

Stephen Romano Wraps Indie Thriller 'What Did You Do?' — with Jonathan Stoddard, D.C. Douglas, and Caroline Williams

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, April 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A dark indie thriller shot across Texas and transferred to 35mm for a gritty, analog finish. Festival submissions begin in 2026.

Logline: Some questions should never be answered...

[Stephen Romano](#), acclaimed writer of "Masters of Horror," "Shock Festival," and the novel "Resurrection Express," has wrapped production on "What Did You Do?," his feature directorial debut—a dark psychological thriller exploring trauma, identity, and buried sins.



Jonathan Stoddard in "What Did You Do?"

Produced by Animated Alligator Unlimited, the film completed principal photography on April 7, 2024, after shooting entirely on location in Austin, Dripping Springs, and Elgin, Texas.

“

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Synopsis: In a remote Texas safe house, a war-haunted ex-soldier (Jonathan Stoddard) is hired to facilitate the slow torture of a man duct-taped to a chair (Brian Villalobos). As their dark and intense relationship unfolds, identities fracture, secrets bleed out, and a brutal puppet master (D.C. Douglas) watches from the shadows, orchestrating violence too terrifying to comprehend.

Stripped to its raw nerves and soaked in vintage pop and sweat, "What Did You Do?" unfolds like a fever dream of retro Americana and slow-burning menace, building toward a brutal, unforgettable finale.

Cast Includes: Jonathan Stoddard, Brian Villalobos, Ashton Leigh, and Caroline Williams.

"What Did You Do?" is the culmination of years of work from one of Austin's most distinctive creative voices—writer, filmmaker, and artist Stephen Romano. His genre film debut came in 2005 through a celebrated collaboration with Don Coscarelli on Showtime's "Masters of Horror." Since then, he's remained a fixture in the Texas indie scene, often profiled in The Austin Chronicle, with credits that include award-winning illustrated works ("Shock Festival"), acclaimed novels ("Resurrection Express," "Metro"), and more than fifteen produced screenplays.

"I've been biding my time for years on being a director so I didn't want to do something super crass in a really obvious way," says Romano. "Most first features scream 'Hey, look at me!'... but I wanted our film to be more of a challenge—and a challenge to the audience. I wanted a lot of talking. Two men spilling their souls in a strange, almost forced way, while the world around them churns with all this evil bile... and what ends up happening ain't pretty at all."

Romano financed the film independently using income from his screenwriting work—much of it for Lifetime—alongside personal savings.

"I cashed in my paychecks from those films to start production," says Romano. "We basically just pooled our life savings to make the movie, which was scary as hell, but we needed the right resources. I wanted this film to have the look and sound it deserves. Also, I wanted complete creative control because we break a lot of rules here. When it's your own money, you answer to no one."

Production Notes: Shot using the legendary Sony Venice cameras—the same system used on Top Gun: Maverick and Severance—the film is being transferred to 35mm during post-production to create an earthy, grain-rich analog aesthetic.

"It's a grittier version of what they do on big movies like 'Dune' and 'The Batman,'" Romano explains. "It allows us to have real film grain and an earthier look. Most movies, especially lower-budget ones, just look too clean to me. We gotta dirty it up, you know?"

The soundtrack features obscure 1960s bubblegum rock tracks composed and performed by Romano's real-life father, which were actually on the radio "back in the day." An original score complements the retro sound with a modern edge.

Romano is editing the film himself, taking cues from DIY genre pioneers.

"Mostly I am inspired by George Romero, in terms of hands-on filmmaking craft. He edited 'Dawn of the Dead' all by himself, and it's an incredible achievement. It was what originally inspired me to be a filmmaker." Romano adds, "I believe directors who edit their own films are really touch with their craft."

Post-Production & Festival Plans: The film is expected to lock by the end of 2025, with festival submissions beginning in early 2026. A full trailer will debut by year's end, with teaser content rolling out throughout 2025 on Instagram [@whatdidyoudo_thefilm](#) under the hashtag #WhatDidYouDo.

Press Assets:

Stills featuring: Jonathan Stoddard, D.C. Douglas, Ashton Leigh, Brian Villalobos, and Caroline Williams

Behind-the-scenes still of director Stephen Romano

Press kit: <https://tinyurl.com/wdyd-press>

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