



Interview

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Interview With The Frightmare Theatre Podcast Creator Nathan Shelton

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For the past few weeks we've had the pleasure to help promote the Frightmare Theatre Podcast. In an effort to bring fans more information about it, we luckily got to talk to the creator of the podcast, Nathan Shelton, also known as Doctor Necropolis. He talks about how he got into horror, how the podcast started, their special upcoming Halloween show, and more...



-PH: You've been involved with acting for a long time now, but did you start to like horror before becoming an actor?

-Nathan: I grew up on horror. My father was an avid film buff and was especially interested in horror. He brought us up on the original black and white Universal horror films and told us stories of H.P Lovecraft's monsters and amazing artists such as Lon Chaney. My brother and I were always dreaming up new monsters and creating spooky worlds. I remember when I was 4 seeing *Thriller and the Making*, and it blew my mind. I knew then that I wanted to grow up to be an actor and a special effects makeup artist. I am one of those lucky people who knew what they wanted to do with their life very young... and I never really deviated from that path. I did grow up to be an actor and sfx makeup artist... and more.

-PH: What was your first experience acting in horror?

-Nathan: Well my brother and I used to make home horror movies when we were little. We would enlist the aid of our cousins and other family members to fill out our casts. They were usually spoofs or ripoffs of some of our favorite 80's horror films, with great titles like "The Great Vampire Slayers" and "And With Him Came Death". So I guess those were my first roles. Self created. As an actor we are very rarely in control over all of our projects. So getting to actually work in horror has usually been of my own doing with my own stage and screen productions. Back in college I was cast as the devil in a cheesy indie horror comedy called *MotorHome From Hell*. It was a trip. A lot of my early acting gigs in indie horror films won't ever see the light of day I believe. For a while it seemed everything I signed on to never got out of post production. It was infuriating giving so much time and energy to something that I had no control over. This is one of the reasons I started directing and producing myself; so I can make sure the project had a level of quality that I wanted and so that I could make sure it would be completed!

-PH: Now to the Frightmare Theatre Podcast. What sparked the idea to create it?

-Nathan: I have always loved horror anthology shows like *Tales from the Crypt*, *Creepshow*, *Twilight Zone*, *Night Gallery*, etc. For years I had wanted to develop a feature film or a web series that would combine this idea of anthology horror with the old school Horror Host program concept. I grew up loving watching old movies on horror host programs, where the host would introduce and interject witty and silly commentary on the film that was being showcased. It was so much fun and a great immersive way to get into the films. So, I set out with some of my theatre and film collaborators to create a web series where we could have a group of zany characters in a studio showing horror short films and commenting on them.

The films would be all original and then later open up to include fan made films to showcase as well. While we started this process, we realized that it would be quite time consuming and expensive. We were a ragtag team of creative deviants with shallow pockets. So we needed to pivot a bit. We all realized that we shared a love of old school horror radio theater too. BAM! We now had a perfect trifecta! A perfect combination of horror host, anthology horror, and old school audio dramas brought into the modern age, which could be super high quality and easier (and cheaper) to produce! With Arcane we always strived to create a less passive and more immersive audience experience. Our first screen production was the internationally acclaimed web series, **Shadow Bound**. It was a silent, black and white, Lovecraftian horror series. Very niche audience, I know. But I feel that in many ways it was a success, in that it forced the audience to be engaged with the material. They had to watch very closely and read the dialogue... and it had some great scares in it. With The Frightmare Theatre Podcast, we knew we could once again create a very detailed production where the audience would have to focus more than they usually do in this day and age. I am constantly annoyed at the level of audience interaction with the material they consume these days. Having an intricate story with fully produced sound effects, music, exceptional writing, and dynamic performances allows the audience to escape for a bit into a terrifying (and at times, hilarious) world. The more focus you give the episodes... the more you get out of them. This is why our tagline is “Turn down the lights and turn up the TERROR!” It’s a shared experience between our team of storytellers and our listeners.



-PH: Please tell us what to expect in a typical episode? Where do the story ideas come from?

-Nathan: Our stories run the gamut of horror, mystery, science-fiction, and the dark side of humanity. We strive to currait an exciting season that really takes our audiences on a winding path of terror, humor, thrills, and the absurd. I have a brilliant team of writers who are based all over the country, and we meet every week to workshop new scripts and talk concepts. Every summer we hold a writer's retreat where we sequester ourselves away for creative discussions and exercises... and lots of horror films! We all come to horror and its various sub-genres from different places, and I really have to pat myself on the back for bringing together a perfect team of collaborators. Everyone's unique viewpoint and sense of style and humor come out in their episodes. We also have our writer's direct their own episodes too, which really aids in their desired tone and flavor coming through. Our ideas come from everywhere. We are always on the lookout for a fresh idea or story concept for the show. The trick this first season has been learning to morph our ideas into the audio medium, as we all come from the predominantly visual world of theatre & film production.

-PH: The podcast includes several different characters. Can you tell us a little about who they are, and the team that helps create them?

