

Edward Bass on the Importance of Relationships – In the Movies and In Real Life



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The mind of a serial killer is something that is both intriguing, and at the same time, disturbing. With motives that are primarily based on psychological gratification, these types of killers usually have a method to their madness, one that drives their actions and limits their inhibitions. Belle Gunness, America's most prolific female serial killer, is no exception.

Director, writer, producer, and Golden Globe nominee, Edward Bass, is producing a film that captures Belle's story in the most deep, dark, and irresistible way. His past films have all been accepted into major film festivals and have included

talents such as Sir Anthony Hopkins, Ashley Judd and Kevin Spacey. His extraordinary yet challenging life contributes to every project that he tackles, adding a complex and unique angle. His directional debut of *Belle* is sure to reflect his personal history, sharing the story of Belle Gunness and portraying the practice of serial killing more intimately than ever before.

The story came to life for Bass when his friend, actor, and directing coach, Bjorn Johnson, introduced him to novelist Eva Mayer, whose family bought the Gunness estate. "Eva had all this information about the family. She had been working on the story for twenty years. In fact, her great-great uncle was probably one of Belle's victims," he says. Bass spent three years speaking with both serial killers and forensic experts in an effort to try and understand the emotional profile of this character.

The captivating story of *Belle* examines the life of a woman who kills over 100 men, and eventually falls in love with one of her victims. Bass explains, "All the reasons for a deep, true love are there for her: she likes him because he's good-looking, not very powerful, and younger than her. She can dominate him." Belle's love interest soon realizes that she is a serial killer and obviously wants to leave and call the police. Instead, Belle locks him in her basement and continues to kill older, greedy men. "But, she can't kill him," Bass explains.

It is for this reason that Bass believes *Belle* is a relationship film. "It's a classic theme about a woman looking for love and never quite finding it," he says. "And when she finally does find love, it eludes her. As they say, you can't live with him, and you can't live without him," Bass jokes, referencing a famous saying. Bass is still in the casting stage of production but hopes to begin shooting the film in early 2012. He has yet to determine who will play Belle, but he has a very clear idea of what type of actress it

should be. "It needs to be a strong woman, a woman who can kill men," he explains.

Of course, one cannot help but wonder: Why did Belle do it? And Bass is quick to answer. "She was a nasty pig. She was greedy and killed for money. She got away with it. Maybe she enjoyed it, but it doesn't matter," he explains. "You can have all sorts of urges, but you have to control them."

Belle is a challenging character. She's a woman who kills men, women, and even her own children. Bass describes her as a one-woman crime wave, and the most prolific serial killer in American history. What makes Belle even more interesting is the fact that's she's virtually unknown. Despite her character flaws, he says the audience will feel empathy for her because of the multiple dimensions in which the story is told. As Bass says, "You won't really love her, but you will find her fascinating and hate yourself for it."

When asked if his past influences what he chooses to write and produce, Bass again focuses on the importance of relationships. "I have interesting relationships with people, and I bring them to each film," he says. "I think the most important thing in a relationship – which is the easiest thing to do – is honesty. Most men aren't honest, but you have so much power if you are."

Addressing his rumored dalliances with actresses in past films, he says in jest, "That's not true. Only Anthony Hopkins and I dated, and we were drunk." A little laughter and sarcasm are probably necessary given the darkness of the film. However, to defend the question on a more serious note, he adds, "It's not that I look to date actresses – I really don't. It's just that you spend every day on set, and you become attached to the people that you work with. I think it is proximity and opportunity."

When asked if he learned anything about women through Belle's

story, he ironically says, "Women are so much brighter than men in every way. There would be no war if women were in charge."