





Kevin Bacon: Demon Hunter

Showrunner Erik Oleson embraces the absurd for The Bondsman WORDS: STEVE O'BRIEN

AS SMALL-SCREEN CONCEPTS GO, there are few juicier than "Kevin Bacon hunts demons". That was the back-of-a-fag-packet idea put to writer/ producer Erik Oleson in 2023, a job offer he simply couldn't say no to.

"It was very exciting to develop the tone of Appalachian noir mixed with horror," he enthuses to Red Alert, "and to bring my stamp to it." The idea had been brought to Prime Video by Bacon himself, alongside Blumhouse

supremo Jason Blum who'd been sent the treatment by newcomer Grainger David. Realising they had the DNA of something special, Amazon turned to Oleson, a veteran of shows such as Daredevil, Carnival Row and The Man In The High Castle, to shape David's concept into a potential series.

The result, The Bondsman, stars Bacon as Hub Halloran, a grizzled bounty hunter who is murdered, before being brought back to life by the Devil with an order to hunt rogue demons

concept as batshit as that, it does poke fun at itself, as Oleson is keen to point out, "I like it where the audience doesn't know whether or not they're going to be in a moving, dramatic scene, or laughing their ass off, or watching a demon get a chainsaw to the face," he says.

There are plenty of quirky touches in the show. Though Hell and the Devil aren't actually shown, our connection to the netherworld is depicted through old-style fax machines (through which Hub gets his orders). "We didn't want to show the Devil." Oleson explains, "but we really were attracted to the idea that he had this goofy front company. Pot O' Gold, that communicated by fax. This anachronistic element, it just made me laugh!"

And then there's its star Kevin Bacon. Tonally speaking, the actor's movie Tremors isn't a million miles from The Bondsman's dizzving mix of action, drama and comedy. "If you're treating the story honestly and it were really happening to you, you would have this Kevin Bacon question mark expression of 'What the fuck is actually happening?"" Oleson laughs.

"This is very much a WHAT THE FUCK show, right? Like, what the fuck are these idiots writing? What the fuck is happening? What's going to happen next? Let's be honest, we've seen countless stories about demons from Hell. We've seen countless stories about



deals with the Devil. I think what makes this show unique is its mash-up of those tropes, which are inverted and reinvented in ways that you don't expect."

Of course, Kevin Bacon comes with a ton of star power, and is credited as a producer on the series. Oleson has only good things to say about the show's 66-years-young leading man.

"Kevin is one of these people who has worked with every great filmmaker of the last two generations," he says. "The guy's literally a household name and an icon.

"I called my mom to say I had finally made it in Hollywood when I got texted a Kevin Bacon meme by Kevin Bacon! Kevin and I really built the show from the ground up, and he and I see eye to eye about the optimal way to run a television series. I've worked on some shows through the years that were, let's just sav. less than smooth operations."

In the series, the actor is orbited by a colourful cast of characters, including Damon Herriman as local villain Lucky, Jennifer Nettles as Hub's country singer ex Maryanne, and Beth Grant as his devoutly Christian mum, Kitty. If you only know the 75-year-old Grant from her roles in The Mindy Project and Donnie Darko, prepare yourself for a revelatory turn in The Bondsman.

"The mother/son relationship between Kitty and Hub I hadn't seen before on screen."

66 I had finally made it in Hollywood when I got texted a Kevin Bacon meme by Kevin Bacon 99

Oleson says about the series' central pairing. "I wanted to make Kitty a former bounty hunter herself, and give us the ability to send her out into the field.

"Beth was just hopping up and down with delight, saying, 'Roles like this aren't usually created for women in Hollywood!' She was so excited for the opportunity."

Oleson says he can't talk about season two but confirms he does have plans should Amazon okay a second run. For the moment though, he's just excited for audiences to feast their eyes on this gleefully bonkers show.

"Kevin Bacon in a deal with the Devil hunting demons - hev, come on!" he laughs. "What's that quote from the Super Bowl [Uber Eats advert]? 'Everybody loves bacon'.

"Put him in a deal with the Devil where the only way he can get out of it is to hunt down escaped demons from the prison of Hell, put a chainsaw and a shotgun in his hands and yeah, I'm in!" ●

The Bondsman is on Prime Video from 3 April.

SGI-FACT! Beth Grant isn't the only Donnie Darko alum in the show - Jolene Purdy also appears as Hub's contact from Pot O' Gold.

6 | SFX MAGAZINE | APRIL 2025