

DISSOLVING THE LABELS

David Morse & J.T. Walker on the Healing Humanity of 'Broken Land'

Interview by Paul Salfen | AMFM Magazine *As the powerful indie drama premieres on digital platforms today*



David Morse delivers a career-highlight performance as reclusive rancher Carson Tidwell in 'Broken Land.' Photo courtesy of the production.

In the sun-baked, windswept ranchlands of South Texas, where isolation meets the invisible lines of the border, an unexpected story of grace and human connection is unfolding. J.T. Walker's feature directorial debut, *Broken Land*, arrives on digital platforms today with a quiet but undeniable force. Anchored by a masterful, understated performance from David Morse, the film follows a fearful, isolated rancher who accidentally shoots a young migrant woman crossing his land. What begins as a reluctant act of mercy evolves into something far more profound—a bond that challenges every label and assumption each character carries.

Timed perfectly with our national conversation about immigration, identity, and compassion, *Broken Land* refuses easy answers. Instead, it offers something rarer: a genuine invitation to see the person behind the label. In an exclusive conversation with AMFM Magazine, Morse and Walker opened up about the long journey to bring this story to life, the magic that happened on set, and why this film feels so necessary right now.

The Unlikely Partnership

For David Morse, whose five-decade career includes iconic turns in *St. Elsewhere*, *The Green Mile*, *The Hurt Locker*, and dozens more, the pull toward this intimate Texas story was immediate and irresistible. After viewing Walker's shorts, Morse was struck by the young filmmaker's distinctive eye. But it was the character of Carson Tidwell—the reclusive rancher at the story's center—that truly captured him.

"I saw your shorts, which were really good. And you had a really, really interesting eye for film," Morse told Walker during our conversation. "But the script... I slept on it. And this character—I

already had started working on the character. I'm, you know, I just can't help myself. I was so compelled by this man."

His representatives had the usual concerns about independent films—limited reach, uncertain futures. Morse has been down that road before. But something about this project felt different. "There's nobody who regrets this, me taking part," he says with quiet conviction. "And it's just such a beautiful movie."

Walker, making his feature debut, brought not only vision but a deep personal connection to the material. The production was a true labor of love, filmed in the raw Texas landscape with a lean, dedicated crew working in brutal heat and dust.

"I'm watching an even smaller group of people. This is a mighty, mighty group of people doing really the amount of work that a crew four times or five times their size would normally do. And I was so proud of them, every one of them..."

Morse was visibly moved recounting the experience. Watching this small team punch far above its weight stirred memories of other low-budget shoots, but this one stood apart for its spirit and results.

The Scene That Changed Everything

There was one moment on set that crystallized the film's potential for everyone present. In a lengthy, dialogue-driven sequence shot early in production (raw footage ran nearly seven minutes before editing), Morse's character encounters the young migrant woman—portrayed with breathtaking vulnerability by newcomer Jaklyn Bejarano—after she has gone into a stream. She comes to him to apologize. He offers to take her to Laredo. Then, in a devastating gesture of trust and pain, she opens her shirt and reveals a scar.

"It was so powerful even there on set," Morse remembers. "And suddenly everyone was like, 'Okay, this is a movie.'" Bejarano's performance in that moment was transcendent. "Particularly at that moment, it was Jaklyn because Jaklyn was just killing it in that moment."

The scene exemplifies the film's core strength: long, patient stretches of human interaction where transformation happens not through spectacle, but through presence, listening, and the courage to be truly seen.

Presence, Discovery, and Terror

Both men speak passionately about the creative process. For Morse, the key is rigorous preparation followed by radical presence. "When we get to the set, there's orchestrating it. But then I'd like to stop thinking. I don't want to be thinking. I just want to be there. I just want to be present." He credits Bejarano's own deep presence as a gift that made discovery possible. "What you're trying to do is be surprised, you discover things. You don't want to come in with your ideas and holding on to your ideas because it doesn't really serve you."

Walker describes his directorial experience with refreshing honesty: a constant undercurrent of "terror," but also a profound bodily intuition. "I don't think I keep in mind, but terror. ... But

also there's a feeling that I have about the material that it's maybe having it in mind. Having it in my body is more like it. ... Is this creating the feeling that I have in my body?" When that feeling is embodied on screen, he knows they're on the right path.

“*The whole hope that I have is that the labels dissolve during the course of the film, and by the end of the movie... this person and this person... they connected as individuals. They don't represent, they're not a label—they are a person.*”

The Message That Matters

In an era defined by labels—immigrant, rancher, Border Patrol agent, “other”—*Broken Land* offers a radical alternative: the possibility that two people who “would never in a million years imagine they would have a connection” can find common ground, empathy, and even healing.

Morse articulates it beautifully: “Everybody in this movie is bringing such humanity to it, and it's in the script. And I think it's what JT really would like is just that human connection between two people who would never in a million years imagine they would have a connection. And just seeing how that happens between them and how it affects the people around them, I think is part of the magic of this movie.”

Walker is even more direct about the film's aspiration. He hopes viewers—especially those quick to judge from behind their screens—will watch and find their preconceptions gently challenged. “The labels dissolve during the course of the film... everyone out there is an individual and deserves to be treated as an individual and as a human, and not as just a representative of whatever demographic group you're talking about.”

It's a message delivered not through didacticism, but through lived experience on screen. The result is a film that entertains, moves, and lingers—exactly the kind of storytelling AMFM Magazine champions.

See It Now

Broken Land is now available on major digital platforms including Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, and others through Well Go USA. Whether you're drawn by David Morse's always-compelling presence, J.T. Walker's sensitive direction, or the urgent timeliness of its themes, this is one film you won't soon forget—and one you'll want to discuss long after the credits roll.

As Paul Salfen noted in closing the interview: it's impossible not to talk about this movie with somebody. In a divided time, that may be the most hopeful thing of all.

AMFM Magazine continues its commitment to curating stories with a conscience—stories that illuminate our shared humanity through the power of independent film and visionary artists.

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