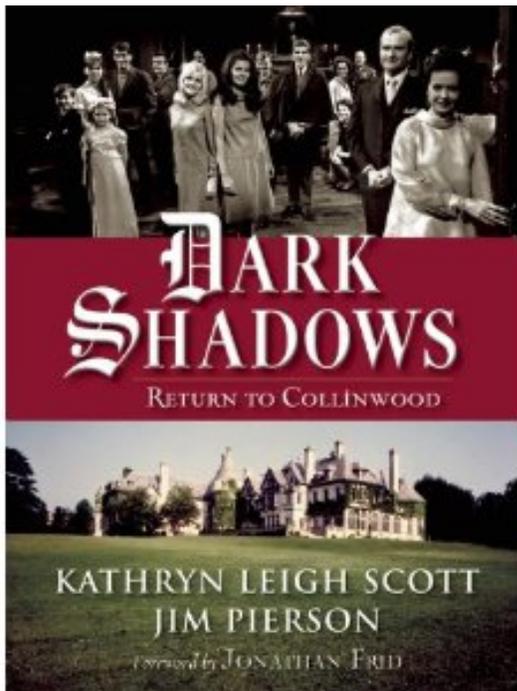


'Dark Shadows' star Kathryn Leigh Scott returns to Collinwood



Courtesy Amazon



Jim Dixon
Fanboys Examiner
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Actress and author Kathryn Leigh Scott is remembered by millions of “Dark Shadows” fans as Maggie Evans and Josette DuPrés, the doomed fiancée of vampire Barnabas Collins. In its heyday, the original “Dark Shadow”’s daytime series (ABC-TV, 1966-1971) attracted 20 million viewers. The spooky, literate, romance and horror-driven show had universal appeal—and came to be known as the program “kids ran home from school to watch.”

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She and Jim Pierson have previously collaborated on five top-selling books about Dark Shadows and a coffee table book about the career of its creator, the late producer-director Dan Curtis. Their latest collaboration is “Dark Shadows:



Courtesy Kathryn Leigh Scott

Return to Collinwood,” an in-depth look at five decades of the classic Gothic horror soap opera that made sympathetic vampire Barnabas Collins a pop culture phenomenon and prompted the **big-screen revival** starring longtime fan **Johnny Depp**, directed by Tim Burton.

You don't have to talk to Kathryn Leigh Scott long to realize she's intelligent, cultured and sophisticated. She's also very down-to-earth with a disarming sense of humor, and loves to talk about the groundbreaking series that made her a pop culture icon. She was still a student when she was cast:

“We did “Dark Shadows” in New York City in our own studio on West 54th Street, and I began auditioning for the series while still a student at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts . . . and I was also studying with Uta Hagen and working with the Berghoff Playwrights Foundation. I did a camera test with Mitch Ryan, and we both got cast. I was in the very first episode of the the series. It was exhilarating . . . and a bit scary. Television was new to me and we were live!”

Like many cast members, Scott ended up playing more than one role. What was that like for a young actress?

“I was the first of the original actors to play a second role, and it happened quite by accident. I stopped by the studio to pick up scripts and found the producer and wardrobe woman clothing a dress dummy in a torn lace gown with a veil to film a short sequence of the ghost of Josette DuPrés. Even with swirling lights and a fan billowing the shrouds, I told them it still looked like a clothes dummy . . . so they asked me to stand in for the dummy. I did, and of course I was able to lift my arms and animate the ghost and it was so effective that I did it again and again . . . for no extra pay, I may add. However, I was richly rewarded when Dan asked me to play Josette, the young fiancée of Barnabas Collins. Everyone told Dan he

should cast another actress...that it would be confusing...but he wanted me, and I was already associated with the role. Lucky me!"

As to the late Dan Curtis, creator of "Dark Shadows," Scott has fond memories:

"Dan was a bear of man, who could be moody, stormy and brusque...and he could be so very gentle and encouraging. His talents were huge, and his mercurial nature was that of a driven, creative personality."

