

## 4. Ross Lynch's Killer Instincts

ROSS LYNCH was born in 1995, one year after Jeffrey Dahmer was murdered in prison while serving 16 life sentences. Dahmer is among the most infamous figures of modern times, but Lynch wasn't familiar with him when he was cast to play him in the new film *My Friend Dahmer*. "You hear about serial killers and think it's a terrible thing," he says, "but Dahmer went the extra mile. It was shocking."

And yet, Lynch's distance from his subject—a gay necrophile who raped, slayed, and dismembered 17 males between 1978 and 1991—allowed the 21-year-old actor to approach the man behind the monster with less judgment. "You have to put yourself in the person's world," he says, "and his was very isolated. A big thing for me was the question you'd ask about any killer: Is it nature or nurture?"

Origin stories are de rigueur in superhero cinema, but it's rare to see a project like *My Friend Dahmer*, director Marc Meyers's adaptation of the graphic novel by John "Derf" Backderf, who went to high school with Dahmer in the 1970s before his suppressed queerness led to grisly violence. For Lynch, a Disney Channel alum now on tour with his band R5, the movie offers hope that sinister paths might be redirected through intervention. "Maybe we can make better efforts with people who seem out of place," he says. "Maybe we can step in and avoid creating more Jeffrey Dahmers."

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