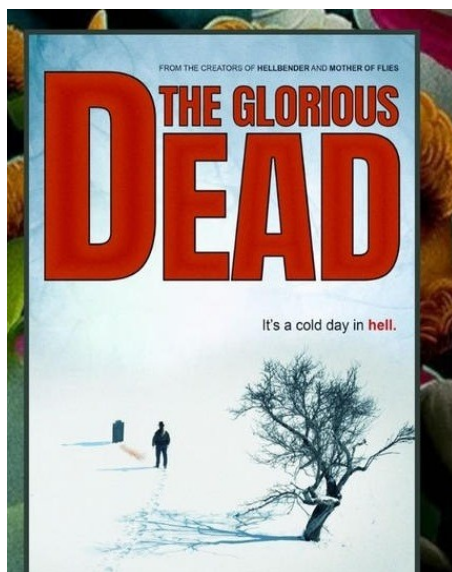


Don't Hesitate

The Adams Family Walks The Glorious Dead Into Fantastic Fest

After the witchcraft of Mother of Flies, Toby Poser, Lulu Adams, and Zelda Adams brought a snowbound small-town apocalypse to Austin — and told Paul Salfen why the next picture is already rolling.

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine



Official key art for *The Glorious Dead* — “It’s a cold day in hell.” Festival art courtesy the filmmakers / Fantastic Fest coverage.

A GLORIOUS DAY IN AUSTIN

Fantastic Fest would not be Fantastic Fest without the Adams Family. That is not a slogan. It is the weather in Austin every September: Alamo Drafthouse South Lamar packed with people who already know the last name, and still have no idea what they are walking into.

This year the surprise was *The Glorious Dead*, the U.S. premiere of the latest feature from Wonder Wheel Productions — writer-directors John Adams and Toby Poser, with daughters Lulu Adams and Zelda Adams wearing every other hat the budget will not buy. World-premiered at Fantasia in July, the snowbound apocalyptic dark comedy arrived in Texas as a finished object and left it with a 2027 Shudder pickup, the family’s fourth collaboration with the streamer after *Hellbender*, *Hell Hole*, and *Mother of Flies*.

Paul Salfen caught Poser, Lulu, and Zelda in the middle of the week, still riding the Q&A. The film had just been unveiled to the exact room they make movies for.

“It’s so fun to see it unveiled to the audience,” one of them said, “because now people kind of know to expect something really, really cool. They don’t know what they’re getting into.”

That is the Adams brand in a sentence. The fans come hungry. The family still gets to spring the trap.

"It's just so special getting to feel the energy of the movie through an audience," Poser said. "It's also really nerve-wracking. It's scary, but it's a great time. And the Q&A was so wonderful. People have been so kind to us."

Zelda nodded at the room itself. *"These are the eyes that we want. Everyone here just breathes and loves film, whatever part they're involved with. It's so nice to have their eyes and thoughts and opinions on it."*



Toby Poser as Sheriff Deb McCloud, mid-shift in a world that will not stay buried. Still from The Glorious Dead. Photo: Wonder Wheel Productions / festival still.

PLAYING DRESS-UP ON THE BIG SCREEN

Salfen has spent enough festivals asking actors whether the work is as fun as civilians imagine. With this family the answer does not require a rescue edit. They write the parts. They wear the skins. They shoot in the yard.

"We've been talking about how cool it is to be able to wear different skins, play different characters," they told him. "We get to write our own characters too. So it's like playing dress-up, but on the big screen."

They have been doing it long enough that the panic has been sanded off the process. Work hard. Have fun. Move the camera. *"We've got it down pretty much."*

Poser grinned at the monster-suit question. *"Anything that they want me to play. Build something with my dad. Monster suit. I just love it. And I love where we live as well. So it's so nice to keep filming different things in our backyard."*

The backyard, this time, came with snow. Upstate New York in winter is not a soundstage courtesy. It is weather you have to schedule around, and weather that makes blood look like a miracle.

It's like playing dress-up, but on the big screen.

