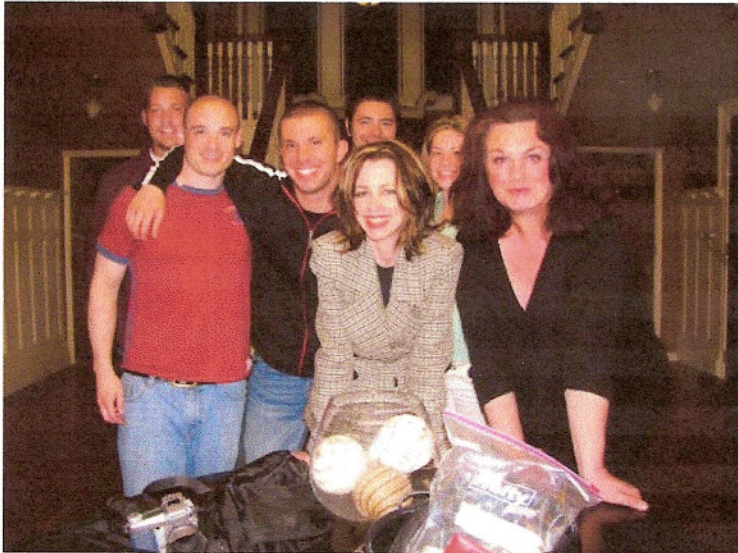


think of gorgeous Ava Gardner in her mid-'50s in EARTHQUAKE and how they would strategically place the soot on her upper cheekbones and muss her hair just a little bit—even after a building collapses on her! But she looks fabulous! It's so Hollywood, and I love that. But not in real horror. However, I do have a few roles coming up where I will play glamorous femme fatales and get to look as good as my publicity photos! [Laughs] Poor cinematographer; that's gonna be a large fill card! [Laughs] But again, that's nothing I take very seriously because I think I'm better on camera when I'm a mess or looking dreadful. It seems to be my niche, and character acting sure keeps you working a lot longer than lead roles. In real life, I'm actually always coiffed, lipsticked and styled. Too many years in the fashion industry have trained me to always look like someone the moment I walk out the door. It's just habit.

ABLEY: Is it bad that I'm totally hot for Benzy and Jerry Murdock, the two actors playing your tormentors in FAR CRY? And not despite their white trash, murdering, psychopathic appearance, but sort of because of it?

KELLY: You're not the first one to say that, Sean! [Laughs] In real life, Jerry Murdock and Benzy are two of the most handsome, considerate, intelligent "gentle" men you would ever meet. I brought them in for those roles, not only for their extraordinary acting talents, but because I knew I could trust them completely with my safety and well-being on set. Some of the scenes really disturbed them to perform because the brutish characters are such polar opposites of who they are in real life. On many occasions when we called "Cut," they were both at my side in a flash making sure I was OK. I really love those guys for helping make such a harsh shooting environment work so smoothly. Everyone on set was so dedicated to this piece. It wasn't the type of film shoot, say like THE BLOOD SHED, where you would wrap for the day and have a few cocktails and laugh about the day's events. When we finished days on FAR CRY, we would all look at each other and just retreat to our rooms to shake it off! [Laughs] It was heavy stuff to enact at times.



ABLEY: Speaking of actors, who are your rep company, and how did they find their way to the Alan Rowe Kelly universe?

KELLY: I pinch myself when I realize the pool of talent that surrounds me and actually "want" to work with me.

My main core of actors are Jerry Murdock, Katherine O'Sullivan and Zoe Daelman Chlanda, who started out with me 10 years ago on BURY. From there came Mike Lane, Terry M. West, Susan Adriansen and in key supporting roles, I always depended on Robert Norman, Sandra Schaller, Jessie May Laumann and Shane Kuhlman. There is so much talent here and they're always up for a challenge. I always write characters with certain actors in mind because they are so versatile and want to do something different every time. That's the New York actor for you! I've also had the great pleasure and honor to work with Raine Brown (three films), Debbie Rochon, Marv Blauvelt, Benzy, Justin Alvarez, Don Money and Joshua Nelson. But it's my off camera crew of people who also help make my films shine: Bart Mastronardi and Dominick Sivilli are true artists behind the camera, as well as being directors in their own right. And Tom Burns, who does my music, composing and sound design, is brilliant with every note he creates! Also, with each new film must always come new blood (actors and crew), which I think is crucial in keeping every new piece fresh, unique and different. It keeps us all from getting stale and too familiar.

