

First news: UK filmmakers do “THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS”

Written by Michael Gingold
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In the wake of their collaboration on the anthology *LITTLE DEATHS* (see previous item [here](#)), British writer/director Sean Hogan and co-producer (and Fango scribe) Jay Slater are quickly reteaming on another feature. Titled *THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS*, it’s being produced by Jen Handorf (pictured in the first photo below with Hogan, left, and Slater), with Dan Martin and Sam Stone (second photo below) on the FX, and the foursome gave us the exclusive scoop on the project.



The story centers on Pinner, an aging hitman with a long string of victims in his past. When he’s given a job that teams him up with a rookie partner, he winds up confronting demons from his past and elsewhere, and fighting for his soul which he may not have left to lose. Hogan tells Fango that this film won’t be as extreme as his *DEATHS* segment: “I like both ends of the genre spectrum: the intensely violent stuff but also more suggestive horror,” he says. “And after having done a more balls-to-the-wall story in *LITTLE DEATHS*, I was ready to work on something subtle again. I really respond to claustrophobic, psychological horror, where you isolate some characters in one location and watch them gradually lose their minds. My first film [*THE HAUNTING OF #24*] was definitely influenced by Roman Polanski and there’s some of that here too, along with Val Lewton and even Harold Pinter.”

“What this brings that’s new to the genre,” Slater adds, “is that it is a somewhat old-fashioned scenario with a totally innovative spin. And that’s the attraction. Sean has written a beautiful script—it will appeal to the intelligentsia as well as delivering buckets of blood, but in a good way. Being professionals in the genre and knowing what makes movies tick—and seeing so many that bomb at festivals—we like to think we’re backing a movie that will be of interest to the horror community.”

Handorf believes that fans will appreciate the way the film diverges from one of the genre’s more played-out recent trends. “What I love most about the story of *THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS*,”

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she says, “is that it isn’t the same recycled crap audiences have seen 100 times. Goreography is great, but after a while, when you’ve seen one horrible dismemberment by chainsaw, you’ve seen them all. I don’t know why producers seem to think they can still feed audiences the same reheated images of twitching flesh and get away with it—people are smarter than that these days. And the worst thing about the torture-porn revolution was that, in order to cram in as much blood and guts as possible, the narratives of the films really began to suffer. That’s what makes THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS such a great project; it’s a slash-tastic terror ride, but with heart. Granted, that heart is served up still beating on a silver platter, but it’s there, and that’s what matters.

“Seriously, though, this movie takes horror to the next level, but without relying on the gore to carry it,” she continues. “It really reminds me of the horror tales my brother would read to me during lightning storms—the kind that would give me nightmares for weeks. If the story is thrilling enough, then the gore is just icing on the cake. I could have THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS read to me by a primary school teacher in a brightly lit room full of puppies, and it would still make me pee my pants. Now, pair that kind of story with Dan Martin’s effects? Hell yes, you better believe I’m looking forward to this!”



Martin, whose credits include ISLE OF DOGS (an upcoming crime thriller Hogan scripted and Handorf produced) and THE WOLFMAN as well as LITTLE DEATHS, is looking forward to the freedom this independent production will bring, and notes that THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS, for all its attention to character, won’t skimp on the nastiness. “Sean’s quite savvy when it comes to writing only what is needed on screen,” he notes, “but that said, without the worry of financiers looking over our shoulders, we can push further and be more extreme than is normally allowed on more commercially minded projects. I’m looking forward to seeing what new and horrible things we can come up with together.”

Also potentially part of the movie is the cult British rockers Crippled Black Phoenix, whose music Hogan listened to while writing the script. One particular song caught his fancy, and he decided to investigate the possibility of using the tune on THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS’ end credits. “This led to us contacting Justin Greaves from the band,” Hogan recalls, “and, lovely, helpful guy that he is, not only was he open to the idea of us using the track, he was also willing to

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discuss scoring the rest of the movie! Nothing’s been finalized yet, so I don’t want to jinx it, but their music is so dark and interesting and cinematic, it could be a great fit for this film. So I’m really hoping it all works out.

“What we’re trying to do with THE DEVIL’S BUSINESS is maintain our independence and control,” adds Hogan, who enjoyed being part of the LITTLE DEATHS triumverate of directors but is looking forward to tackling a feature of his own. “I’ve had to deal with too many meddlers and incompetents in the past, and it just gets massively wearying. Too often in this industry, people get ripped off, or films get blanded down and made by committee—the tail wagging the dog. With this film, myself, Jen and Jay own it outright. Everyone working on it will be given a percentage of the proceeds, and will be treated equitably and fairly. In the current financial climate, films have to be made for less money—and one way you do that is by making sacrifices up front and not treating a production as your own personal gravy train. There are certainly a few people I’ve worked with in the past who could do with being reminded of that.” Keep your eyes here for DEVIL’S BUSINESS updates, and look for more on LITTLE DEATHS very shortly.

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