



Santa Clarita Diet Creator Invites KHTS On Set Ahead Of Second Season

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(L to R) KHTS Owner Carl Goldman, KHTS Senior Staff Writer Caleb Lunetta and Santa Clarita Diet Show Creator Victor Fresco.

Months before its premiere was set for March 23, KHTS was invited onto the set of Santa Clarita Diet to meet Drew Barrymore, Timothy Olyphant and the rest of the cast and crew of the popular Netflix show based in the Santa Clarita Valley. This is the story of that experience.

Like many of you who have grown up in this area, I've had my fleeting fantasies of making it "big" one day in Hollywood. Being so close to Hollywood, with many of my friends' parents working in the industry and regularly seeing the likes of Mountasia, Glen Park, or Hart High, I think most of us would say that idea has crossed our minds.

However, and again I do not think I'm alone in this, what makes my dream so ridiculous is that back in October of last year I was invited onto the "Santa Clarita Diet" set at Santa Clarita Studios. And, at the age of 23, this was the first movie or TV show set I had ever been on.

For clarification, I have seen production sets before. I used to ride my bike home back from Meadow's Elementary everyday and would, from a long way off, see the "Power Rangers" being filmed in Glen Park. Or the legendary Kobe Bryant filming one of his McDonald's commercials there on the basketball courts. I would like to think that anyone who grew up in the SCV has had one of these experiences at one point or another.

However, I have never walked onto a studio set, been asked if I "needed anything," given a chair beside the director and actors and witnessed exactly how movies and television are made.

And because of this new experience of actually being on set and not straining my eyes from hundreds of yards to get a glimpse of The Mamba, let me say this: if that dream of making it to the big screen ever comes up

again, it will be through an entirely different lens of awe and respect for what the people in the entertainment industry do.

Walking onto the frigid Santa Clarita Studio set, I saw two things that altered the way I will view movies and my Netflix binge shows forever and both were unscripted, unplanned but, nevertheless, the epitomic example of why these casts and crews on these sets are “professionals.”

Beginning with the actors and actresses on set, it wasn't that they delivered their lines to perfection or that highly complex stunts were being conducted.

It was that Drew Barrymore or Timothy Olyphant never sat down.

Whether they were rehearsing their lines, asking the director about what they felt could be different or better about the next take. Or, in the case of Barrymore, being with her actual children on set, the actors were at work endlessly (keeping in mind that on this particular day, shooting had wrapped the previous night at 1 a.m.)

I might be in the minority here, but I didn't understand that when I'm watching a movie or TV show that each and every scene is not only the product of hours and hours worth of takes for a brief 30 second part in the project, but that they run every scene over and over again, expecting the actors and actresses to be perfect every time.

Not only that, but I learned “that being on set” means that from the top actor or actress down to the lone catering guy, is like being a single note in a symphony. Everyone is shuffling around, hitting their marks, tirelessly working and never complaining.

And what comes out is something like “The Santa Clarita Diet.”

Secondly, I've seen a number of shows over the last two decades that try to represent Santa Clarita: Heroes, 24, Freaks and Geeks etc. But never have I thought I've seen Santa Clarita as accurately portrayed as I did on the set of “Santa Clarita Diet.”

As I sat with my station's co-owner, Carl Goldman, behind the director and script supervisor, I watched the cast and crew go to work in “the kitchen,” the dark “hallway” and “door” we came down to reach our on-set seats.

Then the “sun” turned on.

I had not noticed when I first entered, but when the stage lights came on, I realized I had not entered through a hallway, but rather the lights illuminated “the side yard.” They had made an exact replica of every side yard in Santa Clarita.

The yellowish cinder block stacked just above eye-level; high enough to not see over, but just tall enough to see kids able to boost themselves up and over on their elbows. And of course, it was complete with the three Santa Clarita Waste Management cans, A/C fan and two hedges that no one takes care of.

Coming into the “house” was similar to walking through the “side yard”: everything was Santa Clarita. The kitchen had the pristine granite countertops except for that one surface, which has every bill, SCV magazine and homework assignment on it; white cabinets that compliment the rest of the furniture in the houses open layout; reed filled IKEA pots for decor; and pictures of the Hammond family decorated the walls.

As hard as Barrymore and Olyphant worked to portray themselves as Santa Clarita parents, the set designers demonstrated how much they cared about a sense of realism by making the house look exactly like those houses I grew up visiting in Stevenson Ranch.

After watching the tireless work of all those on set, Victor Fresco, creator, writer and producer of “Santa Clarita Diet”, sat down with me and talked about this attention to detail and about the show’s respect and close relationship it has with the Santa Clarita Valley.

“We’re all over in places like Newhall, Sierra Highway, nearby real estate offices, local schools, and we’ve mentioned Magic Mountain,” said Fresco. “The people in Santa Clarita have really welcomed us, and we try to have as little impact as possible in the neighborhoods we’ve been in. I mean, our interactions with the people from Santa Clarita has always been delightful.”

And according to Fresco, fans of the show both here in Santa Clarita and around the world, can see how the Hammond family continues to cope with those external factors, as well as the internal struggles in keeping their family together.

“In this second season, (the Hammonds) are now in full mode adaptation: how do they find a steady source of ‘worthy food,’ the noose is tightening around their neck because what they’re doing is dangerous, and how do they help their daughter Abby who is in this environment where a lot of craziness is happening around her,” said Fresco. “They all must deal with the two important elements in this season: the first being how do they get Sheila the food, and the second is how do they not get caught.”

However, while the character’s relationships with the community might change, one thing that remains consistent is Joel and Sheila’s relationship with one another.

“I think at the heart of the show is that Joel is ‘all in’ and was from the beginning; it was difficult for him but he never questioned their marriage or his love for her,” said Fresco. “Joel basically told himself, ‘If this is where she’s taking us, this is where we’re going,’ and I think she feels the same way about him.”

And It’s this story of love and compassion between the members of the Hammond family that was the final detail which solidified the authenticity of Santa Clarita Diet in terms of its accuracy and representation of the town it’s named after.

“She’s the one that has changed, but Joel is along for this crazy ride that he never signed on for, and the heart of the show is their unconditional love for one another and their family,” said Fresco.

“No one is going anywhere.”