

Filmmaker's 1st feature stars Adam West

By Eric Lach

Special to Weekend

"I was wrong, my DVR doesn't record the future," Nate Barlow's character Joe Teufel tells his best friend Steve (played by Eric Manning) in "Tales From Beyond."

"Actually," he says, "my new remote controls the world."

Barlow, 31, who grew up in Portland and went to Xavier High School in Middletown, collaborated with four other young filmmakers to create "Tales From Beyond," which was released on DVD by Anthem Pictures in October. Barlow, Manning, Josh Austin and Russell Scott worked together to write, act in, direct, produce and finance the film, their collective first feature.

A medley of four Twilight zone-like stories woven together, the film won the Best Fantasy Feature award at the 2004 Shockerfest Film Festival, and Best Sci-Fi Feature at the 2004 Shriekfest Film Festival. Starring Adam West, of TV Batman fame, as a quirky and devious bookstore owner, the film blends horror, fantasy and suspense to spin creepy, compelling tales.

Barlow's segment, entitled "Life Replay," tells the story of Joe Teufel, an ordinary guy



Nate Barlow, 31, grew up in Portland and went to Xavier High School in Middletown. He is the son of a Wesleyan University music professor and a Middletown Public Schools music teacher.

Armed with talent, an idea, and a star, the group spent the majority of 2003 shooting, and the bulk of 2004 editing. Once the film was finished, the group took their project around the festival circuit, where it won awards at Shockerfest and Shriekfest. The filmmakers then translated the critical success into their current distribution deal with Anthem Pictures.

who one morning receives a mysterious and powerful remote control in the mail. The remote controls time, and, by accident, Joe fast-forwards an entire day. He turns on the nightly newscast, only to find a report detailing his own murder. Joe then decides to rewind the world and try to prevent his own preordained death.

The film is a milestone for Barlow, who, despite having worn many hats in the movie industry, ultimately aspires to direct.

The movie's deal with Anthem is a particularly important accomplishment, as many independent productions get no distribution at all. Barlow can now boast not just a feature film, but a commercially viable product.

The son of a Wesleyan University music professor and a Middletown Public Schools music teacher, Barlow was raised in a creative household.

"My father took me to Wesleyan's film series growing up, so I got to see all these great classic films," Barlow said. "That probably initiated my filmmaking. But I always acted in productions growing up: Christmas pageants, school plays, that kind of thing."

He studied computer engineering at Carnegie Mellon University, where he took acting and film classes for non-majors as a senior.

He first met one of his "Tales From Beyond" co-creators, Manning, in one of these classes.

After graduation, Barlow decided to forgo graduate school and took an engineering job in New York City. He wasn't convinced that engineering was for him, and a trip to visit a cousin in California persuaded him to follow his passion.

"I visited my cousin in San Diego and she was putting on a (theater) production, and everything came back to me," Barlow said.

"So that's when I moved to Los Angeles. The thing about filmmaking is it is a wonderful mix of art, technology and business. It involves such a wide range of skills."

In October 1997, Barlow moved to Hollywood with big dreams but few guarantees.

"I only had a couple very slim contacts," he said. "I started out working for free on

crews."

Because some of his friends were working on independent films, and the opportunities for advancement were better, Barlow worked primarily on independent productions. His first major position came in 1998, when he produced a short film entitled "Take it Easy."

By chance, Barlow ran into his old classmate, Manning, at a movie theatre in Burbank after losing touch completely for several years. Manning had studied mechanical engineering in college, but, like Barlow, had followed his dream to California.

"We always wanted to work together," Barlow said. "We have a lot of similar thoughts, and relate to a lot of the same thing."

In January of 2003, Manning approached Barlow with an idea: along with two other friends, they would produce a series of four shorts in four months.

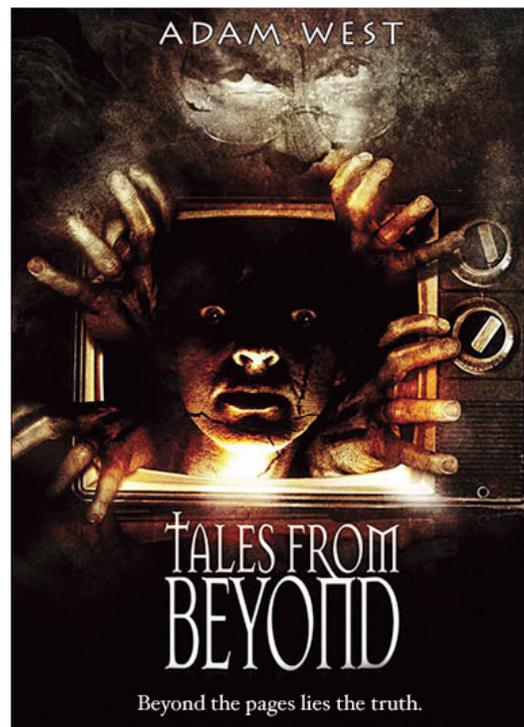
Each would write and direct a short, and each story would be in different genre. Barlow liked the idea, but in one of the first meetings between the foursome, he suggested they find a way to tie the projects together and create a feature-length, marketable movie. In a single weekend, Barlow wrote a polished draft of a couple shopping in a rare bookstore - the books they browse become the individual shorts. "Tales From Beyond" was born.

Over the next 10 months, the team dedicated their weekends to shooting film. They financed the film's budget, \$200,000, completely out of pocket, a big risk for even established movie-makers.

"I was waiting tables, working a lot of nights," Barlow said. "During the day, I was working an industry support job."

The filmmakers also took out a casting notice with Breakdown Services, a major casting service, hoping to attach a star to their production. The script caught the attention of West, who signed on to the small project.

"Adam hasn't let (celebrity) go to his head at all. He's more accomplished, but when it comes to being on set, he's a colleague," Barlow said. "At the same time, it's very cool because, hey, that's Batman. What meant the most is when he complimented my writing. Here is someone who's accomplished, working on something smaller, and there is a compliment inherent in



that."

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"For all of our careers, it's a very big step," Barlow said. "There are so many movies made that get no distribution whatsoever.

"Having the deal is the most important thing. As a producer, having your product out there is a big bargaining chip for the next thing we want to do. It's always a process of growing."

While Barlow has big plans for the future, he recently took a break from work in order to plan his wedding.

"It's funny, because planning a wedding is exactly like producing a film: you've got your cast your crew, your setting," Barlow said.

"Tales From Beyond," \$24.99, is available on DVD at retailers nationwide, including amazon.com, Borders, Barnes & Noble, Hollywood Video, Movie Gallery, and Best Buy.