

The Newborn Dead: Unfamiliar With “THE FAMILIAR”?

Written by Marla Newborn
Monday, 20 December 2010 17:03



For those of you unaware of Kody Zimmerman and his wildly successful short film THE FAMILIAR, you're in for a hilariously dark treat. After nearly two years of festival haunts and with more nominations and wins than this writer can count, Zimmerman has posted the movie on-line, and I promise you the most fun 19 minutes you'll spend today!

But first, indulge me for a moment and let us dream together about having the perfect job. OK, not that one where you work for yourself, but the one where it is early in your dream career and you get that golden opportunity to assist the best of the best in your field. Oh, how you might imagine yourself working by his or her side, indispensably, learning everything there is to know, all in the hope to one day be in that person's shoes yourself. And once all your hard work is completely noticed, you finally do get promoted. You are there. Ah, to reach the top, to live what once seemed the improbable good life. Well, wake up. This is not that story!

The tale I'm bringing to your attention is that of one vampire's assistant, or what is also known as a “familiar.” “Hey...a vampire with his own assistant?” you may be wondering. Well, I was too. Guess we should have realized that when you are cool, hip and hotter than hell, then yes, you get your own lackey—just like all those glam-fam posers in Hollywood. Remember, this is the vampire we are talking about here!



So what makes THE FAMILIAR so special? Mostly, the fact that it mixes horror and comedy so successfully that it becomes hard to truly distinguish one from the other. The merging of the two genres is no easy feat—what comes to mind is Don Coscarelli's BUBBA HO-TEP, but even that film bends more toward laughs than chills. THE FAMILIAR is a perfect blend of both.

The Newborn Dead: Unfamiliar With “THE FAMILIAR”?

Written by Marla Newborn

Monday, 20 December 2010 17:03

The movie is told in the first person by our hero Sam, played by THE TUDORS' Torrance Coombs. Sam is obsessed with vampires, so much so that he wishes to one day become one himself. Well, it seems dreams can come true, as he is approached one day by a mysterious stranger and offered a job as a vampire's “familiar.” Sam is ecstatic, feeling his prayers have been answered. That is, until he starts the job and gets to know his new employer, the 400-year-old bloodsucker Simon Bolivar (Paul Hubbard), who is literally the boss from hell.



What makes THE FAMILIAR so, uh, familiar is, who among us hasn't had what we may have considered the worst boss on the planet? I'll raise my hand. We relate to Sam as his hopes and dreams are dismantled one by one, and we watch in sympathy as his job is reduced to the most degrading of tasks—in his case, wrangling whores for his barking vampire boss, chopping up leftover body parts and being screamed at and belittled on a constant basis. All in all, not quite what Sam had in mind. Plus, soon into the gig, poor Sam finds that being a vampire's familiar may not deliver the expected payoff after all. Just what kind of situation has Sam found himself in, and what is there to do about it?

The Canadian Zimmerman tells us, “I think everyone has had a boss who was either a bastard or a clown or both. At some point, everyone has been disappointed with the thing they previously thought was the cat's meow.” Perfectly put!



Both Zimmerman (pictured right) and his producer Riley Walsh never expected THE FAMILIAR to have the great success it has garnered since its launch onto the festival circuit at Screampfest

The Newborn Dead: Unfamiliar With “THE FAMILIAR”?

Written by Marla Newborn

Monday, 20 December 2010 17:03

LA in 2009. To date, there have been 27 Official Selection showcases, and 19 awards in 2010 alone. Of the wildly “unfamiliar” fame that the film has brought him, Zimmerman says, “I knew filmmakers who were having success at festivals, but a successful run was maybe four or five screenings. Riley and I wanted to hit what we considered to be the top dogs in North America and Europe: Scremfest LA, followed by the New York City Horror Film Festival and then Sitges. To get into those was like being on fire.” THE FAMILIAR was an official selection at all three and a winner at the prestigious Sitges fest in Spain.

So how does it feel to make a short film and seemingly strike gold and bat one out of the park so fast? Zimmerman shares some of that feeling: “At Scremfest, the reaction was overwhelming,” he recalls. “You have no idea how validating it is as a struggling filmmaker to get a minute-long applause after the last shot, then another big round after the credits play. Every time it gets into a festival, let alone wins an award, that same sense of validation occurs. It tells me I am on the right path.”

Regarding what’s next, Zimmerman is choosing from a few scripts—one of which is a feature-length version of THE FAMILIAR. He sums up for us: “It’s really about keeping the momentum moving. I think THE FAMILIAR started something good, something noticeable; the trick is to find the right connections to reach the next level.” With that, enjoy THE FAMILIAR [here](#)

{jcomments on}