— THE ADAMS FAMILY

NO REST FOR THE WICKED

The Glorious Dead did not arrive as a three-year development package. It arrived because the family had a winter, a window, and a hangover from something more personal.

"Coming off Mother of Flies, which was super personal, we kind of wanted a palate cleanser and wanted to go right into it — no rest for the wicked," Poser said. "We knew we had the winter. We had Zelda for a short time. We had Lulu home for a rare couple of months because she's usually all over the world. And so we were like, we're making a winter movie, and it's going to be about a small-town community, which is what we are. And it was just what we wanted to say at this moment in time in 2026."

The premise is a sheriff's day off that refuses to stay off. Poser plays Deb McCloud, the only law left in a sleepy, snowed-in hamlet in upstate New York. Zelda is her eager deputy, Mikey. John Adams — usually all over these frames — is mostly a ghost this time: Deb's husband Hank, three months gone, living in photographs. Lulu takes the athletic work, including time inside a bulky creature suit that still has to act.

By midmorning the town is reporting vanishings. Blood comes out of residential taps. Flesh-monsters move in the woods. The dead do not stay down. Reviews out of Fantasia and Fantastic Fest have reached for Fargo, The X-Files, Pontypool, even a deadpan cousin of The Dead Don't Die. The family will take the comparisons and keep the local weather.



A cold geometry: footprints, a winter tree, a stone in the snow. Still from The Glorious Dead. Photo: Wonder Wheel Productions / festival still.

Salfen asked what they wanted people to carry out of the theater. Poser did not dodge into lore.

“Right now there’s a lot of division in the country,” she said. “No matter what you’re feeling, there just seems to be a lot of norms being defined, and there’s a lot of division. There’s exclusion, and there’s a distrust and fear I think among us that a lot of us are feeling for various reasons from different angles. So this was really a conceptual, visual, emotional conversation about what it feels like in America — in particular in a small town where everyone knows each other and the rule of law has just gone to the end.”

Zelda, playing Deb’s deputy, put the uniform on and felt the walk change.

“I play a cop in it,” Zelda said. “It’s so weird how you put on that uniform and all of a sudden you walk different. Like — oh. This is what it feels like.”

This was a conceptual, visual, emotional conversation about what it feels like in America.

— TOBY POSER

CEREAL, DUCT TAPE, AND THE SUIT

Favorite scenes, in this family, are never the ones that look most expensive. They are the ones that still smell like the house.

“I love watching you guys talk with each other. I love your little dialogues,” one of them said. “And probably the one in the kitchen — kind of frantically running around the house looking for tape. Who knows one reason has duct tape. I wrote that one.”

Zelda went back to the first morning they rolled. *“I love the opening scene where you pour me some cereal. That was the first scene that I actually shot in the movie, and it was so fun getting to learn my character with you in that little cold kitchen.”*

Poser lit up talking about the creature work. *“I loved watching where the monster shoots, too, because Lulu is a great athlete. Both the girls come from serious soccer backgrounds, but to watch Lulu — how she moved in that suit, which is so bulky and yet show a character — was a really neat trick of art.”*

Someone joked that the suit at least kept her warm. On this set, that is not a small courtesy.

MAKE THE MOVIE YOU WANT TO MAKE

The Alamo hallway at Fantastic Fest is full of people who have watched the Adams model from the cheap seats and decided they could do it with their own cousins. Salfen asked what the family would tell those filmmakers before the romance curdles.

“Right now is such a great time to get out there and make movies,” they said. “You can shoot any sort of film — found-footage, whatever you want — on an iPhone. They’re more affordable. There’s technology out there that you can use now. Work with your friends. Work with your family. Don’t listen to what people say about keep your friends and family away from your business. No. You should work with them because it’s fun, and you know them, and you know the kind of characters they play well. And it’s really fun and bonding to work with the people that you love.”

The second half of the sermon is about scarcity as style.

“Whatever you write, whatever budget you’re working with — just make it. That will make your own film as well. You will become so creative, and probably so original, around what you have to create with whatever budget you have. And that is your baby: what you have to work with.”