Any "Dark Shadows" fan, of course, wants to know what she has to say about Jonathan Frid, the actor who created the role of Barnabas Collins, the most famous screen vampire since Dracula, and who was perhaps the first sympathetic vampire character, long before Edward Cullen:

"Jonathan is a wonderfully warm, dear man and delightfully eccentric, almost whimsical in his outlook on life. He goes his own way and is really not awed or impressed by anything... he's really a down-to-earth guy. Whoops, now I've totally spoiled his rakish, devilish persona!"

Not to put too fine a point on it, but there are isolated examples of takes that didn't go perfectly on "Dark Shadows" but made it to broadcast:

"There were times when we walked out of the studio dazed and shell shocked by all the things that had gone wrong, but Dan would tell us, 'Forget it, a bunch of kids and housewives will see it once and that'll be the end of it.' So years later we have to watch ourselves struggling with missed cues, botched lines, missing props, doors that won't close, dead bodies that blink and every other sort of mishap. Yes, I had my share of bloopers...we all did. But that's what 'live' TV was all about."

In 1970, while the show was still being produced, MGM distributed "House of Dark Shadows," a feature film based on the show with the original cast. It was the first feature film for many of the principals, including Scott, who reprised her role of Maggie Evans, and director Dan Curtis:

"Dan wanted to direct a movie. It really was an 'Andy Hardy' case of let's all get together and

make a movie. The budget was miniscule, and ABC insisted we keep producing the series while shooting the MGM film. It was a logistics nightmare, but most of us didn't know any better. Aside from Joan Bennett and Grayson Hall, we were new to movies...including Dan, who had never directed before."

In some ways, inexperience turned out to be a blessing. And to actors used to a soap opera schedule, even the brisk shooting schedule of a B movie could be a luxury. Joan Bennett, who played matriarch Elizabeth Collins, was a seasoned feature film veteran who had screen tested for the part of Scarlett O'Hara. She reminded the stage and TV-trained Scott to "save it for the close-ups."

"The biggest difference for those of us who had only done live television was that we got to do a second take! That was a revelation. Joan reminded me that my face would be 10 feet high, so I reined myself in a bit...and even though the pace was fast with our tight shooting schedule, it was comparatively leisurely after doing 30 pages a day on the soap!"

There were some behind-the-scenes people on "House of Dark Shadows" who were on the verge of major careers. Director of photography Arthur Ornitz had just shot "The Boys in the Band," and would also lens "Serpico," "Death Wish" and "An Unmarried Woman." At the time, Ornitz's moody, natural light approach took some criticism:

"They all said 'Dark Shadows' was going to be too dark. I think the photography is one of the things that elevates the movie."

Also working on "House of Dark Shadows" were makeup legends Dick Smith ("The Exorcist") and Rick Baker ("An American Werewolf in London.") Smith created the startling old age makeup for Jonathan Frid during a climactic scene. He also produced vampire neck wounds that were far more believable, and far more graphic, than audiences were used to at the time. Scott says they had their genesis in the veal cutlets Smith's wife was making for dinner. She stuck one with a meat fork, and Smith's creative eye saw it and he knew he had what he needed. The punctured veal cutlet became the mold for the neck wounds on the victims. The story is one of many in "Dark Shadows: Return to Collinwood."

She was almost done with her time on "Dark Shadows," however.

“My husband was a Time/Life photographer assigned to the Paris Bureau, then London. I was young, in love and so grateful to have a chance to work as an actress in England and France. Dan Curtis thought I was mad to leave ‘Dark Shadows,’ but after four years I was ready for new adventures. Only months after I left the show, the series went off the air.

I moved to Paris and did two French films, then lived in England for several years doing film, television and theatre. I worked at the Bristol Old Vic and played opposite Jimmy Stewart in ‘Harvey’ in the West End. I didn’t return to the US until I did a CBS series (Big Shamus, Little Shamus) with Brian Dennehy.”

