidence gets off evidence.

Cory belittling anyone around him.

Instinct *moving name?*

Geraldine: the one time his Dad actually gave him something. Connection from Varmint blunder to Geraldine.

Lem Merchant: one of his Dad's drinking buddies.

EXERCISES

Scene 1

walk around facing their status.

Get rope, try a mess

Sitting at dinner table
 - Even if Trevor gets it first, Cory still talks.

Tell them to do something scary together, steal a car.

Subplot

Trevor

1. Goes off facts

I know what you're talking about.

2. There's no way we're going to get this thing. *to go home*

Subtext:

"You're an idiot, you don't know what you're talking about."

3. I don't want to go.

Key words Specificity

Relationships & Status

Cory's competition.
 - Varmint is a threat!
 - Clear & Strong

More excuses
 "we don't have to go get it."

Here is page one of the shot list that Joel & Randy put together.

We used this as a guide to shoot the live action animatic during our location scout.

VARMINT

VARMINT SHOT LIST - 08.16.11

VARMINT Shooting Style & POV:

1. Lots of handheld shots in the film. I want to make sure that the audience is right there with the VARMINT and kids.
2. Seeing the world from the VARMINT's point of view. Shots being from his height. Strong POV.
3. IF the camera is locked off, we are watching the action like a picture. Not many locked off shots but when they happen, the audience will notice. It will feel different.

Wild sound!

still need!

Profile

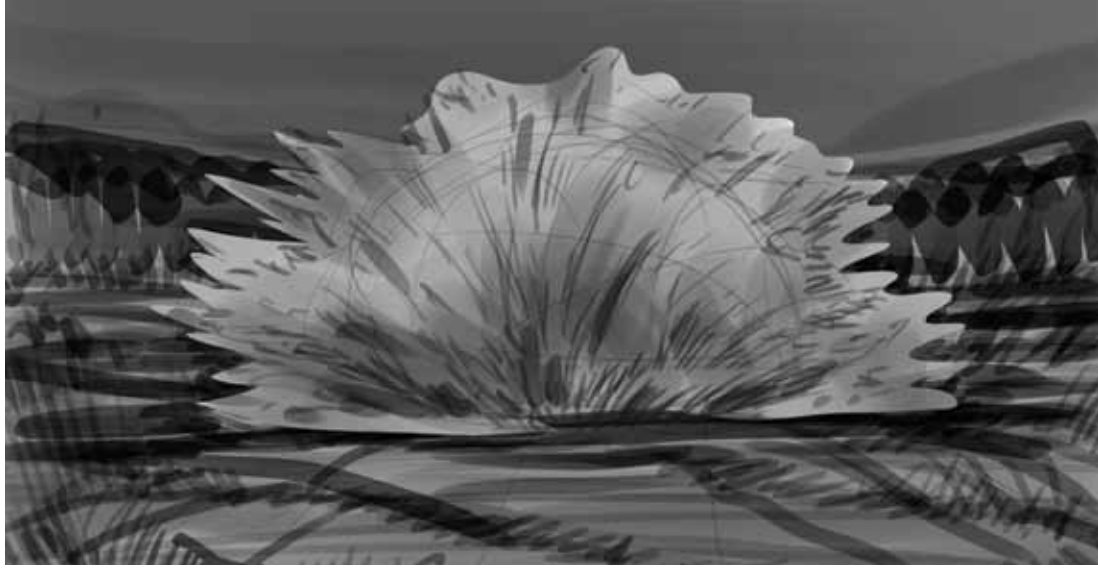
25mm.

