

# TV Goodness

## Kristin Lehman Talks Ghost Wars and Creating Collaborative, Safe Spaces [Exclusive]

Posted by Heather M on November 8, 2017 at 8:59 pm



Photo Credit: Kristin Lehman via Twitter

One of the nice surprises of the fall season has been Syfy's *Ghost Wars*, which is a supernatural series grounded in humanity and populated in front of and behind the camera with an impressive roster of women. That includes one of my absolute favorites, *Motive*'s Kristin Lehman. Lehman started directing on that series and in *Ghost Wars*, she recurs onscreen as Marilyn, and directed two episodes this season. I spoke with her last week about the series and building collaborative, supportive cultures in television.

Lehman got involved with *Ghost Wars* through series creator Simon Barry. "Simon approached me to direct before act. I had the great fortune of Simon coming to me. [It was] such incredible generosity on his part. He's such a splendid, close friend and

mentor. He liked the work I did on *Motive* and asked if I would be interested in directing a block [of episodes],” she recalls.

“Those luxuries are not often afforded new directors, let alone female directors. Also fortuitous was [*Motive* creator]Dennis Heaton’s involvement, so I was well, well, well, acquainted with the people crafting the show. When Syfy and Netflix signed off on the directors. they knew me as an actress and said, ‘Yes,’ but they [also wanted me in the show] so I agreed. Shooting in beautiful British Columbia in the sunny summertime and getting a chance to direct with my friends was an opportunity I couldn’t pass up.”

She points to that team of Barry and Heaton as integral to the talent assembled for the production and the tone of the show. “It’s a testament to Simon and Dennis. That gathering and caliber of talent exemplifies the kind of man and creator of television Simon is,” she shares.

“Ultimately, good storytelling should be thoughtful and compelling. In my opinion, that’s a real by-product of Simon and Dennis and the writers room they collected. I feel that’s a way to tell a horror or sci-fi show if your budget can’t compete with special effects. It needs to be based in the psychological [such as] ‘How does an everyday person deal with stress?’”



**Photo Credit: Dan Power/Nomadic Pictures Corp./Syfy**

Lehman spent four years with Heaton on *Motive* and says he and Barry are of the same mind about how they build and run a set. While that’s important on a good day, it’s now more important than ever, and their reputation is reflected in their repeatability with cast and crew, “They recognize strong collaborators who influence the culture of the set. I had four extremely fruitful years with Dennis where we couldn’t have had a more healthy working environment. Simon is exactly the same in the way he gathers people and wants to work with people who are like-minded,” she says.

“[People] who understand that, yes, at the end of the day, you are making something together, and shouldn’t it be fun and fantastic and the best product you can put out there,

the best storytelling you can? [While] you're doing it, you're spending incredibly long hours with people and a degree of maturity and care for each other need to be there and those two certainly exemplify that. I would say that if asked, they would say the same about me."

With so many women on staff at every level of the show, Lehman says there wasn't a specific focus on that. "It wasn't necessarily that each day as women collaborators we thought about it. It was just something we naturally brought to it. It's just what happens when you have women at the helm or influencing the storytelling or the containers stories are told in," she points out.

That was reflected in "The Exorcism of Marcus Moon," the first episode Lehman directed, which aired two weeks ago. "It required a sensitivity between mother and son. It's a natural by-product. I really love to get into the intimacies between characters and how that advances plot and the world we're living in within the show," she says.



**Photo Credit: Kristin Lehman via Twitter**

"Exploring characters is very important to me. It's how I relate to the story. There was a nice symbiosis. That's my way...I tell stories grounded in a real place of people relating. Luvia [Peterson] and I playing mothers on the show to two daughters, that is something that was also natural. We brought our own natural sensitivities and sensibilities to that and it worked really well for everybody. We didn't set out consciously to do that." She says that the show's more intimate focus will expand outward in the episodes to come. "We're early in the world still. [Episode] 105 is pretty seriously character-based as well. The episodes eventually begin to sprawl in an exciting way that has momentum and a pace that is different from the early exploration of the town and its people," she explains.

After *Motive* wrapped last year, Lehman guested on a handful of series, including *Saving Hope* and *Rogue* and she will appear in Netflix's 2018 tent pole fantasy series *Altered Carbon*. She loved getting to do those one-offs but is ready to get back to something similar to what she had on *Motive*, where she acted, produced, and directed.

"Every show is an ensemble show, but I do love the responsibility of saying, 'You can put this on my back and I'll take us to the finish line and I'll do it with grace and kindness and goodwill and good nature,'" she explains. "That's the challenge I really love about making television and it's what I have come to know I want more of. I really, really enjoy being able to influence the culture of a show and being able to produce it and I want more of that."

*Ghost Wars* airs Thursdays at 10/9c on Syfy. Here's a sneak peek of "We Need to Talk About Abigail," a harrowing episode about what happens when the war sets its sights on the McGrath-Dufresne household.