

# ***The Black Phone and When The Crawdads Sing***

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Terror strikes when *The Black Phone* rings and a woman fights for survival in *When The Crawdads Sing*.



Source: Supplied

## ***The Black Phone***

You will be clasping your seat from start to finish with this excellent heart-pounding thriller from director Scott Derrickson.

In 2012, filmmakers Scott Derrickson and C. Robert Cargill partnered with producer Jason Blum and actor Ethan Hawke to make *Sinister*, widely considered the most terrifying film of the 21st century thus far. The team was eager to work together again, and as Derrickson began exploring options, he revisited Joe Hill's bestselling short story *The Black Phone*, which was released in 2005 as part of his short story collection, *20th Century Ghosts*.

The film follows 13-year-old Finney, who is abducted by an infamous child abductor and serial killer known as The Grabber in a small town in northern Denver. Locked in the killer's basement, Finney discovers that he can hear the killer's previous victims through a disconnected black rotary phone on the wall.

*The Black Phone* was adapted from a short story crafted by Stephen King's son Joe Hi, whose bestselling short story was

released in 2005 as part of his short story collection, *20th Century Ghosts*.

Derrickson had always had an interest in creating a film that explored the emotional complexity and pain of childhood and the ability of children to overcome tragedy.

The result is a film that transcends genre. “Scott and I believe that great genre films take a genre that you already love and tell that story, and intercept it with a different genre,” Cargill says. “Here, we wanted to write a coming-of-age film that got interrupted by a horror movie.”

“Growing up and feeling a lot of fear as a kid and understanding that emotion, my love for horror ultimately originated there,” Derrickson says. “Watching horror and making horror, for me, has always been about confronting something that I’m afraid of. I love the non-denial in the genre. Looking into the eyes of something unspoken or that’s unspeakably scary in the world or in nature, I’ve always found it an incredibly cathartic experience, both as a viewer and as an artist.”

## ***When the Crawdads Sing***

If you are looking for a superb coming-of-age story, a murder mystery and a heartbreaking romance, *Where The Crawdads Sing* offers a well-crafted film from director Olivia Newman.

It tells the story of Kya, an abandoned girl who raised herself to adulthood in the dangerous marshlands of North Carolina. For years, rumours of the “Marsh Girl” haunted Barkley Cove, isolating the sharp and resilient Kya from her community. Drawn to two young men from town, Kya opens herself to a new and startling world; but when one of them is found dead, she is immediately cast by the community as the main suspect.

As the case unfolds, the verdict as to what actually happened becomes increasingly unclear, threatening to reveal the many secrets that lay within the marsh.

For this story, director Olivia Newman assembled a majority-female production crew – an extreme rarity. In addition to screenwriter Lucy Alibar and producers Reese Witherspoon and Lauren Neustadter, not to mention production executive Elizabeth Gabler, the team included director of photography Polly Morgan, production designer Sue Chan, and costume designer Mirren Gordon-Crozier. Editor Alan Edward Bell and composer Mychael Danna round out the production team.

The film offers splendid performances from British actor Daisy Edgar-Jones as Kaya, well supported by Taylor John Smith and British actor Harris Dickinson as the two men who fall in love with her, on David Strathairn who fights for her freedom.

“Where the Crawdads Sing is a filmmaker’s dream come true of a story,” says director Olivia Newman. “It has this incredible female heroine at the center of it that we’ve never seen on screen. She’s vulnerable and emotional but also strong and resilient. And her story straddles multiple genres – there’s this beautiful romance. There is a murder mystery. There is a survivalist tale. When I read the book and then the script, I thought it captured all these different worlds and elements of stories that I just couldn’t wait to dig into as a filmmaker.”

*Crawdads Sing* is Delia Owen’s first novel, her first attempt to break free from non-fiction writing. A literary phenomenon, the book skyrocketed to the top of the bestseller lists when Witherspoon picked it for Reese’s Book Club – and its record-breaking run has lasted over 191 weeks. With over 12 million copies sold in total, it was the top-selling book of 2019 and 2020 and set a new record for the most weeks at #1 on *The New York Times* hardcover fiction bestsellers list

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## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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