Fence all in same area

Need yelps & howls

Fr

- ~~1. EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT~~
- ~~a. WS, Forest dark, night, light mist. Suddenly, flashlights sweep across the frame, silhouetting the grass blades as two boys appear in frame. They walk through frame.~~
- ~~b. HH 1 shot (probably get dirty 2 shots here too) of CORY dialogue as he walks.~~
- ~~c. HH 1 shot of Trevor's dialogue. Scared/nervous.~~
- ~~d. HH 25 mm tracking 2 shot behind boys as they walk. Whole dialogue.~~
- ~~e. WS lone bush. Slider in w/ boys flanking bush.~~
- ~~• Back to 1b. CU CORY, finger to lips.~~
- ~~f. MS TREVOR nodding, walks around backside of bush.~~
- ~~g. MS CORY lights up flashlight, points it straight down the lens, VARMINT runs in distance. Boys swing & fire over their shoulders.~~
- ~~h. Long lens various distances of VARMINT PROFILE shot running through forest, keeping tension. WS, CU feet, MS etc. running.~~
- ~~i. HH series, gunfire, hand held, bolt actions, shells, gunfire, etc.~~
- ~~• Back to 1h. Title comes up.~~
- ~~j. WS - 2 shot of boys. "Probably I got it..."~~
- ~~2. EXT. FENCE - NIGHT~~
- ~~a. WS Locked off silhouette of VARMINT walking through forest.~~
- ~~b. HH behind VARMINT gnawing on milk carton.~~
- ~~c. HH tracking in front of VARMINT. Scene starts off with his feet walking, cuts to 2a. Still don't get good look of him.~~
- ~~d. CU shot on sign. camera pulls back to MS as Varmint walks in & over/under barbed wire fence.~~
- ~~3. EXT. FARM - NIGHT~~
- ~~a. HH wide shot in front of Varmint. He walks up over hill and into frame. Looks at something. Rubs blanket on face. Builds suspense of what he's looking at. Yelps & howls.~~
- ~~b. VARMINT in BG house in BG w/ lights off.~~
4. EXT. PORCH - NIGHT
- a. WS shot of the house. VARMINT stealthily creeps up to house.
- b. HH follow VARMINT sneaking onto porch. See's ceramic cow & walks up to it; he's curious. Breaks it.
- c. HH reaction shot of VARMINT's face (revealing VARMINT) as it breaks. Light turns on, ducks down.
- d. HH low, behind VARMINT as he scurries up to the wall. Peaks up and into window.
5. INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT
- a. HH 50mm POV of VARMINT, w/ some of window in FG.



STORYBOARD



ANIMATIC



PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY

CORY motions toward a conspicuous lone bush.

They move forward.

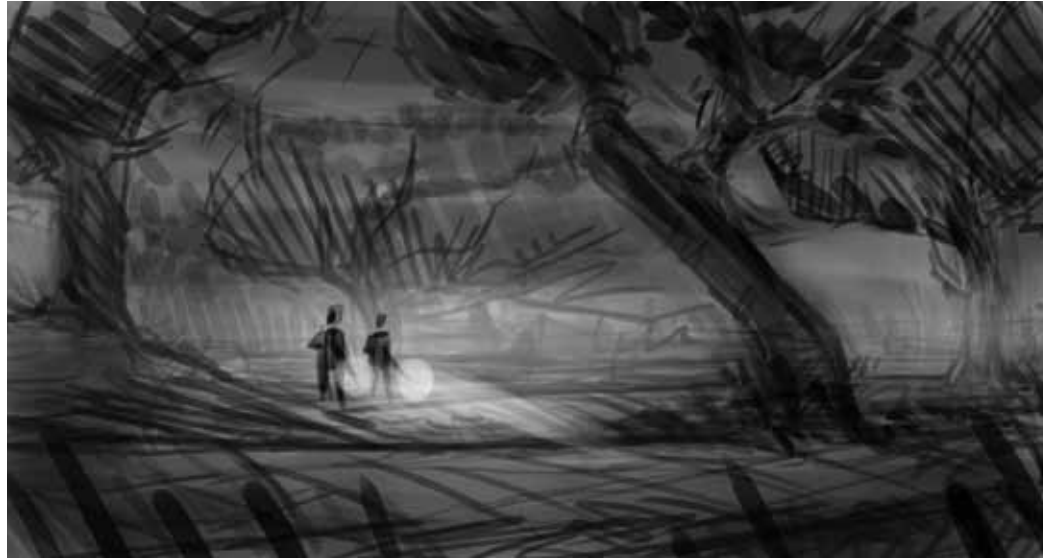
CORY puts his finger to his lips in a quieting gesture and points. TREVOR nods as both slowly begin to flank the bush.

They pause, CORY raises his hand and give a three finger countdown: 3, 2...

TREVOR gulps. A distance behind a FIGURE sprints across

TREVOR
(noticing)
There it is!

