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Lech Majewski on ‘Valley of the Gods,’ Navajo Mythology, Josh Hartnett, Keir Dullea

By [Ed Meza](#)

[Ed Meza](#) @edmezavar



CREDIT: Krzysztof Wesołowski/Camerimage

TORUN, Poland – In his latest work, “The Valley of the Gods,” director [Lech Majewski](#) explores the ancient mythology of a downtrodden people and the absurd wealth of the world’s richest man in a surreal vision of modern America.

The film screened at the EnergaCamerimage Intl. Film Festival as part of special showcase honoring Majewski, who received the Special [Camerimage](#) Directing Award.

“Valley of the Gods,” which stars [Josh Hartnett](#), John Malkovich, Keir Dullea, Bérénice Marlohe and John Rhys-Davies, presents the clash between the ancient civilization of the Navajo and the ultra-modern, high-tech world of multi-billionaires.

The Navajo “live in really very harsh conditions and their territory is surrounded by this super civilization, the Roman Empire of today, with this epitome of technical innovation,” Majewski told *Variety*. “I don’t know whether there is another place in the world that has this kind of absolute opposite sides.”

Majewski contrasted his film and its fantastical themes with Hollywood's ever growing crop of comic book movies.

"I'm always interested in ancient societies and mythologies. I'm interested in archetypes. I'm interested in what is the underlying foundation of us humans and the juxtaposition of this with what is offered today and how bastardized versions of the myths are sold via the box office, those endless reproductions of comic characters. No one wants to try anything new, everything has to be tried and proven."

On his choice of Hartnett for the role of a struggling writer who visits both worlds, Majewski said: "I wanted him because he transpires a certain intensity. He has this quality of an old-school star and at the same time he has a little bit of Indian features himself, there is a little drop of blood in him that is coming from this side and since my story was really Navajo mythology based, I wanted the writer who writes about it to be a little bit connected on some level."

Majewski had to get permission to shoot parts of "Valley of the Gods" in Monument Valley, Utah, on Navajo Nation land. Navajo actors also appear in the movie.

"I had to be accepted, also with my screenplay and with my attitude towards them. Funnily enough one of them said to me, 'You are a white guy but this film as I see it is told from our point of view and this is the first time I see a movie told from our standpoint, from how we understand the world.' This made me extremely happy. ... It was really the greatest thing I could hear."

For Hartnett, working with Majewski was a novelty.

"The process of making this film was unlike anything I've ever done before, obviously," the actor said at a press conference at [Camerimage](#). "Lech is not necessarily interested in over explaining the film to anyone, and I think that includes the actors."

He added, "My hope in being part of this was to be a part of something that was intense and personal and hopefully something that stands the test of time and continues to speak to people."

Hartnett praised the director's singular vision. "I don't think I've ever worked with anyone that I felt had such control over what it is they're doing. Often there are compromises being made in film because of the expense, because of the eclectic nature, that a director will be unhappy with, and with Lech, I didn't experience that. He did what he wanted to do and I admire that greatly. It's very rare to get the opportunity to work with someone who has that sort of control."

The film also marks a return to this big screen for Dullea, who played astronaut Dave Bowman in "2001: A Space Odyssey." Majewski admitted that there are some allusions to the Stanley Kubrick classic in his film.

"I always wanted to work with Keir and finally I managed to work with him on this project. He kept saying that this was exactly 50 years after he did '2001.'" Dullea pointed out to Majewski that he had aged 50 years on Jupiter, so the director had seemingly plucked him straight from the gas giant. "So the coincidences were happening of course."