ABLEY: I know when I did SOCKET, the days that I shot the scenes I appeared in were murder. Too much to think about that didn't involve my performance. And yet you cast yourself in lead

roles that involve makeup FX, fight choreography and complicated camera moves. How in the world do you not go crazy when you're on set?

KELLY: I'm an obsessive multitasker! [Laughs] I thrive on it because I'm getting the acting career I always dreamed of and still creating the movies I want to make. I'll admit, it's hectic, but this is what I put myself out there to do and if I don't man my ship correctly, then it will sink and I'm the only one to blame. I spend all my preproduction time making sure that everything is thought out and ready before day one of shooting: from scripts to locations to props, wardrobe, hair and makeup, insurance, petty cash, shot sheets, shoot schedules, food, travel, hotels, lights, camera—the works! All this must be thought out way ahead of time. Once it's all done and everyone is assigned their duties, voila! Shooting begins and you just keep your fingers crossed that you bring your day in on time.

But I'll tell you my secret, Sean. I see no reason to work with someone I don't like, even if they are madly talented. It just makes me miserable when I have to babysit someone. It's a complete waste of my time, as well as cast and crew. Nobody is that important on my sets. We're all working equally together for the benefit of making the best film we can. I only work with folks I consider professional, respectful, fun and full of talent. And I listen to every word and suggestion they make. Why bring in great talent if you're not going to listen to them, take their advice, and most importantly, leave them alone to do what they do best on set? Ignoring that is just egotism if you ask me. Yes, you are boss and in the end the decision is still all yours. But isn't it better when you have five great ideas to choose from instead of just one?

ABLEY: After watching your work, I can tell you're the perfect filmmaker to revisit DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT, one of my all time favorite, low budget, exploitation flicks. Your first three films all have that sort of slow boil in the beginning, building up to a crazy, almost hallucinatory climax. Considering your scripts are so insane and original, why jump into a remake instead of another homegrown project?

KELLY: Honestly, Sean? Two reasons. At the very same time both Jerry Murdock and filmmaker Anthony G. Sumner suggested to me separately that I should remake DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT! Now I had always loved this film, but was a bit sour on the remake trend until I really thought about it and realized that it would be easier to get a bigger budget for production if I remade this drive-in classic, which is ironic since all of us try to write unique, original and unusual pieces that could be made into good cinema and all the "business" will pay for is the same story told five different times! [Laughs] Then you do a remake and viewers balk by saying, "Couldn't they have thought of something original?" You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. Plus, I must admit I'd like to know the luxury of working on a large budget production to see what more I can accomplish as a filmmaker. You can still be very independent with a larger budget so your cast, crew and you won't have to rough it so hard for a change. There's nothing wrong with that.

But as far as DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT! is concerned, I'm retelling the story my way. I'm remaining true to Tim Pope's original screenplay as well as S.F. Brownrigg's atmospheric storyline. But with all films made over 30 years ago, new characters are now added (one for me, of course!) and updates are needed because I'm not shooting it in the original 1973 timeline. We were supposed to have shot it by now, but the economy robbed us of our original backers last October and we have to move filming to 2010, which is totally fine with me because it's more preproduction time to figure out logistics. Our cast is stellar with Raine Brown, Jerry Murdock, Zoe Daelman Chlanda, Marv Blauvelt, Terry M. West, Debbie Rochon, Tony Simmons, Jeff Dylan Graham and some lovely newcomers like Debbie Deverde and Deneen Melody. And like all my films, DON'T LOOK will still be insane, original and a proper homage to the classic grindhouse splatter films! If it's an indie hit? Then I can move on and make more original films, my way. I already have four scripts just jonesing to get into production!

ABLEY: Aside from FAR CRY, your films (at least so far, and if I'm reading your bio correctly, in the near future) aren't "gay" horror films, really. They're just f-ed up. Is this by design? Or have you yet to be struck by any gay-centric ideas?

