

Hooking Up With Tony Todd

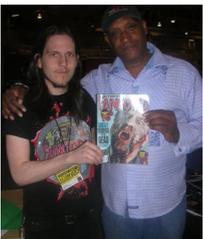
Written by Michael Koopmans
Monday, 05 April 2010 12:36



This past weekend, Fango caught up with genre favorite Tony Todd at I-CON, an annual sci-fi/fantasy convention held on Long Island, NY. The star of the CANDYMAN films towered over this writer at almost six and a half feet, and it was hard not to be intimidated while standing next to him. The fact that your correspondent couldn't look in a mirror for years after first seeing CANDYMAN didn't help the situation either. At least no hooks were in sight during the interview...

FANGORIA: In HATCHET 2, you reprise your role as Reverend Zombie. Is the character going to have a more substantial role this time?

TONY TODD: I'm actually the second lead this time. The four main characters are played by me, Danielle Harris, Kane Hodder and Tom Holland, who was fantastic.



FANG: Are the FX still practical, or are they leaning more toward CGI with this one?

TODD: Practical. Well, there are a couple of CG effects, but not a lot. But the fact that they had enough money to take us out to New Orleans is brilliant. All the swamp-tour scenes were shot in real swamps. I'm trying not to give away any of the plot, because in my head I'm picturing director Adam Green [*holds a finger to his lips*]—"Shhh!" I know that Adam has a vision for the trailer of me and Kane Hodder running at each other, and then, "HATCHET 2!" He thinks that would be awesome. He's probably right.

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FANG: Next, you're in a film called ONE BY ONE: DEATH'S DOOR. What can you tell me about that?

TODD: That has been shot. Kimberly Seilhamer directed that one, it's her first. She's a former schoolteacher who also wrote the script, and wants it to be a franchise. We shot it in California in an old train station. It's an interesting take on the four horseman. I play a train conductor. It's kinda like FINAL DESTINATION, only a little more lengthy.

FANG: You voiced the character of Ben for the animated NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: ORIGINS. What's that all about?

TODD: Zebediah DeSoto was the director, and an animator. Originally they were going to use a rapper for Ben's voice, and then [co-star] Bill Moseley brought it up to me that they weren't satisfied with him. So I made a pitch, just like I did for Tom Savini's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and next thing I know, I got the part. It's Japanese *anime* style, set in Manhattan circa 2011, mostly in Times Square.

FANG: Where does the "ORIGINS" part come from?

TODD: It's cause Zebediah wants to reboot things—you know, hit the reset button.

FANG: Is this incarnation of Ben any different from the others?

TODD: Well, Zebediah kept the names of the four original main characters, but what's different about this one is that you see Ben's family. He has a wife and two daughters.

FANG: Are they with him throughout the movie?

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TODD: No, it's actually a flashback sequence. And it shows how he gets to the townhouse they're in. That was something I could emotionally relate to—a voice that was left out of the first remake.

FANG: Any other upcoming horror films?

TODD: I'm doing one next week called THE WITCHING HOUR. It's me, Michael Madsen and William Forsythe. That's about a radio shock jock who tells scary stories at night, and all of a sudden, what he does gets mixed up with real life. Madsen plays a cop, and I play a guy who's guilty of picking up prostitutes in the streets, but I'm not guilty of what he thinks I am. It's a nice independent, shot in Massachusetts. Do you know about BEG?

FANG: I don't; what can you tell me about that?

TODD: That's Kevin MacDonald's film. He's been working on it for two years. After cashing in a few favors, he finally got it made. It's got me, Michael Berryman and [HALLOWEEN's] Tony Moran. It's from the same company that's putting out THE WITCHING HOUR.

FANG: You've been acting in TV for over 20 years; anything coming up we should look out for?

TODD: Oh yeah! I just finished the pilot for a show called THE EVENT. That's going to be awesome. It's a mix between THE X FILES, TWIN PEAKS, Area 51 and LOST. Well, it doesn't get as crazy as LOST, but there is a similar plane-crash scenario. What's cool about this is that the writer, Nick Walters, a brilliant guy, gave all the main actors a little confidential dossier. So all the key players have common story threads, but we each have secrets that the others don't know about.

FANG: That's pretty clever.

