



Sign of the cross: Anton Yelchin prepares to do battle with Colin Farrell's vampire in *Fright Night*

The Saturday interview

Frightening follow up

US ACTORS Anton Yelchin and Christopher Mintz-Plasse face unspeakable vampire horrors in the new movie *Fright Night*, but perhaps nothing as gruesome as coming face-to-face with Jedward in the Big Brother house.

The pair entered the BB house in Elstree to give winning housemates tickets to a special screening of the 3D film in the task room.

Later, from the safety of a London hotel, the *Fright Night* stars declared that the housemates were "excited to see us and they were all very sweet" (Mintz-Plasse) and "super nice and they were like stir crazy" (Yelchin).

Not that they knew anyone in there, apart from American Pie actress Tara Reid. They did witness some of the garlic-eating tasks set by BB and take great delight in recalling how Edward – or it might have been John – threw up after eating a garlic kebab.

"People were telling us about Jedward and certain people, but we hadn't seen the show, and we only met them for ten minutes. They were nice to us," says Mintz-Plasse, best known for McLovin' in *Superbad* and *Kick-Ass*.

Yelchin's teenage Charley in *Fright Night* – in which he battles Colin Farrell's vampire next door – is his third reboot role after playing the young Chekhov in the most recent *Star Trek* movie and the Reece Kyle character in *Terminator*.

Young US actors Anton Yelchin and Christopher Mintz-Plasse talk to Steve Pratt about getting their teeth into a remake of horror movie *Fright Night*

nator: Salvation. He's not particularly drawn to such material. "It just kind of lands in my lap," he explains. "If I like a character and I like the story... I mean, *Terminator* was a little different because when that opportunity came to me I felt really lucky because that was actually one of my favourite movies growing up."

"But I don't really seek it out, no. It's just the condition of mainstream film-making."

In *Fright Night*, he sees his best friend (Mintz-Plasse) turned into a vampire and enlists the help of an outrageous stage magician (played by ex-*Doctor Who* David Tennant) to battle the bloodsucker. Neither actor was born when

the original *Fright Night* starring Chris Sarandon, William Ragsdale and Roddy McDowall came out.

"I wasn't really aware of it and then when I got the script, I watched it," says Yelchin, son of professional pair figure skaters who was six-months-old when the family left Russia for the US. He made his name as an actor opposite Anthony Hopkins in *Hearts In Atlanta* when he was 11. "I didn't know it existed until I got the script for this one," says Mintz-Plasse. "I just heard that this was a remake, and I went in and got the part. Then I bought the original and watched it. I thought it was great."

He admits to being a big horror buff. "I enjoy horror movies, I saw *Blade* with my dad when I was younger. But *The Thing* is one of my favourite horror movies, and *The Strangers*. I just like violence and blood."

Yelchin, on the other hand, isn't "a huge vampire guy" but likes the original *Nosferatu* and the Werner Herzog remake. "I like cerebral vampires or gory, messed-up violent ones. I like *From Dusk To Dawn* and Gary Oldman is so good in the Coppola *Dracula*. He's amazing."

So he likes his vampires feral? "Yeah, I'm not really a fan of the suburban melodramatic lovesick..." He doesn't name names, but *Twilight* comes to mind.

The first horror movie Mintz-Plasse saw in the cinema was *Starship Troopers* – Paul Verhoeven's sci-fi drama with young soldiers battling giant bugs – when he was eight. "That was the first movie I saw boobs in too, so it was a double win for me," he says. "My dad took me to that one, it was my first impression of aliens and blood and action and stuff like that. I loved it."

What was he doing being taken to such an adult movie so young? "I had an older brother and he was 11 or 12 at the time, and my dad was a big sci-fi guy. He said, 'you're going to have to

see it sooner or later, you'll have to get into this stuff", so he took me as well."

Yelchin didn't do any sneaking into movies because his parents were "really cool with me watching things". But he didn't really see a lot of horror films when he was younger, although he did see *Nosferatu* with his dad when he was a little kid. *Cape Fear* (about an ex-con planning horrible revenge on the family he felt wronged him) was one of his favourite movies when he was little.

Michael Bay's action adventure *Con Air* also made a big impression, although it's not a horror movie. It was more a line of dialogue – which he quotes but I won't repeat in a family newspaper.

"My parents took me and then they felt really bad. At that time I could take movies but that was just too much. I remember that we went to Blockbuster and rented a cartoon or something immediately after," recalls Yelchin.

The young actor got to do some stunt stuff in *Fright Night* as he joins forces with former *Doctor Who* David Tennant's stage magician to slay the vampires.

In one scene Charley goes up in flames with his chest, arms and legs on fire – he's wearing a protective suit, so don't worry. "It's great, I love it, it's awesome," he says about being setting on fire. "The thing is you are really cold because they wrap you in layers of this freezing jelly. You put on these long Johns and they pour it down the front of your pants, the back of your pants, down the front of your shirt and the back of your shirt and it's that feeling of not being able to breathe because of the cold."

