

CREATOR EXCLUSIVE

Stalk This Way

Genre auteur Alice Lowe talks about her new timey-wimey romcom

Timestalker WORDS: STEVE O'BRIEN

“LIKE A SCREWED-UP *DOCTOR Who*,” is how actor/writer/director Alice Lowe describes her latest film, a bruise-black romcom about a woman named Agnes who repeatedly falls for the wrong guy, dies a horrible death, and gets reincarnated a century or so later, before the whole grisly cycle starts over again.

Timestalker is another characteristically left-field idea from the woman who brought us the similarly deranged pregnancy horror *Prevenge* in 2016. And though it's moderately more accessible than her splatterly debut, it's not what you'd necessarily call commercial.

“I wanted to be ambitious with the film,” Lowe tells Red Alert, “because I know how unusual it is to get to make a movie, and I felt like, surely I'm at the point now where I can compromise less about what I want to do. That means that it is a risk for financiers, because it is so singular as a vision.”

Though *Timestalker* isn't a time travel story as such, the various time periods (the film pings from 1688 to 1793 to 1847 to 1980 to 2117) all intersect with each other, with recurring echoes and motifs. Lowe says she chose time periods that show “the evolution of our idea of romance.”

“That was the reasoning,” she says, “but it was also because I like all of those eras. I think we're under the illusion that filmmakers are supposed to serve the public, and Christopher Nolan is doing some sort of great service to the public by making *Oppenheimer*. And you're like, 'I think he just likes bombs, and he just wanted to put them in a film.' And I think that's okay. To me, the more specific something is, the more universal it is.”



Alice Lowe as one of the period era Agneses.



Nick Frost plays Regency Agnes's nasty husband.



Another time period, another problem...

As such, *Timestalker* incorporates elements from not just Lowe's favourite films, but many pieces of music, books and art that have caught her eye over the years. “Every single scene has got a painting that influences it, or a book or 10 books, or 10 paintings or 10 films,” she says.

“There's also those big, sweeping romance films *Gone With The Wind* and *Dr Zhivago* in there, and also Powell and Pressburger, because to me their style is so theatrical and fantastical.

“There aren't many people doing stuff that's pure fantasy, when you're telling the audience this isn't real,” she continues. “That's what I wanted to do with the colour choices in the film and the theatricality of it: that as soon as you watch it, you're like, 'Oh, this isn't trying to be real, it's not trying to be an accurate historical depiction of something. It's a fantasy.’”

Lowe fans will recognise many faces from



Who'd be a woman in 1688... in Salem?



Agnes gets woo'd with beau Aneurin Barnard.

her previous movie, including Kate Dickie, Mike Wozniak and Dan Renton Skinner, while Aneurin Barnard (*Doctor Who's* Roger ap Gwilliam) is the object of Agnes's desire in each time period, and *Interview With The Vampire's* Jacob Anderson is a character that follows the various Agneses around. Nick Frost, who Lowe co-starred with in *Hot Fuzz*, also pops up as Regency Agnes's brutish husband.

"I really feel like everyone attached was fated to do it," she says. "I mean, you have to know what you're getting into to do an independent film [the movie was shot in just 22 days], and especially one this mad. It was amazing to have someone like Nick Frost come in, because his understanding of the character was so complete."

There was an eight-year gap between Lowe's

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first and second films, but she says she doesn't intend as long a wait for her third movie. However, a mooted biopic of BBC Radiophonic Workshop whizz (and arranger of the original *Doctor Who* theme tune) Delia Derbyshire, which was intended at one point to be Lowe's second feature, has been put on the back burner.

"I don't know if that's the right film to be doing as my next movie, because it's so niche," she explains. "Sometimes projects go away,

then come back as different incarnations, which I think is kind of what happened with *Timestalker*. I didn't make a film about Delia Derbyshire, but I did make a film about a female time traveller, so they're sort of connected."

She can't talk about the next film she has planned, but teases that it's "a very twisted psychological horror" and she's keen, she admits, to do a proper science fiction movie, albeit one with an Alice Lowe twist.

"I'd love to do more sci-fi," she says, "but I never want to feel like I'm starting to apply the rules of a genre to something. I prefer to think of whatever I'm doing as its own thing, and if it happens to fall into that bracket, that's fine." ●

Timestalker is in cinemas from 11 October.

► SCI-FACT! Lowe plays a character called Captain Kransky in Duncan Jones's forthcoming *Rogue Trooper* movie.