Working with the legendary Jimmy Stewart on stage for seven months is one of her fondest memories:

It was wonderful—we became the best of friends. We had lunch together every matinee day at The Wine Bar. He paid on Wednesdays, I paid on Saturdays. We always had quiche and salad.” Stewart was very down to earth, unaffected by his international superstar status, she recalls. “He wore his success like a glove.”

Working with Stewart also came with the fringe of benefit of meeting the people who came backstage to see him while he was reprising his signature role in “Harvey,” like his prior co-stars Henry Fonda and Richard Widmark. While in England she also made the cop movie “Brannigan” with another Stewart co-star, John Wayne.

She was in England when the 1991 primetime version of “Dark Shadows” aired. She only saw a portion of one episode. “My feeling is the element that was missing was romance,” she says.

Scott read for the role of Elizabeth Collins Stoddard for a 2005 “Dark Shadows” pilot that would have aired on the WB. The part ultimately went to Blair Brown, and the pilot didn’t air. Scott refers to that attempt as “a travesty.”

Scott has successfully embarked on a career as a professional, published writer. What does she want fans to know about her latest book?

“‘Dark Shadows: Return to Collinwood’ presents five decades of ‘Dark Shadows,’ giving

context to the new Johnny Depp/Tim Burton film. There have been several incarnations of 'Dark Shadows' and this book, with all the color photographs, delves into the behind-the-scenes stories of all of them. If ever there was a labor of love, this book is it!"

Scott cameos in the **Tim Burton/Johnny Depp film**, along with her former co-stars Jonathan Frid (Barnabas Collins), Lara Parker (Angelique) and David Selby (Quentin Collins):

"The reason for doing this book is to explore this latest incarnation of 'Dark Shadows' from a very personal viewpoint. Jonathan wrote the Foreword, and both Lara and David contributed to the book because we have cameos in the film, appearing in two brief segments...it was such fun!"

Needless to say, your friendly neighborhood Fanboys Examiner tried to get as much information out of her as I could about the new movie. It looks as though fans will have to wait for the movie for answers, although Scott's upcoming book, "Dark Shadows: Return to Collinwood" offers some advance information based on her observations:

*"It's all in the book! We were lucky enough to work with not only Tim Burton and Johnny Depp, but Michelle Pfeiffer, Helena Bonham Carter, Chloe Moretz, **Eva Green, Bella Heathcote**...and Alice Cooper! It was a wonderful experience...and I describe it all in considerable detail in 'Dark Shadows: Return to Collinwood.'"*

She adds: *"For us to be on that set...it was just incredible. It felt like Collinwood. The back lot felt like Collinsport."*

Does she think the new version is faithful to the original?

"It's a hard question to answer...There's a Rip Van Winkle twist...It takes place the year after 'Dark Shadows' went off the air. There is some streamlining...Victoria Winters has become the Josette figure, but you can't stray too far."

Why do she think "Dark Shadows" has such enduring appeal?

"The stories! It's always the story, isn't it? 'Dark Shadows' is a wonderful meld of fantasy, romance and horror, with wonderful characters and sublime storytelling. In our primitive way

in 1966 we just caught that brass ring. We just got the right tone.”

Kathryn Leigh Scott and Johnny Depp have appeared onscreen in the same project prior to the new “**Dark Shadows.**” She did an episode of “21 Jump Street:”

“Alas, we didn't work together or have an opportunity to meet...however, the first words I heard when I entered the makeup trailer in Vancouver were, ‘Dark Shadows is Johnny's favorite show. Someday he'd love to play Barnabas Collins!’”

She's proud of her new book, which she feels puts the Tim Burton movie in context. She had a free hand writing it, without input from the studio, which nonetheless provided invaluable support:

“If it weren't Tim Burton and Dick Zanuck and everyone at Warner Bros. who have been so wonderful and supportive, it couldn't have been done.”

“Dark Shadows: Return to Collinwood” will be in bookstores April 1st. Kathryn Leigh Scott will be making a number of personal appearances to sign copies, starting with a book signing and talk at Barnes & Noble at 86th and Lexington Avenue, New York, New York, on April 3rd at 7:00 PM, EST.