

ROSS LYNCH

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Location: W Above the Penthouses

Suit by DAVID HART
Shirt by EMPORIO ARMANI
Coat by DANIEL GREGORY
Shoes by DRIES VAN NOTEN

Unless you've been following the Disney Channel lately, or listened to the band R5, Ross Lynch might be an unfamiliar name. That won't be the case for much longer. Starring in his first feature film, **My Friend Dahmer**, Lynch wastes no time showcasing his dramatic expertise as he portrays notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer in this coming of age story based on the graphic novel by Dahmer's actual friend, John [Derf] Backderf.

Lynch feeds off of the unknown saying, "exploring is the best part about being an artist." While he didn't know who Dahmer was when he initially approached the project, his passion for exploration and adventure drove him. "Experiment, try different things out, see what you really like! That's what life's all about," Lynch proclaims. He was extremely interested in the story and how it's told, "it wasn't necessarily what [Dahmer] was going to do, it was about the story that Derf had to tell about this troubled kid in high school that's later going to become a serial killer."

Once Lynch started researching Dahmer and watching his interviews, he was hooked. "When you go into the details of it, it's really bizarre. I didn't expect it to be so odd," Lynch admits.

My Friend Dahmer, directed by Marc Myers, isn't your typical serial killer thriller, it's a story about the young man when he was just a normal high school kid. He may be just shy of 22 as we chat, but high school isn't particularly familiar for Lynch. On top of being homeschooled, his Disney Channel show, *Austin & Ally*, was about young musicians on tour rather than the typical high school scripts Disney slings. This doesn't phase Lynch. "I just put myself in [Dahmer's] situation. We were filming in his hometown, in his childhood house and I was wearing 70's clothes, my hair was done like his, all those things helped."

The most challenging part of being Dahmer, for him, was staying level. "Being in this weird headspace, I wanted to shed it before I went to sleep but then of course I want to be prepared for the next day, so I'd read the upcoming scenes and look at where Dahmer was coming from and where he was going to go, so I never really got to be away from Dahmer in the whole process." Remembering the "mall spaz" scene as he calls it, Lynch laughs as he relives "disturbing the extras" and even chasing one through the mall while the cameras never stopped rolling. "They just kept rolling and I'm not even kidding you, it was like a 30 minute take," Lynch recalls. "It's a really vulnerable thing to do, to expose yourself in front of people like that."

Dahmer's childhood home is the location of where he killed his first victim. "It's a really beautiful house," Lynch describes. "It's got great scenery, it's really lush, very green, you feel like you're up in the mountains." He was pretty focused on being Dahmer as a teenager,

before becoming a killer, so he wasn't uncomfortable in the home but he says "there was a point in filming, I was talking to Derf, and he was showing me where everything happened and that was really surreal. Just to be in the exact place and visualize what had gone down. Also, I'm dressed as Dahmer and Derf is showing me around and at one point he says, 'can you just take your glasses off, I can't even look at you—you look too much like him.'"

Things didn't get really eerie for Lynch until the last day of filming when they were doing the heavier, more unnerving scenes. "Alex [Wolf] and I, when we did the big climax scene of the film, after filming that scene and wrapping, we were trying to get out of there as quick as possible - we thought we were going to throw up! That scene was definitely the most present I was being Dahmer. Being in that car, it was as if no one else was there and it was just me and Derf—Jeff and Derf."

Researching Dahmer wasn't hard to find for Lynch. Luckily, Dahmer himself was very candid in interviews following his arrest and his high school friends are still around—literally—they would come by the set and tell Lynch stories about their friend. Lynch was very serious about portraying Dahmer accurately and depicting the infamous killer's idiosyncratic behaviors. The film's objective is Dahmer's development so it's inaccurate to portray him as just a murderer. "If you go into playing Jeffrey Dahmer as an ultra weird dude, it wouldn't work as well," he says. "No one in his high school, ever, suspected he was as dark he was. His friends' stories were actually friendly." Even when Derf's wife (a journalist) heard of Dahmer's arrest, she told Derf someone from his high school was a murderer and Derf guessed a different guy. "It was crucial to how I portrayed him in the film."

The honest approach of the film makes Lynch think Dahmer "would not necessarily love the film, but I think he would like that we're telling his story in such a way that's not vicious. I don't know why anyone would become a serial killer, it could be anything. Ultimately, this movie is a cautionary tale. It's a movie that sticks with you for days...it just makes you think. That's a great thing about movies, they teach you things, they make you wonder. I think in a lot of ways, films can make human beings better, they can teach us a lot."

In addition to acting, Lynch is also well known for being the frontman in the band R5, which he formed with his three siblings: Rocky, Rydel, Riker, and family friend Ellington Ratliff—hence the five R's referenced in their moniker. The chart-topping band has released five EPs, and eleven singles.

Lynch has discovered a lot of growth transitioning from "an actor that your kids love to a transformative actor that you don't even recognize." While he continues to strive for shocking roles, he's also becoming an activist. Lynch notes that he's seen a lot of documentaries about climate change. When he's not focusing on acting or making music, Lynch takes his growing passion for climate awareness to his social media in hopes that he can at least educate his fans. "More people need to be aware of the world and how we're treating it."

Coat by JUUN J
Shirt by DRIES VAN NOTEN
Suit by STEPHEN F.
Shoes by LOEWE



Hat by RINALDY YUNARDI
Shirt by ALEXANDER MCQUEEN
Suit by DSQUARED2



Bow Tie by AURA TOUT VU
Coat & Suit by RESURRECTION
Shoes by TOM FORD