

## Building a Perfect “BEAST” (with exclusive photos)

Written by Michael Gingold

Thursday, 17 November 2011 16:34

---



Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft have been mined incessantly as sources for horror features, but what about Rudyard Kipling? The JUNGLE BOOK author showed his scary side in a tale that has now been filmed as RUDYARD KIPLING’S MARK OF THE BEAST. Its creators gave Fango the details and some photos, including a few exclusives.

Thomas Edward Seymour and Jonathan Gorman, the duo behind the BIKINI BLOODBATH series of slasher spoofs, took a more serious turn with this project, which began when Seymour, working at New York City’s famed Strand Book Store, came across Kipling’s story in a dusty old collection. “I thought it was great and that it read like a deep myth, like Beowulf or something,” Seymour tells Fango. “Fast-forward three or four years, and I had a finished script and we were filming in Connecticut in the middle of the woods for 11 days. Making a feature in that amount of time is tough, and it was a hot, grueling shoot, but Jon and I tried our hardest to hold onto the aesthetic we set out for.”



Kipling’s grisly story tells of a drunken man who desecrates the temple of the monkey god Hanuman, and has a curse placed on him by a leper priest that turns him animalistic. The feature-length expansion, scripted by Seymour and Sheri Lynn, centers on a group of friends who try to help out a pal in a similar situation by kidnapping the leper and torturing him until he lifts the affliction—at the cost of their own humanity. DEAD LIKE ME’s Ellen Muth stars alongside BIKINI BLOODBATH series alumni Debbie Rochon (pictured above with Muth), Phil Hall (2nd photo below), Dick Boland, Matt Ford, Margaret Rose Champagne and Lynn, with Marc Bovino as the leper.

As befits an adaptation of a classic work of literature, the BEAST filmmakers aimed for an

## Building a Perfect “BEAST” (with exclusive photos)

Written by Michael Gingold

Thursday, 17 November 2011 16:34

---

old-fashioned approach, which Seymour describes as “beautiful, grainy, color-washed images and dark, fire-lit interiors. Longer takes with more master shots and traditional blocking, free of modern technology and pop references. It aims to be a movie that does not resemble the look and feel of today, because I believe a lot of the best horror films are the ones that look gritty—like TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. The first time I saw THE EXORCIST was as a tattered transfer—an old VHS, if I remember correctly—and that was always scarier to me than the remastered version that came years later. Americans are obsessed with fidelity and sharpness of image, and I resent it. It leaves no mystery. What ever happened to cool little 72-minute features like Roger Corman used to make? What happened to creating a good little indie horror flick? When did mystery become mislabeled as vagueness? Why does every indie horror film that ‘makes it’ have to be so damned gimmicky?”



Gorman adds that their visual style on BEAST also matched the subject matter. “On the BIKINI BLOODBATH films, we were trying to light the actors the best we could with the equipment we had. We were not going for any specific aesthetic; we were just trying to accentuate the girls and the jokes. With MARK OF THE BEAST, we were trying to create and maintain an atmosphere of tension between the forces of light and dark. The characters are confronting those forces within themselves and externally, with regard to the possession of their friend by what seems to be a monster. We also pared down the cast on this film, trying to focus more on strong emotional performances as opposed to the ensemble comedies we had previously been doing. We could really focus on getting the material to the right level of intensity, and one of the benefits of the longer takes was that cast could build off of one another. We could keep everyone in the moment, vs. trying to get them to recall the mental spaces they were in during the wide shots for the close-ups. It often took a lot of takes to get the right feeling going, and maintain it.”

To create a horror film audiences could take seriously, the MARK OF THE BEAST team

## Building a Perfect “BEAST” (with exclusive photos)

Written by Michael Gingold

Thursday, 17 November 2011 16:34

---

needed a monster they could take seriously. Gorman notes that their “faceless thing” also needed to serve the story and surrounding performances. “The ‘faceless’ aspect allows our protagonists to justify their actions internally,” he says. “They believe that what they’re doing to this creature is morally justifiable because it isn’t human. Makeup artist Leigh Radziwon made that creature come to life, and did an amazing and tireless job on the set. It’s an important part of the movie; if Dick and Debbie were having an amazing emotional moment and we panned over to a papier-maché monster, it would kill any intensity and just make you burst out laughing. And everything I said about Leigh must also be said for Marc Bovino, who really brought the creature to life and gave an intense performance without saying anything.”



In addition to her emotionally intense scenes (including one Gorman refers to as “her crowning moment”), Lynn faced the additional challenge of pulling double duty as a producer on MARK OF THE BEAST. “This is the fifth feature I’ve done with Tom and Jon,” she says, “and as on most low-budget indie films, the same people ended up wearing many hats. Because of the extensive preproduction that BEAST required, I was anxious about having enough time to shift gears and focus on my acting, especially since this was the first serious film I’d done. But some of my fondest memories of any shoot happened on this one, particularly with Debbie and I doing battle with nature on a regular basis. She helped me shine in moments where I really needed to shine, and it’s something I’ll always remember. MARK OF THE BEAST was the most grueling shoot we’ve done so far, and we’re really proud of what we were able to accomplish, particularly with the time and the budget allowed.”

Currently, Seymour and Gorman are angling to get the movie into festivals. “I would like to plead with Slamdance or Sundance to accept RUDYARD KIPLING’S MARK OF THE BEAST to screen at their next editions,” Seymour says. “Come on, guys. I’ve been paying those entry fees for years!” You can see a trailer below the pics, and find out more at MARK OF THE BEAST’s [official website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

## Building a Perfect "BEAST" (with exclusive photos)

Written by Michael Gingold

Thursday, 17 November 2011 16:34

---



{youtube}yPm6yhSac6Y{/youtube}