STORYBOARD



ANIMATIC





CORY
Blast it!

Both Farm Boys turn and chaotically fire at the Figure as it sprints across the field.

The Figure appears to be a boy with a tail carrying something

SUPERIMPOSE: "VARMINT" title

The Figure disappears into the distance

CORY (CONT'D)
Prolly I got it.
(spits)
Fuckin' varmints...

ANIMATIC



PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Essentially test shooting the entire film ahead of time on the actual locations allowed the film makers to refine the framing, lighting, and overall storytelling before the shoot even began.

The Varmint curls into the fetal position holding the bullet wound in his side.

FADE TO BLACK:

26 EXT. FARM - DAY

It is a beautiful sunny morning.

how many hours of sleep did he get. urgency.

27 EXT. FARMHOUSE PORCH/LAWN - DAY

A tired-eyed Jerry exits the house. He stands for a moment staring out into nothing, then looks down seeing the bloody Varmint collapsed motionless on the lawn.

oblivious Jerry: to repair his tractor. urgency

Varmint was an epidemic, was gone, it now back know how, vaccine to get rid of it. Like measles, mumps.

JERRY (matter of fact, toward the house)

There's a dead varmint on the lawn.

another roadblock to getting his life back on track. must deal with it. Doesn't to deal with it, damn it!

WIFE (O.S.)

(from inside) Well throw it in the dumpster.

Just well, get rid of it!

Jerry approaches the Varmint. Junior quickly rushes to his side, gnawing on a corn dog.

JUNIOR

Cool. - we got an alien on the lawn.

Jerry instructing after being embarrassed! It's about teaching his son something useful here!

WIFE (O.S.)

Don't touch it!

- How does she affect you? - Fall into routine & tells him what to do. mothering roll.

JERRY

It's not cool. It's disgusting.

lost respect. Talks over him! she could be talking to both of them.

WIFE (O.S.)

You'll get worms!

tags him. Let your wife respect you, as the father figure.

The Varmint moves slightly.

JUNIOR

It's still alive dad!

Making his roll as a father. Reasserting himself & reconnect!

JERRY

Christ... Don't touch it!

- Junior doesn't listen.

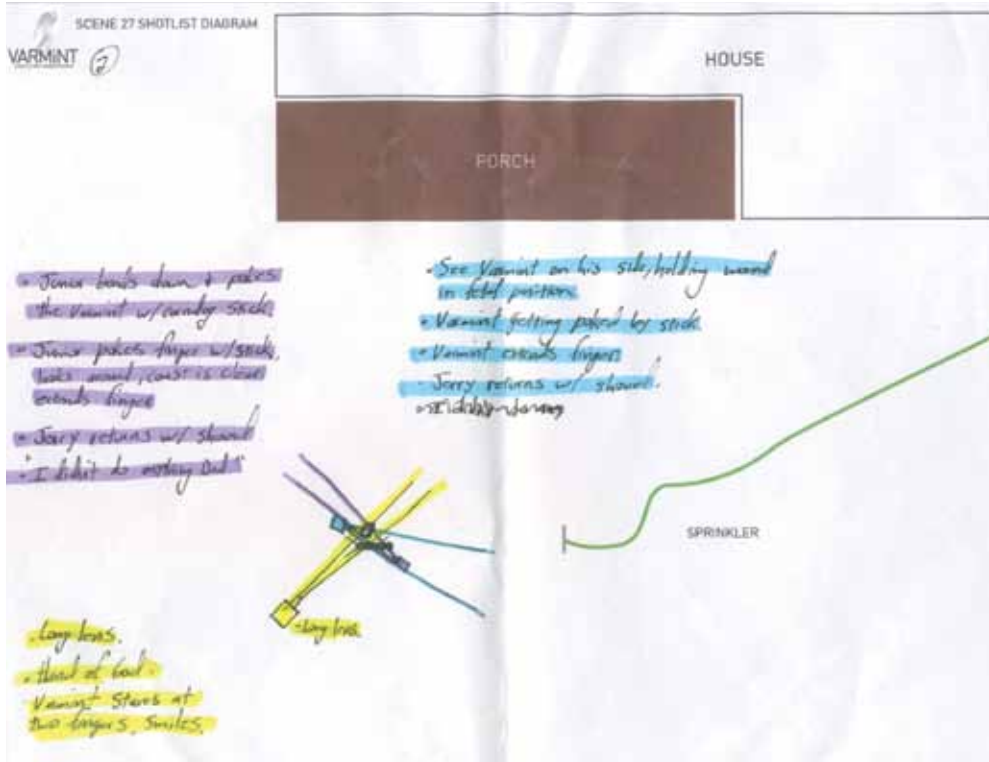
Think about that!