"By the time they set you on fire, it feels great because you're so cold. It feels like being next to a heater."

Both young actors have nothing but praise for Tennant. Mintz-Plasse didn't know him from *Doctor Who* but found him "super hilarious – he's the best part of this movie really, he's my favourite part".

Yelchin agrees. "He's so good, he's really so much fun to watch. On screen and then while we were shooting, it was just a blast. I wish they could have put everything that he said in there. You could make a whole movie out of that character."

■ *Fright Night* (15) is now showing in cinemas

Brian's over the rainbow

BRIAN Fortuna is hanging up his dancing shoes. The *Strictly Come Dancing* star is making his acting debut on the British stage in the show about Washington-born singer Eva Cassidy, *Over The Rainbow*.

It must be odd not dancing on stage after all these years? "You know what's strange," he says during a break from rehearsals. "It's not the lack of dancing, but not having a partner. My whole life I've always had someone there to do it with me. So on top of being exciting, acting is a challenge."

The role of Eva's brother Danny in a production that has been touring since 2004 is ideal for him. "It's the perfect opportunity to step into the show. There's no dancing – not a chance," he says.

He went to meet the management company about a different Christmas show and the possibility of joining the *Over The Rainbow* cast – which also features Maureen Nolan and Hollywood star Sarah Jane Buckley – came up. He auditioned and got the role in the new tour, with audiences at Billingham Forum next week being among the first to judge his acting.

Although he's American, Fortuna wasn't aware of Eva Cassidy before the show came along. The musical play follows her idyllic childhood growing up in a musical family, to her studio work with boyfriend and mentor Chris Biondo, the rabble-rousing live recording of *Blues Alley* and her death at the age of 33.

"I hadn't heard of her, but her popularity has shot up across Europe," he says. "I've not seen the stage show, just a DVD recording of it. But it's been re-

Strictly dance star Brian Fortuna explains to Steve Pratt why he decided to hang up his dance shoes and turn to acting

ally impressive and interesting for me to see how much research the director has done on this project. He's gone out and met Eva's family and they've been really supportive."

"Danny Cassidy is a very easy-going kind of lad, a kind-hearted musician who has a tough life and respect for Eva. He watches her back," says Fortuna.

The role suits him because he sees himself having a lot in common with Danny. His playfulness, his level-headedness and Fortuna has a younger sister too. "For someone stepping into their first acting role, this is a real opportunity for me and to step into something that's near my personality."

He's approaching this acting business seriously, having taken a year off work for acting and vocal training. "I left *Strictly*, took a step back and thought the entertainment industry was what I wanted to do long-term. But I realised that as dancer I wasn't going to be able to do it long-term because once *Strictly* ends, full-time dancing ends too."

"I want to be more like the kind of guy that's John Barrowman. I want to act and sing and dance. It was take a shot or get off the target. I had a bit of a profile from *Strictly* and could use that opportunity to better myself."

"I took the year off – and was very fortunate I was able to do that – to train with a vocal coach. That was awesome and gives me a new-found respect for what people do as actors."

"Acting is completely different to dancing. I think some people have the innate ability to do things and some don't, and I'm lucky to have that ability. I'm a born performer."

Fortuna is used to working on stage as a dancer which he sees giving him a huge advantage when it comes to acting. But he's aware of the dangers. "People are going to be expecting me to dance and think I don't know how to act," he says.

The touring aspect is nothing new to him, as dancing has taken him around the world. Ask when he began performing and he likes to answer "straight out of the womb," explaining "my mom had me at stage school – she sent me out when I was younger and forced me to do ballroom and Latin and lot of things that at the time I didn't want to do."

Dancing is now something that he loves even if he has abandoned it, temporarily at least. Having done it for so long he's bound to miss gliding around the dancefloor. "I missed *Strictly* at the start of this year. The biggest thing is dancing on live TV. When they say your name, you go on and dance... I get goosebumps just saying that."

All the same he feels leaving *Strictly* was the correct decision for him because of his long-term ambitions. "I think I have the potential to do it and if I don't do it now, when am I going to do it?" he says.

He has the bonus of being able to work in this country and the US, but isn't about to decide to put down roots in one place or the other. "I don't think you have to make that kind of decision. I spend time in the US and I spend time in England," he says.

"There are some opportunities for me in UK because of my run on *Strictly*. I love London. This has been my life and home for last three years. Long-term who knows? I would like to do stuff in the US as well. I'd like to go back and forth."

■ *Over The Rainbow: The Eva Cassidy Story*: Billingham Forum, Thursday, Sept 8 to Saturday, Sept 10. Box Office: 01642-520240 and forumtheatrebillingham.co.uk



Dance fame: Brian Fortuna is leaving behind professional dance partner Kristina Rihanoff to make his acting debut at Billingham



Stake night: Christopher Mintz-Plasse with, inset, Anton Yelchin and Colin Farrell



Eva Cassidy is played by Sarah Jane Buckley

“I want to be more like the kind of guy that's John Barrowman”

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