

Fantastic Fest Preview: A.J. Bowen on "YOU'RE NEXT"!

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Tuesday, 20 September 2011 08:00



A.J. Bowen has been one of the coolest additions to the genre in recent years. Equipped with serious chops, the actor has left lasting impressions in striking new horror like *THE SIGNAL*, *HOUSE OF THE DEVIL* and *A HORRIBLE WAY TO DIE*. Re-teaming with his *HORRIBLE WAY* director and writer, Adam Wingard and Simon Barrett respectively, Bowen hits Austin and Fantastic Fest this week in the much talked about *YOU'RE NEXT*. He briefly spoke with Fango about what fans can expect from the masked intruders film, and what he's off to next.

FANGORIA: Firstly, what is *YOU'RE NEXT* and who do you play in it?

A.J. BOWEN: *YOU'RE NEXT* is (hopefully) a new take on the home invasion subgenre. A fractured family in a very tense and awkward reunion that is broken up by an attack from masked intruders. I play Crispian, eldest son (*BARBARA CRAMPTON'S SON!*), who is a college professor bringing his girlfriend home to meet the family. Unfortunately for the assailants, my girlfriend (unbeknownst to me) was raised as a survivalist. Fit hits the shan.

FANG: Aside from your previous work with Adam and Simon, what attracted you to the project? A lot is being made of the cleverness of the film? What, if anything, did you find so smart and gripping about it?

BOWEN: I agreed to do the movie sight unseen without having read the script. Having worked together recently, and knowing Joe Swanberg and Amy Seimetz and I would play siblings, that's all the motivation I needed. I find those guys clever and I think our previous collaboration made it possible for us to understand what we all wanted. I tend to hide in a corner with Simon and build a tactical assault prior to each scene. I can tell you that the actors convened frequently and made a company choice to try and play it like a slasher version of *CLUE*. I've no idea if that worked, but we tried very much to plug into the world of comedy to balance the

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absurdity of the situation these characters found themselves in. we felt to play it any other way would have been incredibly maudlin, and that the events occurring were already dour enough. Case in point, that is exactly what Simon and Adam wanted from us, so I hope we did right by them.

FANG: Is it surreal that women like Mary Woronov and Barbara Crampton are acting beside you and playing your mother?

BOWEN: What do you think? You know my love of genre, and especially 80's genre, so to have strong women that I idolized (and still do) play my mother is intimidating, and astonishing to me. I don't deserve to be in their company, but there's a sucker born every day, and I'm lucky to be reaping the creative rewards. They're amazing performers, and I learned a lot from their guidance and approach to the material.



FANG: There's almost something theatre company-esque to the way you and a lot of the cast and crew on this film remain in each other's work and lives. What do you find rewarding about this way of working, aside from the obviously good company?

BOWEN: Life on a film set is stressful. It's a pressure cooker. Having good people around you that you trust creatively allows you to circumvent a lot of the bullshit you end up often dealing with on a set and get to the business of trying to accomplish a unified story. also, it breeds a healthy competitive environment. If i can make those guys laugh, or satisfy their expectations, i feel pretty confident I will have done my job.

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FANG: What will audiences find scary about You're Next? What do you find scary about You're Next?

BOWEN: Honestly, I've not yet seen the movie, so I'm not sure. Hopefully they won't find it scary someone gave us money and resources to make another movie together. I have a unique working relationship with those guys, and on the last one, they were open enough to allow me the freedom to bring a different angle to the character I played than they'd initially envisioned. On YOU'RE NEXT, I felt like I understood Simon's writing and what he was looking for, as well as what the story required of my character. To that end, I wanted to make sure I was getting Simon's ideas across. Before every scene, the AD would find Simon and I huddled in a corner discussing what the goals were. Again, I trust Simon, and I trust Adam, so it was important that I fulfill the expectations for both the story and tone they were trying to accomplish.

FANG: On a separate note, if you can say anything, what can you tell us about Danielle Harris' AMONG FRIENDS, and anything else you've got coming on up?

BOWEN: Danielle is family to me, so it was a blessing and privilege she'd ask me to be involved with her movie. It's a horror comedy about a group of friends who go to an 80's prom themed mystery dinner. Things get messy from there.

I'm the luckiest guy in the world to have the good fortune to get to make movies for a living and especially lucky that they usually tend to be genre pictures. I grew up watching them, and the community has always been home for me. I just shot a movie with my signal family, which is a dystopian love story about time travel, and am going to be directing a comedy later this fall that's (hopefully) along the lines of an 80's Carl Reiner film-SUMMER RENTAL/SUMMER SCHOOL. My good friend Drew Daywalt [w
ho we just spoke to regarding his work on DEATH VALLEY right

[here](#)

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and I, are getting close to doing a supernatural ghost story he wrote, which is my favorite script I've gotten to read in this industry, so I am very excited to collaborate with him. He's ridiculously talented. There's a few other things cooking, and as these things go, I'm not privy to divulge any details on those until they let me. Thanks so much for the time and support.