Jerry exits. - Turns off water.

Listen to her & don't disregard her.

Junior looks around then quickly hunkers down next to the Varmint who stares helplessly back at him. Junior eats the last bite of his corn dog, then pokes at the Varmint's forehead with the corn dog stick.

why he doesn't look Junior inside. be a man!



(LEFT) Overhead shooting diagram of this scene showing key camera position, set & prop position, etc.

(BELOW LEFT) A photo of the actual camera position from this scene.

(NEXT PAGE) On the next two pages are pictured the animatic of the scene which we shot with Chris as Junior and Vanessa as the Varmint, and also the color corrected and finished still from the film.

On the next page is our "Hand of God" shot.



ANIMATIC



PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY





PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY

SHOOTING



CINELEASE

04/11/16



Filming with the Sony F35, Leica lenses & the Codex recorder in a handheld configuration. We typically used handheld when following the VARMiNT to emphasize his rough nature.

Recording to the Codex allowed us to shoot the F35 completely uncompressed with no sacrifice in visual quality which was key. In post production we were able to match the lighting and color of different times of day and match different lighting setups at night, in both subtle & drastic differences. It also allowed us to manage our workflow, archive our footage and to create and watch dailies back at the production office.



The camera crew rigged a shoulderbrace backwards so Randy could run in front of the Varmint with the camera pointing behind him. "Vietnam" Joe Schimizzi ran along side spotting him in case of an accident. 1st AC Monika Lenczewska (in hoodie) follows pulling remote focus on a C-Motion handset. Gaffer Julien Janigo looks on from the sidelines.

The F35 camera was specifically chosen due to it's CCD sensor, which completely eliminates the rolling shutter look, a commonplace artifact that makes handheld shots look artificial on most recent digital cameras. Also it captures incredible highlight detail which was important for shooting in the bright sunny conditions of Sonoma in August.

For night photography the production switched to the Sony F3, which allowed for very low light levels and great shadow exposure.



Joel blocking out the path where the VARMiNT will run through an establishing shot.



Meanwhile, Monika & Randy set up the establishing shot at the bottom of the hill. Here the F35 is mounted on a Panther Vario-Jib. We typically used an 18mm Leica Summilux-C lens for wides.



Chris & Joel work out a scene as the sun goes down.

CAST & CREW





Ian Hamrick as the VARMiNT. Shown here with custom five finger shoes designed by sculptor & shoe designer Charlie Becker, which enabled him to scramble through the brush at top speed.



Kai Lennox (who we had seen and loved in the film "Beginners") playing Jerry, Junior's father and a complex character in the VARMINT's world, embodying both soothing & vengeful sides of the father figure. Kai was a great asset, elevating the performance of the young actors around him.



Mason Ford (left) and Monk Serrell-Freed (right) played Corey and Trevor, two local hayseeds with a bloodthirsty streak towards VARMiNTS and other pests.



Chase Ford played Junior, Jerry's son, pictured here holding a corn dog, the only known form of food in the VARMiNT universe.

While Junior mimics his father's style of dress, Jerry really wishes his son would dig a little deeper and learn from his father's actions. Later in the film Junior learns some hard lessons about life.



Anyone who worked on this shoot will tell you one of the best parts about it was the food. Upstart San Francisco food personality Vanessa Dora Lavorato worked with hot SF restaurant Mission Chinese & local markets to source fresh food, which was all prepped on site and cooked in either the wood burning pizza oven or over an open fire. The crew usually dined in the courtyard of the hacienda at Scribe Winery.

(above) PA's Anna Brue (left) & Jacqueline Tosline-Davis (right) share a rare moment of downtime with Vanessa (center) in the outdoor kitchen.





Technical/Visual Consultant "Vietnam" Joe Schimizzi at-the ready, in-between takes.

