

Nicolas Cage: The 'Ghost Rider' Interview

The actor opens up about his creative process, life goals

Academy Award-winner Nicolas Cage won his Oscar for "Leaving Las Vegas," in 1996, before going on to deliver memorable performances in movies like "National Treasure 1 & 2," "Kick Ass," "Face/Off," "Con Air," "Snake Eyes," "The Rock," "Captain Corelli's Mandolin,"



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

"Adaptation," "World Trade Center," "Knowing," and "The Bad Lieutenant." The versatile thespian has also enjoyed impressive outings in "Moonstruck," "Raising Arizona," "Wild at Heart," "The Cotton Club," "Peggy Sue Got Married," "Red Rock West," "Amos & Andrew," "Birdy" and "Fast Times at Ridgemont High."

Here, he talks about reprising the title role of the Ghost Rider, aka Johnny Blaze, in "Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance," the sequel to the original adaptation of the Marvel Comics series about a motorcycle stuntman who sells his soul to the devil in order to transform into a super-human vigilante.

Kam Williams: Hi Nick, how you been, bro?

Nicolas Cage: Very well, thanks, Kam.

KW: What interested you in reprising the role of Ghost Rider?

NC: First of all, these two guys, [co-directors] Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor, were very adamant that we overhaul the entire experience, and that this "Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance," be a separate entity in its own right, a much more terrifying interpretation. I wanted the character to be like a bad dream, something you don't fully understand that hopefully will excite you and terrify you at the same time.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles asks: How was making the sequel different? Did you feel any pressure to up the ante?

NC: There's always a pressure to excel in some way, to go above and beyond, to have the sequel provide something that's new. The way that I was able to participate in that process here is that I was actually allowed to play both Johnny Blaze and the Ghost Rider. I didn't play the Ghost Rider in the first movie. That was a stuntman. In this film, the Ghost Rider feels much more alive because I did put some thought into how he should walk and into how he should move. I was so into the character, in fact, that I

would paint my face with white and black makeup to look like a skull. And I put on blacked-out contact lenses, so I almost looked like an Afro-New Orleanian voodoo icon by the name of Baron Samedi. Oh man, I would walk around the set without saying a word to anybody, and I could see the fear in my co-stars' and co-directors' eyes. And that fear was like oxygen to a forest fire to the point where I really believed this spiritual force.

KW: Harriet has a follow-up: What's it like to play a comic book character?

NC: It opens my imagination to an infinite number of possibilities, and then I kind of have to locate the ones that I think are going to be the most exciting to watch onscreen. When you're playing a spirit from another dimension, you really can do anything and get as abstract as you want and still have a context that will work within the movie. I wanted Ghost Rider to move in a way where it would be like a bad dream. I thought about cobra snakes, and the way that they will show you their backs and sway in a rhythmic



'Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance'

motion and almost lull you to sleep before suddenly attacking. Well, I put that into the movie. And I decided to move my head in the jerky way a praying mantis does. So, I did all these things to give the movie a feeling of otherness. I was very thrilled that the directors were open to utilizing my imagination in that fashion.

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