

"DEATH ON DEMAND"

Bumped off on-line

From *Sesame Street* to the bloodsoaked environs of the haunted McIntyre house is some jump, but that's what director Adam Matalon and producer/co-writer Kevin Burke undertook with their new horror film *Death on Demand* (coming to DVD July 8 from MTT). Their production outfit, Chatsby Films, had been producing videos for the *Sesame Street* home-video line when they decided to branch out into their own productions. "It was funny," Burke laughs. "A week after we wrapped *Death on Demand*, we actually had to do pickups for a *Sesame Street* video. We were scrubbing fake blood off the apple boxes and everything, because the *Sesame Street* shoot was done with all toddlers."

The Internet, it's a wonderful place: It presents a whole new *raison d'être* for college kids to get into life-threatening situations. In *Death on Demand* (originally titled *Web of Horror*), one enterprising young guy comes up with the brilliant idea of creating a webcast with a group of friends spending a night in a haunted house. He even throws in a porn star to spice things up. Via a seance, they try to conjure up the spirit of Sean McIntyre, a psychotic killer who had slaughtered his family in the dwelling before hanging himself. As usual, they succeed. They are then broken up into teams, each given a map leading to clues that will enable them to escape the house while the world watches.

There were several factors that drew Burke to the original script, by *Rock & Roll Frankenstein* writer/director Brian O'Hara. One of them was the fact that the killer was a

rock climber, an activity the producer has been engaged in for 12 years. This offered a whole new array of tools that could be turned into

deadly weapons. "We thought we could get a lot of that equipment and paraphernalia for free, since I had a lot of it already," the producer says. Grappling hooks, ice screws, rappelling hooks and ice picks can be very effective weapons, and Burke and Matalon did a rewrite, pumping up the murders. "We liked the fact that the characters were kind of flawed and goofy, but unaware of their flaws," Burke adds. "It's a slasher film, cut and dried. What's important in a movie like this is that you have to make the deaths interesting."

All the prosthetics and makeup FX were created by Jeremy Selenfriend of New Jersey's Monsters in My Closet shop. Having trained

under makeup guru Dick Smith, Selenfriend previously slung the gore for East Coast indies like *Eat Your Heart Out*, *Aunt Rose* and *Crazy Eights*. For *Death on Demand*, Selenfriend rigged an exploding head for a bit where McIntyre

crushes one of the victims beneath his crampon-spiked boot. With blood set to splatter everywhere, unessential personnel were sent out of the attic set while the remaining crew draped themselves with plastic bags. To insure that the stunt went off without a hitch, Selenfriend himself put on the heavy footwear.

"There was this big buildup, we were rolling the cameras, I called action and he stomped on the head," Matalon recalls. "Nothing happened. Jeremy tried again, and we get a squirt and a little bit of blood came out. We did this about three or four times."

Reshoots and a couple of scenes salvaged from the first attempts eventually saved the day, but not before the crew got

another unwelcome surprise.

"The second time we did it, we were all so ready for it not to

happen that we didn't cover ourselves in plastic," Matalon admits. "We put it right in front of the lens, and on the second try, it blew out and there was blood everywhere. I was about 15 feet away, and blood hit me. I looked like I had been blown to pieces. I had gore all over my face, all over my laptop, all over the monitors. That was actually pretty funny—now. At the time, I was pretty pissed."

Tammy, played by pretty blonde Anne McDaniels, meets a particularly grim end when she runs into the malevolent spirit, in a scene inspired by an injury suffered by the director's wife. "She ruptured her Achilles tendon and has this wicked 8-inch scar up the back of her leg," Matalon says. "I saw the pain she was in, and the notion of someone dragging you around by that was horrible. We were trying to find

ways for people not to die instantly, so the notion was that McIntyre nails her with an ice pick, tears out her Achilles tendon and drags her across the room. He then hangs her and she bleeds out."

The producer and director aren't finished with their grim tale-telling; coming up for the duo are *Maggots* and *My Sister is a Vampire*. "We spent a lot of time on this film trying to figure out what would really make you cringe," Matalon says. "Maggots is just really out there, with a bigger budget but some sick shit you've never seen before. We learned practical technical lessons about what we will and won't do on the next one."

—Dan Scapperotti

