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## Loud and clear, proud and queer

A profile of Hollywood hotshot Kevin Williamson BY ANDY MANGELS

Ask most adults in the real world who Kevin Williamson is, and you're likely to be met with a blank stare. But ask any teen-ager or any adult in the reel world of Hollywood and you'll get a litany of answers. Chief among them is that Kevin Williamson revitalized the horror film industry by writing films such as *Scream* and *Scream 2*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, and *The Faculty*. He also helped propel teen television drama and the fledgling WB Network to both ratings heights and social responsibility with his first television series, *Dawson's Creek*.

Most importantly to the queer audience, Williamson is an openly gay screenwriter—and arguably the hottest scribe in Hollywood—who is using his success and clout to entertain and influence the youthful generation.

Born in New Bern, S.C., Williamson aspired to be a filmmaker like his movie idols Steven Spielberg and John Carpenter. He faced a turning point in his life in high school: a teacher who was determined to crush his dreams. When he read aloud a story about date rape in an English class, the teacher roared at him to sit down.

"She just yanked it out of my hands, and tore it up," Williamson recalls. "She said, 'You can't write, you're from the sticks of North Carolina, you are illiterate, you're ignorant, you can't speak, your diction is terrible, you can't articulate yourself. Just give up. Just go get into fast foods. You're never going to be a writer. Your voice shouldn't be heard!'"

After years of believing his teacher and working as a struggling actor in New York and Hollywood, Williamson took a class in screenwriting at UCLA and joined a writers group. It was there that he penned *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, a dark comedy about a hateful teacher and the students who confronted her, which in 1999 became his directorial debut, marking closure for the trauma of Williamson's youth.

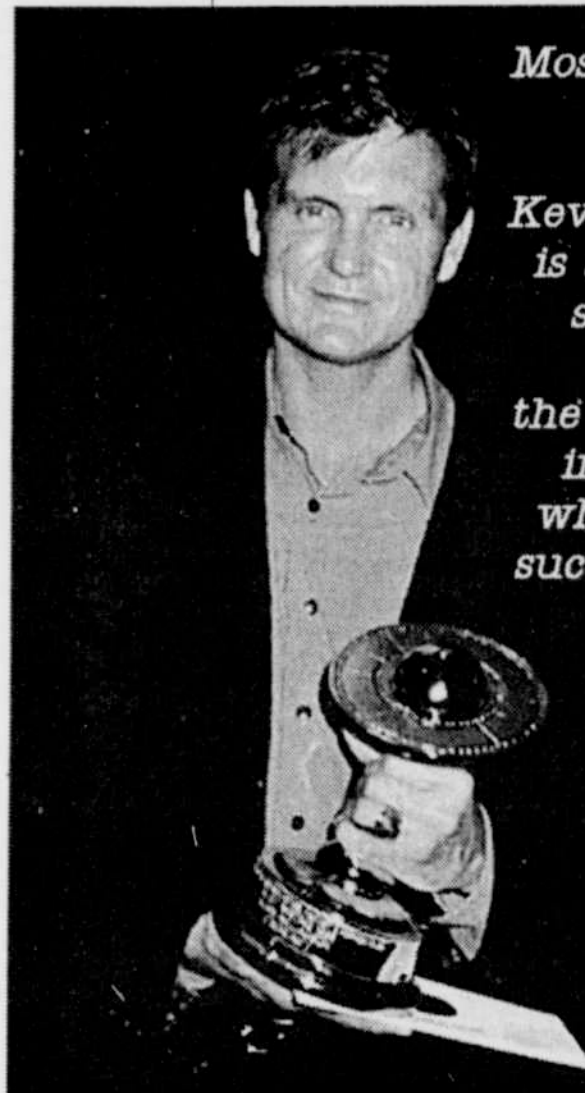
While in the writers group, Williamson also conceived the *Scream* trilogy. When the first *Scream* script was bought in a fierce Hollywood

bidding war, he became the new hot property in town. The astonishing \$100 million-plus successes of *Scream* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer* solidified his credentials in Tinsel-

story line on *Dawson's Creek* in which one of the main characters, teen-ager Jack McPhee (played by Kerr Smith), came out of the closet to friends and family. Williamson also publicly came out, in interviews with the *New York Daily News* and *The Advocate*, telling the latter that he "wanted to explore the complexities of a young boy coming to terms with his homosexuality, very much the way I did in a small town."

Although Williamson's second television series, ABC's *Wasteland* (also featuring a gay lead character), didn't fare well in the ratings, Williamson is still hot in the market. *Scream 3*, based on his treatment and characters, is an \$82 million hit, and he's busy at work on several new film projects. He's supervising and will direct a romantic comedy called *Her Leading Man*, in which a gay man tries to help refashion a straight man Cyrano-style to win back his girlfriend. And he's working on an action thriller that reportedly has an AIDS researcher as its main character.

In the six years since he sold his first screenplay, 34-year-old Williamson has proven his passion in Hollywood and has worked his way into an elite group of writers whose names will sell movie tickets and draw television ratings. The American public has recognized what his English teacher did not—that Kevin Williamson's voice should indeed be heard.



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town, but Williamson wasn't content to ride on horror. He had already sold the WB on a new teen drama series about friends growing up in the fictional town of Capeside, Mass.

*Dawson's Creek* debuted with huge ratings and great reviews, and the autobiographical elements of the story lines made Williamson an unofficial cast member in most press stories.

In February 1998, after having gay and lesbian references in almost all of his projects, Williamson initiated a



FROM SCREAM TO DAWSON'S CREEK:  
AN UNAUTHORIZED TAKE ON THE PHENOMENAL CAREER  
OF KEVIN WILLIAMSON

By Andy Mangels. Renaissance Books, 2000; \$16.95 softcover.

Anyone who's a fan of Kevin Williamson, the most famous openly gay screenwriter alive today, will surely find much to enjoy in this thorough look at his career. It certainly helps that author Andy Mangels shares his subject's passion for classic horror films and is well-versed in the nuances of the genre.

The first fourth of the book examines Williamson's early years, his development as a writer and his brief detour into acting. Remarkably, nearly everything Williamson has done in his life seems to have contributed to his current success. He is one of those fortunate beings who figured out his life's path while he was just a little boy spending his Saturdays at the local cinema, staring at the big screen and daring to imagine his own road to Hollywood.

In the latter sections of the book, Mangels scrutinizes each of Williamson's films and television series—and includes eight pages of

color photos—offering complete cast and crew profiles, as well as a guide to the first year's episodes of *Dawson's Creek*. These chapters also fill in details about Williamson's busy life after his career went into overdrive.

Based on numerous interviews and much research, this book could well inspire some other wannabe writers daring to dream their own happily-ever-after plots.

—Oriana Green