A meeting of the minds. Day exteriors were only shot during magic hour (the light of the setting sun) so often we had to make snap decisions based on the duration and direction of the light. Here we are brainstorming how to combine a few shots into a single sequence to save a little time.

Pictured are VFX supervisor & producer Jeff Brue (far left), gaffer Julien Janigo, Chris Schieffelin, Joel Knoernschild & Randy Wedick.



Meanwhile, back in the production office, killer producers Katie Malia (left) & Sunanda Sachatrakul (right) strain to figure out how to stretch the remainder of the budget, shown here in Sunanda's hands.





AUG 81



AUG 81







PROD. No. VARMINT

DIRECTOR JOEL K.

CAMERA Randy Wedick

SCENE

12B.

TAKE

2

ROLL

DATE

8-22-11

SOUND

SYNC

WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR: JOEL KNOERNSCHILD

Short films are mini-hurricanes of intensity. They have all of the same characteristics of a feature film, minus the financial resources. It teaches you how to think creatively and solve problems.

With an incredibly smart and ambitious script written by Chris Schieffelin, there wasn't much room for error.

We approached pre-production similar to music videos I've directed in the past, with an animatic. Pulling inspirational stills, clips from movies and editing it all together. It's a great visual roadmap.

With VARMiNT, we pushed this process even further by going up to Sonoma two months before shooting, acting out each scene on location and editing the entire short together. It helped us analyze and make choices before we were on set.

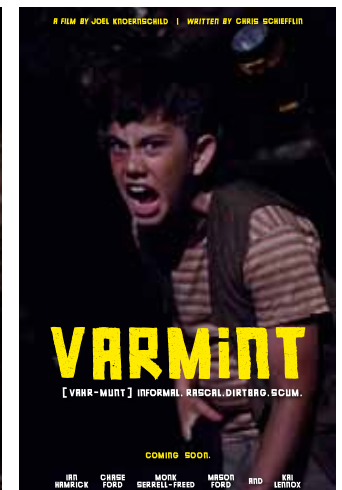
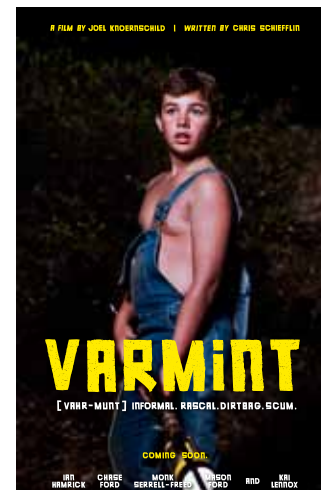
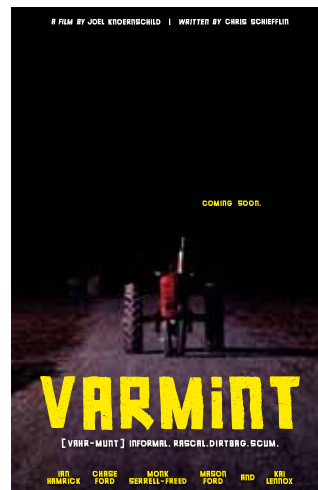
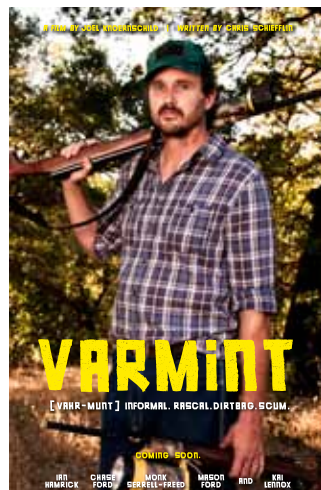
On August 20th, we made the 400-mile trek north of Los Angeles to Sonoma, where we rented 18 rooms at Motel 6 for the entire cast & crew.

Principle photography started on August 21st at a friend's vineyard, Scribe Winery. Over the next 6 days, we shot up in the twisting hills and picturesque landscapes. Craft services were cooked on an open-fire Tuscan Grill. Ian Hamrick (the VARMiNT) braved the elements of weather and harsh landscapes. Each day he would cover himself with bug spray to repel ticks living in the dead brush. Ian was fearless and for the entire cast/crew, this job was incredibly physical. The only bodily damage was done to Ron LaFevre's ego, by having to shave his entire body to stunt double as the tractor-driving VARMiNT.

