

Robin Wright says she wanted to create a 'hopeful' film with *Land*

By Samantha Highfill
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Credit: Daniel Power/Focus Features

When Edee (Robin Wright) loses her husband and son, she retreats to the wilderness in search of healing. What she gets is a brutal lesson in what Mother Nature has to offer. Thankfully, it's followed by a beautiful lesson in what humanity has to offer when she meets Miguel (Demian Bichir), a local man with a big heart and shared life experiences.

Edee's story is told in *Land*, Wright's feature film directorial debut. Below, Wright talks about why she wanted to create something that's "hopeful and kind."

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY: Were you looking to direct and then found this project, or did you find this product and say, "I have to direct this"?

ROBIN WRIGHT: I was definitely looking for material to direct once I got off *House of Cards*. And this one came to me. [Producer] Alynn [Stewart] said, "I don't know why. I watched your episodes that you directed on *House of Cards*, and I just felt you'd be perfect for this movie, to direct it." And it was so beautiful, because the message was about resilience, in the movie. And resilience to me means opening yourself up to something new, a new belief system, and finding faith again.

So were you always starring as well?

No. We were losing our window of time. We had 29 days to shoot this movie, and we had to capture four seasons over two years and we were running out of time and worried about, "Are we going to be able to get someone in that time and not be dealing with other schedules?" Because some actors are doing two things at the same time. And we just couldn't afford to take that risk. The producers said, "Robin, we've been talking about this movie for months in prep." And every time we talk about it, I would kind of act out the scenes. And then they started laughing. They're like, "You're acting the part. Why don't you just play it? You're here." And I was like, "Well, I'm going to be there anyway. Might as well."



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As the director, you have to bring a certain level of energy to set, but you're also playing what I'd imagine was a very emotionally draining role. Was it difficult to take on a role this dramatic while directing?

I mean, it is a job, and I had done it on *House of Cards*, a very different character, mind you, but yes. In this one, you had to get to that emotion. And I've always been the kind of actor where, when it's an emotional scene, I'm generally first take, and then I dry up after take one. So pretty much what you see in the movie, if it's an emotional scene, it was one take. It was the one take, and we moved on. Because once you go there, it's a lot. You kind of don't want to stay in it, you know what I mean?

Much of this film is either just you or you and Demián, and there's very little dialogue. What was it like to work so closely with Demián to develop such an intimate onscreen friendship?

What a gem he is. He's one of the most soulful people I've ever met, beautiful soul of a man. He's so grounded and so talented. I had seen him in *A Better Life* and I was so impressed. He's just so present and has an amazing presence on film. And you feel his soul come through when he's saying nothing. I thought, "He is made for this character because Miguel is a man of very few words." He only speaks when it's important. And being frugal with his words is something that was actually challenging for Demián because he's a chatty Cathy. He loves to talk. He's very animated with his hands and his arms when he speaks. And it was hard for him to contain himself and become this character, but we were talking, and he just said, "If you could give me just one word about this man..." I said, "He's her saint." And it's like that angel that came down and just happened to cross her path.

We see in the trailer that he also lost his family. How does that help them bond?

He went through exactly what she went through, so he knew the stages that she needed to endure. He says, "You were in my path, and I was meant to help you." And I just thought, what a beautiful message about human kindness and friendship, that we, I think, now really want to feel, because there's been so much ugliness in the last four years. People being mean and cruel and bullying, and all the negative effects of that. And I just wanted to make something hopeful and kind.

Land will be released on February 12.