-Nathan: Every episode is a brand new story for our listeners, but there is a sense of stability that can be found in the core "host" characters. These five characters are the employees of the fictional Frightmare Theatre studio crypt, which broadcasts across the astral plane into your homes. Every episode listeners are welcomed into the show by the mysterious Announcer (voiced by co-producer Andrew McMurtrey), who also closes out the episode and gives the show credits. Every story is introduced by the show's undead host, Dr. Necropolis (voiced by yours truly), who is often described as a mix of Fright Night's Peter Vincent, The Crypt Keeper, and someone's prissy aunt. Necropolis is sometimes joined in the studio by the station's lycanthropic manager, AL (voiced by writer Heath Hillhouse), FTP's decrepit music director, Agnes (voiced by writer Nicole McLaughlin), and the station handyman, Greg the Hunchback (voiced by writer Spencer Tilley). These characters usually have short comedic segments that bookend the episode's terrifying audio drama, giving the audience a bit of an anchor point for the show as well as a silly reprieve from the horrific scares.

-PH: What do think makes your podcast different then the typical horror podcast? What do you think fans have enjoyed most about it so far?

-Nathan: I think one of the biggest things that makes our show stand out against some other audio drama shows out there is our constant striving for the highest quality possible. We like to think of our show as a “horror short film for your ears”. Great pains are taken to achieve depth of sound in the storytelling. Every episode takes a full month to produce, not including the development of the scripts, writing, and recording. We go to excessive links to ensure every one of our scripts are perfectly polished before ever stepping into the booth to record. Once post production begins, we make sure to layer the vocal, sound effect, and music tracks in such a way to really transport our listeners into the various worlds and locations of the characters. Our stories are unique and varied, and as we move along we are always striving for diversity in our storytelling and our casts. We want our episodes to have a place for everyone to find their fears. I think another thing that sets us apart from any other show is our format. The weird mix of modernized old school radio dramas with the horror host trope in an anthology show is very unique I think... at least in a podcast. I am constantly getting messages from fans who love the strange interludes of the Frightmare host and core characters. It seems to bring back a sense of nostalgia for them, and that’s a lot of fun. We have a blast writing these weird episodes so we are so glad our fans are enjoying them.



-PH: *For someone who hasn't listened to an episode yet, is there an episode you would recommend they listen to that you know would get them hooked on the podcast?*

-Nathan: Well our hope is that any episode would be engaging enough to hook a listener, of course. Our episodes vary greatly in regards to sub genre and tone. I think as far as scary goes... episode 2 “The Wendigo”, is pretty terrifying. My mom stopped listening to it like five minutes before the end. It’s adapted from the Algernon Blackwood short story by my co-producer, Andrew McMurtrey, and I absolutely love how that episode turned out. I am a huge Lovecraft nut, and so fellow Lovecraft nerds like me should check out episode 3 “Beyond the

Firmament”, which I wrote. I love our performers in this one so much, and it’s just a lot of fun. Our listeners also responded heavily to episode 6 “Cold Call” & episode 8 “From the Drain” as being particularly horrifying. We do have a lot of listeners who enjoy horror comedies, and if that’s your bag I would check out episode 5 “One in a Million” or episode 11 “Haunted Me”. They are both hilarious, with great performances!

-PH: So we understand you have a special episode for Halloween coming up. What can you tell us about it?

-Nathan: Yes to mark our very first Halloween of our first season, we decided to take on the monumental task of creating a special Double Creature Feature! In this special episode, listeners are treated to not one but TWO amazing audio dramas that couldn’t be more diverse. The first story in the episode is a hilarious horror comedy called “That Dark and Stormy Night” which is actually based on an award- winning short play I wrote and performed in New York back in 2005. It concerns a labor dispute between Dr. Frankenstein and his hunchback assistant Fritz the night they are creating the monster and is a zany play on the 1931 classic film. Anything that can go wrong, does go wrong for the poor doctor. The second story is a very disturbing tale penned by Andrew McMurtrey, called Fire Lawn. This is an adaptation of a short film he wrote many years ago, and I think it is absolutely horrifying. Deeply disturbing. One of those creeping stories that you don’t know how much it is getting under your skin, until it’s too late. So this Halloween, Frightmare Theatre will have a little something for everyone! Plus there is a fun wrap around story with the Frightmare Theatre studio gang and some special guest characters! It has been and continues to be an insane task to get this all together, but we are in the home stretch now and so excited to launch on Halloween morning.



-PH: Here's your chance to promote anything we haven't talked about. Let us know something more about the podcast, future episodes, where people can find you, or anything else you would like to mention.

-Nathan: The Frightmare Theatre Podcast is available now on all podcasting platforms and Youtube as well! There is a plethora of fun information about the show, characters, & creative team, as well as official FTP swag & merch at www.FrightmareTheatre.com. For more information on Arcane's other productions or on series creator, Nathan Shelton visit www.nathanshelton.com. Producing a monthly horror audio drama is a monstrous undertaking. If listeners would like to join the FTP family and help support the show, they can become a patron on The Frightmare Theatre Podcast [Patreon page](#). Patrons receive all sorts of members-only content, including script downloads, behind the scenes videos, and even special mini-episodes!

Aside from producing The Frightmare Theatre Podcast, Nathan Shelton is a professional actor, writer, director, and sfx makeup designer. His next project is working on the feature sci-fi film, [To Meet The Faces You Meet](#), where he will be designing effects and sharing the screen with genre legend, [Robert Picardo](#). The film also features the voice talents of [Patton Oswalt](#) and [Patrick Warburton](#). Look for a release date in early 2022.

We would like to thank Nathan for taking the time to answer our questions. He certainly gave a great look inside their podcast. We hope everyone takes some time to listen to some of the episodes. There's a lot going on during Halloween, but please don't forget to check out their special Halloween show.

<http://promotehorror.com/2020/10/27/interview-with-the-frightmare-theatre-podcast-creator-nathan-shelton/>