Immediately after wrapping, we started post-production, which continued for another 10 months. Each process had it's own unique moments. The smell of smoke filling Barry's edit bay and seeing the house next-door fully engulfed in flames. Picking up sound design at 4 AM for drop-offs in Santa Monica. Original music score recording deep into the early hours of the morning, and over 116 VFX shots (one alone took Jeff over 100 hours). VARMiNT is completely original.

I am so proud of the final product of VARMiNT. I worked with some of the most talented and supportive people in the business. After all of the blood, sweat and tears it gives me this sinking feeling to see this chapter come to a close, but I've gained so many friends and unbreakable bonds for an optimistic future. I can't wait to see what trouble the VARMiNT is going to stir-up next.

Joel Knoernschild



CREDITS

DIRECTED BY JOEL KNOERNSCHILD

WRITTEN BY CHRIS SCHIEFFELIN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

ANDREW L. SCHIEFFELIN
CHRIS MCPHERSON
GARETH KANTNER
CHRISTINE KANTNER
ADAM MARIANI
ANDREW PAUL MARIANI

PRODUCED BY

KATIE MALIA
SUNANDA SACHATRAKUL
CHELSEA SHANDERS
JEFF BRUE
CHRIS SCHIEFFELIN
JOEL KNOERNSCHILD

EDITOR

BARRY O DONNELL

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

RANDY WEDICK

CAST

VARMINT IAN HAMRICK
JERRY KAI LENNOX
JUNIOR CHASE FORD
TREVOR MASON FORD
CORY MONK SERRELL FREED
JERRY'S WIFE KIMBERLEY JURGEN

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

NOBUKO WEDICK
MICHAEL SCHIEFFELIN

LINE PRODUCER

DEE CAMP

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

KIRK MICHAEL FELLOWS

LOCATION MANAGER

VANESSA DORA LAVORATO

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

ANNA BRUE
JACQUELINE TOSLINE DAVIS

1ST ASSISTANT CAMERA

MONIKA LENCZEWSKA
MARCIN NADOLNY

TECHNICAL/VISUAL CONSULTANT

JOSEPH SCHIMIZZI

GAFFER

JULIEN JANIGO

KEY GRIP

TYLER MANNING

STILL PHOTOGRAPHER

JOSHUA L. GIROUX

PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER

JAMES ERSTED

SOUND MIX

LOTUS POST

RE-RECORDING MIXER

RICK ASH

MAKE UP DEPT HEAD & FX MAKEUP

REN ROHLING

VARMINT'S PROSTHETIC FEET

CHARLIE BECKER

WARDROBE STYLIST

DESIREE MANLY

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

DAN CARPENTER

SET DECORATOR

RENE SANS

SOUND DESIGNER

JAMES ERSTED

STUNT COORDINATOR

JOHN CAMPBELL

STUNT PERFORMER

RON LAFEVRE

CASTING DIRECTOR

MOLLY MATTHEWS

POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR / VFX DEPT HEAD

JEFF BRUE

COLORIST

SEBASTIAN PEREZ-BURCHARD

VFX & COMPOSITING

DAMIAN DRAGO

STUDIO TEACHER

JACQUELINE DOMAC

CATERING & CRAFT SERVICES

VANESSA DORA LAVORATO

SET MEDICS

PEBE VAN DEN TOOM
BRAD BEEDLE
MIKE ZITA
CHRIS HENDRIX

TYPOGRAPHY DESIGN/GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATOR

DAN CARPENTER

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

MAXWELL GOLDMAN

"LONESOME TOWN"

PERFORMED BY RICKY NELSON
COURTESY OF CAPITAL RECORDS
UNDER LICENSE FROM EMI FILM & TELEVISION MUSIC

ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED BY

JOSH L. GIROUX

ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS

MIKE BELIVEAU
JASON MORRIS

SPECIAL THANKS

SCRIBE WINERY
ANDREW PAUL MARIANI
ADAM MARIANI
LAUREN FELDMAN
KIERAN MALONEY
KIM DAVIS-WAGNER
PATRICK MCKENZIE
KATE MCGREGOR-STEWART
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