

“THE INNKEEPERS”: Checking In With Ti West

Written by Michael Gingold
Thursday, 02 February 2012 17:47



Having turned a suburban home into a den of horror in *THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL*, writer/director Ti West now invites you to check into a haunted hotel in *THE INNKEEPERS*. The movie is set, and was filmed, at Connecticut’s allegedly truly spirit-ridden Yankee Pedlar Inn, and West talks about the shoot and his feelings about ghosts and going Hollywood below.

Beginning limited theatrical release tomorrow from Magnolia Pictures (go [here](#) for a complete list of playdates, and [here](#)

to see our review), *THE INNKEEPERS*, West’s fourth feature for Glass Eye Pix, stars Sarah Paxton and Pat Healy as a couple of Yankee Pedlar employees attempting to track down evidence of a ghost lurking in its halls. Kelly McGillis, from Glass Eye’s *STAKE LAND*, plays an aging actress who checks into the hotel and provides spiritual guidance for Paxton’s Claire. West will next be seen on screen in short form—he contributed segments to the upcoming anthologies *V/H/S* and *THE ABCs OF DEATH*—and he’s currently in preproduction on *THE SIDE EFFECT*, a science-fiction thriller set in space and starring Liv Tyler.



“THE INNKEEPERS”: Checking In With Ti West

Written by Michael Gingold
Thursday, 02 February 2012 17:47

FANGORIA: You’ve said you were inspired to make THE INNKEEPERS by spooky stuff that happened at the Yankee Pedlar while you and your crew were staying there during production of THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL. Did anything odd happen on the INNKEEPERS shoot?

TI WEST: I don’t know if I believe in any of that stuff; the only thing I think is a really interesting anecdote has to do with the room that’s ground zero of haunted activity in THE INNKEEPERS. The only reason I picked the room I did was because it was at the end of a hallway, and it was big enough to do a dolly shot—that was the only thought that went into it. So when we were done and wrapping up, I found out that that is the actual most haunted room in the Yankee Pedlar. Out of 70 rooms or whatever it was, the one I picked, solely for technical reasons, turned out to be *the* haunted room in the hotel. Could be a coincidence, but it’s weird.

FANG: How did you go about making a movie about ghosts without necessarily having that reservoir of belief in them to draw on?

WEST: It’s just fascinating to me. I think it’s interesting that there’s no evidence whatsoever, yet people are still compelled and convinced that they exist. I mean, I find it just as fascinating as anyone else, and I’d love to find out that there are ghosts; I’m intrigued by it, and I keep myself around that world. That’s why I’m interested in horror movies, because it’s stuff that doesn’t exist, but maybe it does. To me, if I see a ghost, then I’ll believe in ghosts. The closest I’ve come has been making this movie at the Pedlar; the hotel is weird and the vibe is weird, but I don’t know if that means there’s a ghost or if it’s just an odd place.

FANG: How was the shooting experience in general, compared to the other films you’ve done?

WEST: It might be the easiest movie I’ve made. On HOUSE OF THE DEVIL, every day something outrageous went wrong. And on this film, things just went OK. The saying on the set was that we were waiting for the other shoe to drop, because we were waiting for something to go bad. Never did. It was a really short shoot, which was difficult, but we finished early every day, and everyone was happy. I’ll pay for it on the next one, I guess.

FANG: You had almost the exact same team on this one that you did on HOUSE; was that a

“THE INNKEEPERS”: Checking In With Ti West

Written by Michael Gingold
Thursday, 02 February 2012 17:47

big help?

WEST: Yeah, it was practically identical, and if anyone’s different, it was because they couldn’t do the movie because they were traveling or something, so we had to get someone else. I like collaborating with the same people; I like the relationships, I like the work they do, I’m very comfortable with them. Things move much faster, and we have a good shorthand, and that’s what made it possible to even do this. We shot the movie in 17 days, and the only way that was even possible was because we all know each other so well and could move really quickly.

FANG: Sarah Paxton is a young actress on the way up, and Kelly McGillis is a veteran with a lot of experience; was there any difference in the way you worked with each of them?

