



Director/Writer/Actor Interview:

NATE BARLOW Tells TALES FROM BEYOND

By Owen Keehnen



Actor/Director/Writer Nate Barlow didn't know quite what to expect when he and fellow actor/directors (Russell Scott, Josh Austin, and Eric Manning) decided to tackle making a chapter horror film in 2003. It was decided that each would direct and star in various segments. The entire process of production, post production, and eventual distribution (by Anthem Pictures) took three years but the end result seemed well worth the hassles. 'TALES FROM BEYOND' starring Adam West (as the mysterious bookseller whose shop frames all four stories) has won Best Picture Awards at the 2004 Shocker Fest and the 2004 ShriekFest and hopes to find very green pastures in home DVD rental and sales. Recently I had a chance to candidly chat with Nate about TALES FROM BEYOND and the arduous journey from shooting nights and weekends to finding a distributor, the influence of horror films on his work, and of

course Adam West.

Nate, why not start is off with a visual and describe the room where you are answering these questions?

I'm in the office in my apartment - white walls covered with movie posters and a gold album that a friend gave to me. Behind me is a bookcase filled with DVDs and a rack full of CDs. In front of me, there is a collection of office and video-related machines, including, of course, my computer.

Let's talk about 'Tales From Beyond'. How did the original concept for the movie differ from the finished project?

The initial concept was for the four writer-directors (myself, Eric Manning, Josh Austin and Russell Scott) to direct a series of low-budget "down-and-dirty" shorts. Each month we would pick a new genre and all four of us would shoot our own piece inside that genre, thus giving us a breadth of experience in a short period of time. Instead, we ended up shooting one feature comprised of four interconnected shorts

with a lot higher production value (and for a lot more money) that took twenty months to produce- and another two years to be released!

I want to hear how Adam West came to be involved in the film as the introducer of the tales?

From the moment we decided to interconnect the four stories to form a feature, we had wanted to attach a name actor to one of the bookstore roles in order to enhance our marketability. So when it came time to cast the sequence, we put a notice out via Breakdown Services (the same service used by all the major studios and television networks to solicit submissions from agents and managers), keeping our fingers crossed that the notice might resonate with somebody. Since actor's reps work off commission, ultra-low-budget films such as ours rarely generate any traction with them- there simply isn't much money to be made for their clients (and, hence, themselves). But we got lucky! The breakdown caught the eye of Adam West's agent and she submitted his headshot. We sent her the script; she liked it and passed it on to Adam, who also liked it! (On set, Adam would later pull me aside and tell me that he loved my words. What a compliment!



And as a devout Batman fan I need to know: what is something about Mr. West that surprised you?

He not so much surprised me as impressed me. He was a complete gentleman and an absolute professional. No ego. A complete joy with which to work. And very spry!

I was reading something about your making of the 'Tales From Beyond' where you mentioned the importance of having a good amount of money for post production costs. Could you explain that a bit more clearly for all the filmmakers out there?

I worked crew on low-budget indie films for years. A mistake I saw repeated over and over was that the filmmakers, either in a desperate attempt to get the film in the can or in the misguided notion that they could do a great job on their own for free in post, would spend all their money on shooting. With no funds left for post-production, the film, if completed at all, would look and sound terrible. So budgeting properly is critical for creating a good movie.

What exactly was the process from finishing the film to getting it picked up for distribution by Anthem Pictures?

We started off by sending submissions to various festivals, eventually playing five and winning two (ShockerFest and ShriekFest, receiving the awards on the same night in 2004). That gave us the ammunition to land a producer's rep, Strategic Film Partners, in mid-2005. It took almost another year before they were able to hook us up with Anthem, and then another three months to work out the details of the contract.



Nate, if someone wants to pick up a copy of Tales From Beyond what is the easiest way to go about doing that?

Probably the best way is online; I've seen it listed on numerous sites, including Amazon. But many brick-and-mortar stores carry the disc, too

So if you were going to make a 'Tales From Beyond 2' what are some of the things you would do make the entire film production process easier this time around?

Having a film already out on DVD alone should make it much easier! Ideally that would not only allow us to raise money to fund the film from outside investors (we paid for 'Tales' from our own pockets) but also allow us to shoot for a significantly higher budget. Secondly, we would shoot straight through, instead of on nights and weekends.

You're also one of those writer/director/actor/producer guys...which of these three roles gives you the most pleasure and professional satisfaction?

Directing, and then acting. Each brings a different form of satisfaction, so it's tough to name just one.

And other Nate Barlow projects you would like to give our readers a heads up about?

I'm in post on a documentary short entitled Jamboree, about an extracurricular public school music program. I'm working on several feature film scripts that I would either like to direct or sell, whichever opportunity presents itself first.

Do you recall the first movie you saw that scared the shit out of you?

It was 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom'. Not the film as a whole, but the scene where the priest reaches into the human sacrifice's chest and pulls out his heart.

Okay, we're pulling the car into the Nate Barlow Drive In. What three horror flicks are on the triple bill for tonight and what goodies are they going to be serving up at the concession stand?

'The Shining', 'Psycho', and the original 'Omen'. As for concessions, I'm not a big fan of the junk food fare available at most theaters. For drinks I would have some fine wine, single-malt Scotch and good coffee. For food, steaks, elegant pasta dishes, Mexican, Italian, all sorts of cuisine.

What makes you go psycho in real life?

Stupidity and being blamed for things that aren't my fault. Drives me up a wall!

What scares you in real life?

Failure! I'm so drive to succeed that I don't know what I would do if I failed. And snakes. I was almost bitten by a black mamba when I lived in East Africa and then again by some other unidentified kind of snake. The experience has always made me wary of them, albeit fascinated at the same time. I'm not so badly off that I can't hold a snake that I know is safe.

