Barry Bostwick became part of an enduring cult sensation when he acted, sang and danced through THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, then won notice on TV for playing historical personages like George Washington. Now he’s appearing in a presidential role that bids to develop a cult of its own: the over-the-top horror/comedy FDR: AMERICAN BADASS.

As far from a stately biopic as it’s possible to get, FDR: AMERICAN BADASS (out today on DVD from Screen Media Films) features a Franklin Delano Roosevelt who doesn’t let confinement to a wheelchair get in the way of partying, bagging babes and battling the werewolves that are actually behind WWII and plotting the conquest of the world. It’s Bostwick’s second venture into humorous horror this year, following SOME GUY WHO KILLS PEOPLE, in which he provides a number of highlights portraying a lawman looking into the murders of those who have tormented the title character. Bostwick spoke to Fango about both movies, as well as the one he made nearly 40 years ago and is still recognized for today…

FANGORIA: How did you get involved with FDR: AMERICAN BADASS?

BARRY BOSTWICK: They asked me to do it! They apparently thought I looked a bit like him and I could sound a bit like him, and I was just crazy enough to play the part.

FANG: When you read the script, what were your first impressions of the character and its crazy take on history?

BOSTWICK: I thought the president swore too much—and then I thought, "That's what I want to play." They had to explain to me a lot of the hip-hop talk, the sort of street talk, and once they explained what that was all about, I was sold. It was risky on their part, too, writing in such a way that could be confusing, in another, curious language. But I liked the mixing of the periods, and the casting; I think it was cast brilliantly. And once I got over the whole werewolf thing, and realized we were killing werewolves with bad makeup…but that's what we were supposed to be doing, and that was the whole point of the movie. It had this sort of [TV's] BATMAN-esque tone, and that sold me—that old "Wham!" "Bam!" thing, you know? Although in this one, it's more of a "Wham, bam, thank you, ma'am!" situation. And I'm always attracted to anything where there's naked ladies.

FANG: Did you do any research into FDR to bring any of the real person into your character, or did you just go with what was on the page?

BOSTWICK: I went with what was on the page. I knew a little of the real history, but I knew I definitely couldn't stick to that. I did more physical things. I knew he wore a ring on his little finger, and what kind of ring it was. I knew the whole thing about the cigarette holder, you know? But we made sure to get one that was just a little bigger than normal. We wanted to do everything slightly larger than life, so that was my goal. And if I was going to have a dialect, which he did in reality, I would only use it for the important speeches. The other times, I would just try to be real. They just had to trust that I was close enough in tone to the guy. I didn't have to do a complete impersonation, because that would've gotten boring after a while, since every time he talked, he would go *up*! It would lose the fun of the character. I left it to the people around me to do the impressions. Many times, your character is established by how people react to you, and if they'd react to me as if I was the president, then I was him, dammit!

FANG: Talking about the physical side of your character, you're confined to a wheelchair for most of the film. Did you find that inhibiting?

BOSTWICK: I found it interesting. I'd never played a character who was in a wheelchair. It was a source of a lot of humor in the beginning, which I liked. I liked the fact that they'd made him

pissed off about it. The scene with the boy in the wheelchair is one of the best in the movie, because it's telling of what somebody's real emotional reaction would be, whether he's the president or a dockworker. You wouldn't just jump right into it. And being physically in the chair, it was just another reason to focus on what I was saying. When you just start taking things away from people, they focus on something else. They focus on what's more important, and for me, it was really using my sense of humor, which he had in abundance. That's what I really honed in on, in terms of the root of the character, in that everyone would say that FDR was always trying to make people laugh. He was the guy on the golf course who would be farting behind the guy teeing off.

FANG: Did you get to contribute any dialogue or scenes of your own?

BOSTWICK: Probably, but on this kind of movie, you move so fast. It wasn't like other films I've done, where it was organically possible to do that. This film had a certain pace where, not only in the making of it, but during the playing of it, we pretty much stuck to the script just to be able to get through the day's work.

FANG: Writer/producer Ross Patterson has said (see Fango #317, on sale now) that you and Bruce McGill had a lot of fun together, working out little bits of your own.

BOSTWICK: That just made the day fun. That made it worth to go to work. Your tendency is to always try to find another level of the work, of what you as an actor can bring to it. Particularly if you have other good actors like Bruce, who is so deadpan and yet so available; he's a real acting partner. I wish they were all like that. I'm the same kind of person, so we had the flexibility to nudge-nudge, wink-wink, do whatever we wanted to do, make little things up. That's what creates the chemistry between characters. It's those little moments you fill it in with, not

just what's on the page.

FANG: You mentioned the profanity before. Is this the most profane film you've ever done?

BOSTWICK: Oh yeah. And probably will be forever. It could be the most profane film ever made by anybody until Ross Patterson makes another movie.

FANG: Patterson seems to have been the prime mover behind FDR, though Garrett Brawith is credited as director. How did they divide up the duties of guiding the film as a whole?

BOSTWICK: Well, you always knew who the boss was, and that was Ross. You always went to Garrett for any acting or directing issues, but if you had any questions about what something meant, or the overview of the movie, you went to Ross. And I'd always go to Ross to find out what the hell I was talking about!

FANG: Do you think you'll collaborate with Patterson on further films?

BOSTWICK: I think he's very talented; that's one of the reasons why I wanted to do this movie. He's a young hotshot: motivated, clever, very witty and bright. He likes to rattle cages and throw people off balance. Those are my kind of people.

FANG: You really stole SOME GUY WHO KILLS PEOPLE as Sheriff Walt Fuller. What was that experience like?

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