WEST: No. Their personalities are sort of different, and they might have had different questions for me, but that’s about it. I make an effort, with everyone I work with, to create an environment where we all would like to hang out in real life, so when we’re on set making the movie, it doesn’t feel like work. So we all got along really well, and I approached directing them the same way.



FANG: THE INNKEEPERS seems thematically similar to HOUSE OF THE DEVIL, in that it’s largely focused on character until the horrific stuff comes through at the end. Are there any different beats or rhythms in THE INNKEEPERS?

WEST: This movie has a tremendous amount of humor in it, and dialogue, compared to HOUSE OF THE DEVIL. It’s a very chatty, comedic movie for the first half. So I actually think it’s nothing like HOUSE OF THE DEVIL. It is a character-driven story that turns into an intense horror movie at the end, so that much is the same, but it’s very different tonally.

“THE INNKEEPERS”: Checking In With Ti West

Written by Michael Gingold
Thursday, 02 February 2012 17:47

FANG: How do you feel about the release pattern of THE INNKEEPERS, like HOUSE OF THE DEVIL, coming out on VOD first, then going to theaters?

WEST: I didn't know how I felt about it on HOUSE OF THE DEVIL, but then that worked really well for us. I didn't agree with it, and then I saw it worked and I was wrong, and Magnolia is excellent at that type of release strategy. I'm so happy to be with them again; there were a lot of people who were not in the 20 or cities that HOUSE OF THE DEVIL came out in, and would never have gotten to see it in a theater. Of course, I'd rather everyone see it in a theater, on a big screen and as loud as it can be, but that's not realistic; someone in Arkansas just can't. But they can watch it on VOD, whenever they want, and a lot of people now have 50-inch plasma TVs and 5.1 sound, and I think that's great. I mean, I cringe at the laptop iTunes downloads down the road, but not at the VOD.

FANG: Beyond THE SIDE EFFECT, do you have any other genre films in the works?

WEST: I wrote a werewolf movie that I have to be sort of tight-lipped about at the moment; it's about a guy having sort of a disagreement with a werewolf, and I'll just leave it at that right now. But it's a movie I'm really excited about, and I hope I get to make it.

FANG: Are you working on anything else with Glass Eye Pix?

WEST: Not right at this moment, but I'd be more than happy to. I'd hope that the billing block would stay the same from the other two movies, there might just be an extra producer. That's what I'd be hoping for.

FANG: Has it gotten any easier for you to make the kind of genre films you want to make?

WEST: You know, people these days want to make movies for half a million dollars or less, or \$60 million and up, and I don't really want to make THOR 2, you know? But I also don't want to keep making under-\$1-million movies; I want to be able to do crane shots, I want to be able to

“THE INNKEEPERS”: Checking In With Ti West

Written by Michael Gingold

Thursday, 02 February 2012 17:47

do some effects, I want to blow shit up, I want to make a movie in space and see a shot of the spaceship.

FANG: Have you been offered any big films—something like THOR 2?

WEST: No, certainly not that big, but I have been offered remakes and sequels and things like that; I was on THE HAUNTING IN GEORGIA for a while. But if I’m going to make a bigger, commercial, Hollywood sort of movie, which I’m all for doing—there’s this idea that I’m against the system, which is not really true—it’s just like, if we’re going to go make a big remake, then let’s make a \$30-million film with cranes and explosions and movie stars and all those things. But it always becomes, “Well, we want to do this for cheap,” and I’m like, “Well, I’ll go make my own cheap movies.” If I’m going to make a big Friday-night-at-the-multiplex movie, I want to have the tools to do that. So if the circumstances are right, I’d absolutely be excited to make a big-budget Hollywood movie. I’d be more than happy to play that game; I’m all for it. But the circumstances for me to get excited about it have to be there, whether it’s technical or it’s cast-driven or I can buy a house from it, whatever it is. If you take all those things away, I’ll struggle to make my own movies; I don’t need to struggle to make some other movie.