

Feeling Bullish

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Nigel Thomas has a disarmingly straightforward explanation of Matador Pictures' guiding philosophy. "The core of the business is making quality feature films that we want to see ourselves," he claims. "If we wouldn't go see that film, we won't make it."

It is a philosophy that has proved highly effective so far, with the company's involvement in an eclectic range of productions from Ken Loach's Palme d'Or winner *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* to Clive Barker's *Book Of Blood*, which wrapped recently in Scotland.

"My long-term business partner Lauri Apelian, who runs our Los Angeles office, has known Clive for quite a long time and the moment seemed right to re-visit the *Books Of Blood* stories," Thomas explains. The project came together quickly, from initial discussions in December 2006 to having it fully financed by August 2007 and getting director John Harrison on board. "When something is right, it just falls into place," he says.

The project, sold by Essential Entertainment, is seen as the first in a potential horror franchise. First published in 1984, the *Books Of Blood* consist of 25 short stories and Thomas envisages making two a year if *Book Of Blood* achieves its potential.

Barker's Midnight Picture Show and Edinburgh company Plum Films are the production partners with Matador, and Thomas envisages the second in the series shooting in Scotland later this year.

Still, Thomas is at pains to point out there is more to the company than a fondness for scary movies.

"We aim to make about four or five features a year," he says. "We were very pleased with *Outpost*, which Sony acquired, and we also made *Senseless* but we're not a horror film company. We also have the Kenny Glenaan drama *Summer* with Robert Carlyle coming out through Vertigo in the UK and *There For Me* with Paul Bettany and Olivia Williams."

Thomas was a co-founder of Matador Pictures in 1999 and has carefully nurtured the company to its current position.

"We basically got bored going around schlepping for money so we started working with a boutique finance house called Regent Capital," he recalls. "We've now set up cinema projects that are production and finance entities either for films we make or other people's films. We're first and foremost a production company but we also act as a financier to third-party films that we really, really like."

Meanwhile, Matador is in pre-production for a March shoot of Marc Forby's *Barbarian Princess* which stars Q'orianka Kilcher, Shaun Evans and Will Patton. It tells the tragic, true story of Scottish/Polynesian Princess Kaiulani and the US invasion of Hawaii in 1898. ContentFilm has international rights.

Looking to the future, Thomas envisages Matador will continue to evolve rather than make any sweeping changes. "We are looking at television because the old rule is if you want to make more films, make more television," he says. "We remain a very small company. We're probably half the size we should be, but as a film producer I have a mortal fear of overhead."

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