Then the line that should be taped to every film-school door. *“Make the movie you want to make. Sometimes people want to make a movie just like someone else. No. That was someone else’s story. I want to know what you want to tell. We’re all creative, and I like to see the original stuff.”*

Don’t listen to what people say about keep your friends and family away from your business.

— THE ADAMS FAMILY

WHEN YOU’RE COLD, YOU’RE COLD

Salfen wanted the private cue — the sentence they say to themselves when it is time to jump off the bridge, get in the suit, or do the scene that will look insane in the cut.

Winter answered first.

“When it’s winter, you’re like: I am cold,” Poser said. “When you’re cold, I have a tendency to be like, okay, did I get it in that shot? Because if I’m done, let’s move on to the next thing. Because when I’m cold, I’m cold.”

The daughters have been hearing that voice since they were small. Someone smiled at a six-year-old version already calling cut. Lulu took the rest of the sermon.

“I have a no-hesitation,” Lulu said. “I think I get stressed once I hesitate. And we did a lot of bridge jumping when we were younger. I learned: don’t hesitate when it gets crazy. So just don’t. Just do it.”



The machine at rest: John Adams, Zelda Adams, and Toby Poser. File photograph. The family shoots under Wonder Wheel Productions out of the Catskills.

NIRVANA, JEANS, AND A SHORT ACROSS TOWN

They have been coming to this festival long enough that the anniversary math surprised even them. Seven years. The first movie. Time doing what time does.

The week is not only *The Glorious Dead*. Zelda also has a short in the building: Elaine Frost's *By Yourself* — a camping-horror piece the family described on the carpet as an influencer-in-the-woods story — programmed with *Bloody Tennis*. For a clan that usually travels as a closed circuit, a role outside the house is its own little premiere.

"Normally Toby is the one that's always in so many films at a festival," the younger Adams said. "Now I'm excited to see what it feels like to act in a film outside of my family."

What else is on the itinerary? Eating. Watching. Talking. Thrifting for jeans. The barbecues, they swore, are fire.

"It's literally good for your heart," they said. "If you're in the file, then you come to Fantastic Fest. It's like nirvana."

THE NEXT ONE IS URBAN

Salfen did the forbidden new-parent question: when is the next one? He already knew the answer. This family does not wait.

“Deep in it,” they said. “Because we’re right in the festival circuit. We’re just not in the waiting. We’re shooting something while we travel, and it’s going to be super different. Very urban, really gritty. I’m calling it our J.Lo. And Dad will be back for that.”

The pressure to top the last picture is real. They have built a festival family that actually wants to like what they make, which is a sweet problem and a dangerous one.

“It’s easy to put pressure on ourselves because we’ve developed such a family at all these festivals, and we really want them to like what we make,” Poser said. “But I think we also understand that we have to make something that feels right for us at the right moment. The Glorious Dead felt like the right thing to make after Mother of Flies. Now with our next one, I think it is just what feels natural.”

The daughters put a finer point on the method. Each film has to talk about something new in the house. If the experiment fails, they still leave with the lesson. They listen to the artists around them and steal the courage, not the plot.

“We have a responsibility, I think, to ourselves as creative people, to flex new muscles and try new things, whether people like them or not,” Poser said. “It’s important to just build your foundation. And we have fun doing it.”

Salfen closed the way this magazine likes to close: congratulations, and stay tuned. The family pointed at the urban picture already in motion and at a festival that still feels like the right room.

“Stay tuned,” they said. “We got more for you at Fantastic Fest 2026.”

The rest of the world gets The Glorious Dead when Shudder opens the door in 2027. Until then the snow stays on the mountain, the duct tape stays in the kitchen drawer, and the Adams Family — as usual — is already somewhere else, not hesitating.

FIND THE ADAMS FAMILY

The Glorious Dead — U.S. premiere, Fantastic Fest 2026 (Austin). World premiere, Fantasia 2026. Streaming on Shudder in 2027 (date TBA). Fourth Shudder collaboration after Hellbender, Hell Hole, and Mother of Flies.

Wonder Wheel Productions · Instagram @adams.family.films · @tobyposer · @zeldadams · Lulu Adams

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