



Writer Edward Gorey's classic tale gets the big-screen treatment.

Gorey things onscreen

Henson, Walden, Fox book 'Guest'

By Borys Kit

The world of Edward Gorey is coming to the big screen for the first time thanks to Walden Media, Fox 2000 and the Jim Henson Co., which are joining forces to adapt the illustrator-writer's classic tale "The Doubtful Guest."

Brad Peyton will direct the live-action feature, with a script written by Matthew Huffman.

Gorey, who died in 2000 at age 75, was an artist and writer known for his macabre bent, with works that had an ominous and somewhat Vic-

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torian air. His influence can be seen in the works of Tim Burton and in music videos like Nine Inch Nails' "The Perfect Drug," and while none of his works has ever reached the silver screen, the opening titles of the PBS series "Mystery!" done in animation style are based on his art. He also was a successful set and costume designer, earning a Tony for his Broadway production of "Edward Gorey's Dracula."

Originally published in 1957, the whimsical story revolves around a quirky family whose life is turned upside down when a mysterious, mischievous creature arrives unannounced and unwelcome, bringing trouble with him and wreaking havoc.

Producing are the Jim Henson Co. co-CEOs Lisa Henson and Brian Henson and senior vp feature films Jason Lust.

The film will be released by 20th Century Fox and Walden Media through their Fox Walden banner.

"It's hard to come up with a creature that you've never seen before in any medium, and he's a unique little creation who is very appealing without being cute or cloying," Lisa Henson said. "He's sophisticated yet simple at the same time, but it's not overly juvenile. Adults can find him cute, too."

Jim Henson's Creature Shop is working on the creature cre-

ation, aiming to stay faithful to Gorey's look but giving him expression and the ability to be articulated as a character. The producers intend to augment the animatronics with plenty of CGI.

Walden senior vp production Jackie Levine was hooked by the Gorey look.

"When you look at his works, which are very unusual, you have the written story and the visual story," Levine said. "It suggests a jumping-off point for a really exciting and visually interesting movie."

Gorey's edge, she added, "is absolutely in there, and we'll be remaining faithful to the story and expanding upon it, as we do with all of our titles."

Walden executive vp production Alex Schwartz and Levine will oversee for the company. Exec vp production Carla Hacken will oversee for Fox 2000.

Canadian-born Peyton broke into the entertainment industry when he wrote and directed the live-action short "Evelyn: The Cutest Evil Dead Girl." He is developing "The Spider and the Fly" at Universal, with Playtone producing, and most recently sold the spec screenplay "Billy Grimm," with Jimmy Miller producing, to Sony. He is repped by Endeavor and attorney Peikoff Law.

Huffman, whose credits include "Awful End" and "When the Wind Blows" at Warner Bros. Pictures, is repped by CAA. ■