

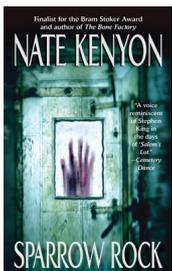
Nate Kenyon: Horror's Other Maine Man

Written by Andy Weeks
Monday, 19 April 2010 09:14



Maine is not just Stephen King territory—not anymore. Call it “Kenyonland.” Nate Kenyon, that is, the author of the novels *BLOODSTONE*, *THE REACH*, *PRIME* and *THE BONE FACTORY*. Although he has the same Maine roots, he’s not as popular as “the King of horror”—but give him time.

THE REACH is currently under option for film, and Kenyon’s newest book, the fast-paced, unnerving *SPARROW ROCK*, comes out in May. It’s the novel he’s most pleased with. “I’m really excited about this one—I think it’s my best work to date,” the 39-year-old Kenyon says. “*SPARROW ROCK* is about a group of teens who go looking for a place to party and end up trapped in a bomb shelter when the end of the world comes—and the creatures that stalk them are like nothing anyone has ever seen before. It’s my darkest, wildest ride, my first first-person novel, and it has twists that nobody is going to see coming.”



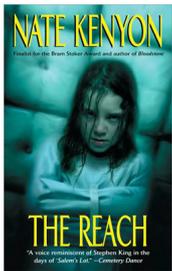
That’s saying something, since his previous books have also been wild rides through labyrinths of darkness. Unlike some genre novels, Kenyon’s stories don’t dwell on blood and gore, but on the more literary uses of character and suspense. “I don’t usually like the extreme stuff, anything that has heavy gore, torture or any of that junk without a good reason for it,” he says. “People can tend to take the easy way out with that. Shocking someone is not the same as scaring them; although you certainly can use the shock factor for the right purpose, it has to serve the story and the characters.”

Nate Kenyon: Horror's Other Maine Man

Written by Andy Weeks
Monday, 19 April 2010 09:14

Kenyon, a Bram Stoker Award Finalist for both *BLOODSTONE* and *THE REACH*, has been hailed by critics as an emerging genre star, and rightly so. He crafts moody, atmospheric tales that explore the dark side of the human psyche—in part because he himself has dealt with life's darkness. “The reasons I chose to read and write dark fiction are probably pretty obvious,” Kenyon notes. “When I was 8, my mother was diagnosed with advanced cancer. A few months later, my father was killed in an automobile accident. My life would never be the same after that—my mother struggled to survive and raise my sister and me while fighting her illness, and she lasted five more years, which was about four and a half years longer than the doctors had given her—but she passed away when I was 13.”

That was in Maine, where the family had moved from Seattle. An aunt moved into the house to raise him and his younger sister. “I suppose on the surface, I was pretty well-adjusted for what I'd been through, losing my mother and father at an early age. I had lots of friends, was pretty athletic, fairly easygoing and I'm sure I seemed happy enough to most people. Under the surface, though, things were different. I was still learning how to cope with my own mortality at an age where that normally doesn't come into play very much.”



He watched out for his sister until going away to college in Connecticut, then struggled to figure out what he wanted to do with his life. Writing was one answer, but he became distracted with “sports, friends and girls,” he recalls. “I came back to it pretty quickly after college, and being a writer was always what I wanted to be.”

As for his chosen genre, “The interest arose out of the trauma I experienced, the desire to explore death and the dark side of living. I like to be scared, I enjoy action, drama, fear and anger and sadness, the intensity of these emotions—and to be able to come out again on the other side, whole and unharmed, although—hopefully—having learned something about myself in the process.”

He admits he casts a wide net when classifying the genre, noting that anything that frightens him, he considers horror. When done right, he believes the genre can explore aspects of emotion and the human condition in ways that few others can. “Let's be clear here,” he adds. “I

Nate Kenyon: Horror's Other Maine Man

Written by Andy Weeks
Monday, 19 April 2010 09:14

love writing horror—but I don't consider myself only a horror writer. I write what I want to write, what inspires and interests me. If it turns out dark and creepy, that's fine with me—but it doesn't always. I'd like to think readers will trust me to write a good story, and not put it back on the shelf just because it seems to fit into a different genre.”

Besides straight scary stuff, Kenyon has written a sci-fi thriller called PRIME and is working on a young adult novel. He's also waiting to hear more about film possibilities, noting that THE REACH has been optioned “by the guys who did WALK THE LINE and LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN, and they have it out to directors now. I have no idea when that might go into production, but I have my fingers crossed. I believe it would make a great film. We're also seeing a lot of interest in PRIME and SPARROW ROCK, but nothing's been signed yet.”



While he feels THE REACH and PRIME would both make great movies, he believes SPARROW ROCK could become the most interesting one because of its tension and twists. Of all his books, he adds, it was also the most fun to write. “I didn't have as many problems with writer's block or plot issues,” he says, “and my personal life was in chaos at the time, so it gave me a very valuable escape.”

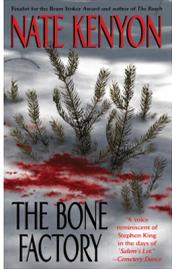
Kenyon, who now lives in the Boston area and works as director of marketing communications for a New England law school, doesn't have the luxury to write full-time, but is a devoted wordsmith who spends as many free moments as possible crafting his dark fantasies. He says he gets inspiration from news, dreams, people and other stories. “My problem is that I tend to have too many ideas,” he says. “The trick is in figuring out which ones are worth writing.”

However, he admits, there are more challenges to being a writer today—in horror and otherwise—than there used to be. “Readership is dwindling—there are too many other things taking people's attention away from books,” he says. “Advances and royalty rates are dropping. There's so much noise out there now, and although there are technically more opportunities to get noticed and find fans, it's actually more difficult than ever—you're competing on Facebook and Twitter and other sites not only with other pros, but with legions of self-published writers

Nate Kenyon: Horror's Other Maine Man

Written by Andy Weeks
Monday, 19 April 2010 09:14

who are trying to market themselves too. Meanwhile, publishers are asking more and more in terms of marketing and publicity from their authors, as their own budgets shrink.



“Thriller/horror writers have to battle all that,” he adds, “plus the stigma of being ‘that kind’ of writer. We don’t get as much respect because of the perception that it’s pulp, or somehow less important than other books getting published.”

Despite the challenges, the world will always need creative minds, and Kenyon’s advice to aspiring authors is: “Write every day. Don’t give away your work for free, or if you do, at least make sure it’s a respected publication with an established reader base. If you *really* want it, don’t give up—many great novels were never published just because they were lost in the shuffle, not because they didn’t deserve it. It’s tougher than ever out there, so you have to put your head down, believe in yourself and keep going.

“And act professional,” he continues. “Be respectful of established writers, engage them, learn from them. Go to conventions, interact on-line—but do it in the right way. As for agents, the right one can be worth his or her weight in gold—but the wrong one can do more harm than good.

“Oh, and don’t pay for publishing—don’t pay an agent to read your stuff, and don’t pay anyone to print it either. Writers should make money on the deal, not the other way around.”

{comments on}