TODD: It was! Before shoots, we'd be testing each other: "Do you know this?" Or, "Why'd you

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ask me that?" "It'll add a little spooky realism to an already great show.

FANG: Is there anything you find difficult with TV acting?

TODD: Television acting is harder because the writing is more specific, and you've got people watching over you constantly, wanting you to say everything exactly how they wrote it. I've been fortunate because I've been doing shows like X FILES, 24, STAR TREK and such, you know? I didn't have to do anything like GHOST WHISPERER. Nothing against the people who like that, but I've never had to do it.

FANG: What about BEVERLY HILLS 90210? COP ROCK?

TODD: Well, OK. That's still not GHOST WHISPERER, because COP ROCK was a Steven Bochco experiment. You didn't see me break into song and dance. And 90210 had class of some kind.

FANG: Fair enough.

TODD: OK, OK, I did JAKE AND THE FATMAN; that was one of my first gigs. Now that you've got me, I'll totally confess: SIMON & SIMON was my very first TV gig. I also did MATLOCK, MURDER, SHE WROTE, FATHER DOWLING MYSTERIES, but that was all because of my aunt; those were her favorite shows. That was all just love to her.

FANG: You've done voice acting for feature films, TV shows and video games. Do you find that more difficult than onscreen acting in any way?

TODD: It's harder to get, easier to do. It's such a competitive industry, and I haven't found the right modulation yet. My voice is too strong. When I don't get a job, it's usually because they say my voice is too recognizable.

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FANG: How'd you get into that kind of work for video games?

TODD: I did it because I'm a big gamer—I love 'em! I'd love to be in a GRAND THEFT AUTO. Have you played PERFECT RAIN? I can't wait, I'm getting that one right when get off the plane back home. I did play the new FINAL FANTASY before I left; I only got a little ways in, but I wasn't really feeling it. FINAL FANTASY VII was fantastic, but with the new one it just seems like they're trying to put too much in. The battle sequences are great, but I hate the characters.

FANG: We've touched on film, TV and video games, and you also have a masters in theater, correct?

TODD: Yes. Theater is what keeps me alive. It's what I love most.

FANG: So stagewise, what have been up to?

TODD: I try to never go more than two years without doing a theater piece. Last thing I did was FENCES in Rochester. I actually did a horror play once called DARK PARADISE at the Cincinnati Playhouse. It was a Western about the ghost of Jesse James. I played a rifleman named Chiron who was also the storyteller. It got mixed reviews, but people who came saw great gun battles and stakes in the heart. It was written and directed by a fantastic playwright named Keith Glover. It was around 2003, and I had a blast.

FANG: Last question: There has been quite a bit of talk over the years about a CANDYMAN remake. What are your thoughts on that?

TODD: Well, about seven years ago I really wanted it to happen, and would have been upset if it wasn't me playing the title role. I was lobbying and actually made efforts to put together financing to get it done. I even had a few meetings with Clive [Barker]. The problem is, the rights are owned by three different companies. Because of the selfishness of some of the powers that be, none of them want to share the profits. But the movie will get remade eventually, 'cause

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that's just the nature of Hollywood. I hope I'm a part of it, but if not, I have other things. I'm not as painfully attached anymore. I mean, I'm gonna have regrets if it's done without me, but I've done two really great ones.

FANG: Which one isn't great?

TODD: Which one isn't? Come on, the last one!

FANG: That's what I figured you'd say.

TODD: That was totally done for financial reasons. The character wasn't as complete. That's why I figure so much time has passed now that someone can come up with a really great addition. I even have a story I did on my own. I think he needs to come back to an all-girls' school in New England. That way I could come home. But they'll probably do a straight-up adaptation of the original.

FANG: Is there anything else you want to add?

TODD: I just want to thank the writers and editors of FANGORIA because they've been fantastic, and very supportive over the years. I remember reading FANGORIA when I was in college. So coming full circle like this is invaluable. Oh wow, I almost forgot: I'm going to be writing, directing and starring in my own film. It's called EERIE, PA. Actually, I have two films in development; I have another horror script written. I'm doing EERIE first because I want to space them out. But both should be done within 18 months. Guaranteed. Once I make the transition to director and producer, I can slow down and stop doing 500 projects at once!

FANG: Well, we certainly will miss seeing you so often when that time comes!

TODD: I appreciate that.

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