KELLY: I love making messed up films that stick with people. And I am struck by some wild gay-centric movie ideas, but I feel that is what people would totally expect me to do, so I steer clear away from making them. I do have two or three films in mind: one would be a gay 1970s period piece slasher flick called THE BATHHOUSE MURDERS. It could be very wild and sexy if captured correctly. And I am presently working on a treatment for SUDDEN FEAR, based on the Edna Sherry novel/Joan Crawford 1952 thriller, placed in present day San Francisco with me in the Crawford playwright role and using gay marriage in the storyline as a plot for murder and betrayal. Someone recently suggested to me a retelling of HUSH...HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE with myself and Caroline (TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSCRE 2) Williams—and I have to admit, that would be so cool doing a gothic horror in the deep, hot south! [Laughs]

I have finished scripts for UNHALLOWED GROUND, A MURDER OF CROWS, HELL'S BELLES, SPORE! and YOU BETTER WATCH OUT! Each takes on a different subgenre of horror.

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But I feel all my films have diversity to them without catering to a particular group. I've never been much on groups or cliques because I always found problems being accepted by one or the other. So I cut my own path alone, and I'm quite content with it. Since I am gay, my films will always have that influence in their characters, screenplays and art direction. You can't turn off who you are because a part of you will always resonate in your movies, regardless.

ABLEY: You've also been an actor for hire in a bunch of flicks like SKINNED ALIVE, PINK EYE, VINDICATION, W.O.R.M., the upcoming EXPERIMENT 7 to name just a few. If you take a look at the casts and crews of these films, you can always find some sort of connection between them, which gives the impression of a very active, clubby indie film scene up in the northeast. I'm super jealous of that; here in LA, everyone is making films, but we're all kind of out for ourselves. Am I getting the vibe right for your film community?



KELLY: I'd have to say yes. At least, for me, that's how it has been. As an actor I've had the thrill of working alongside great directors like Bart Mastronardi, Anthony G. Sumner, James Felix McKenney, Larry Fessenden, Tate Steinsiek, Peter Jacelone, Scott Perry and soon with Susan Adriansen, Joe Davison, Abel Berry and Rob Rosiello. When I'm acting or doing makeup on someone else's project, that's what I'm there for and my directing background stays home. But I must admit, we Yankees sure do egg each other on to make the best films possible and we're always ready to share and lend our talents out where they're needed. It's no biggie to most of us. We want to create, thrive and help each other out in any way we can. If the film makes it, we're all part of its collaborative and a good review is a good review for all of us! But that's only how I see and feel it, Sean. This career has simply been a great gift to me.

ABLEY: Aside from DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT, and the super-secret project Jason Paul Collum, you and I are about to embark on, you have a ton of stuff on the burner. Care to share?

KELLY: Despite this crummy economy, I have been one lucky person this 2009. I just completed my horror anthology GALLERY OF FEAR with Chicago horror filmmaker Anthony G. Sumner, who you must interview for this blog! I wrote and directed three segments, CRITIC'S CHOICE with Debbie Rochon, DOWN THE DRAIN with Jerry Murdock, Raine Brown and Mike Lane and A FAR CRY FROM HOME. Anthony wrote and directed IT RIPS with Debbie Deverde and BY HER HAND with Zoë Daelman Chlanda and Jerry Murdock. It's a true throwback to '70s British anthologies with very diverse storylines. After two and a half years, GALLERY OF FEAR should finally start hitting the fest circuit with screenings this fall. Then on Memorial Day weekend, I'm directing and acting in the New York sequences (which I wrote) for Joe Davison's EXPERIMENT 7. It will be a blast working the "rabid zombie" genre and the locations we secured are amazing! Raine Brown and I play scientists trapped in a warehouse substation trying to find an antidote to purify water while flesh hungry mutants try to get us. After that, I play Tiffany Shepis' snippy agent in the upcoming HORROTICA in June. In July, the film SCULPTURE, where I play a pretentious art gallery dealer, premieres in NYC. Then I'm off to Texas to play a witch in Abel Berry's KODIE, followed by a juicy serial killer role (as a man...Wow. It'll be like doing drag!) in Scott W. Perry's SOMETHING JUST, a reverend's wife in Susan Adriansen's VENGEANCE IS CYNTHIA'S, and if the planet's are all in line, I'll be heading Off-Broadway this Fall to play the lead role of faded cabaret star Sasha Bennett in Rob Rosiello's latest play PANDORA! So I repeat, I am just one lucky bitch! [Laughs]

ABLEY: Thanks so much for taking the time to answer my questions! And I'm looking forward to our collaboration!

KELLY: Ain't no stopping us now, babe!

Find out more about Alan Rowe Kelly and his work on his website <http://alanrowekelly.net>
I'LL BURY YOU TOMORROW and THE BLOOD SHED are both available from Amazon.com.

6 Comments

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