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--Interview by Nic Brown--

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They say that a person's eyes are the windows to their soul; when you see Michelle Tomlinson on the screen you might just believe that is true. In [THE CELLAR DOOR](#), her piercing dark eyes show the fire in her soul as she yearns to escape from her captor. When you finally tear yourself away from staring at the eyes, you can quickly see that they are just one aspect of this actress's appeal. Aside from her beauty, Michelle also brings a wide range of talents to the table ranging from martial arts to yo-yo and pogo stick proficiency! Although she is preparing to start work on her newest feature, [GEORGE'S INTERVENTION](#), the ever energetic Tomlinson was willing to take some time to talk with B-Movie Man Nic Brown about her films, her five year plan and explain to me what on Earth it means to speak Erdega!

Nic - Michelle, how did you get your start in acting?

Michelle- I grew up in a small town in Northern New Mexico. Acting wasn't a big thing in my town, but when I was a kid, the Missoula Children's Theatre came every

summer to cast local kids and put up shows. I think when I was 6, I was a dancing tree in some theatre production they brought, BUT what I loved, even from age 6, was just being on stage. I did do various other little productions here and there... and then found my love for Video Productions in High School and learned a ton of technical stuff for the other side of the camera. Enter College where I took a Beginning Acting Class for a fun credit and... the acting bug bit me right in the butt in a big way! I wound up pursuing it and receiving my BFA in Theatre Performance at Eastern New Mexico University.

Nic -You star in the film THE CELLAR DOOR. Can you tell us a little about the film and your role in it?

Michelle- It's so funny. My costar James DuMont and I always say, "It's a family film, really." Some people have put it in the category of "Torture Porn." I am still trying to figure out where they get the 'porn' aspect for it, but I get the torture part.



Sebrina Siegel
Brinke Stevens
Sarah Swofford
<b>Michelle Tomlinson</b>
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REQUIEM FTF Feature

The film is very cat and mouse. It's set up from the beginning that Herman

(James DuMont) is your average 'guy next door' who happens to be a serial killer and locks women up in his basement and tortures them. After we see what happens to the victim who opens the film, Herman then sets his sights on my character, Rudy. Once he has her in the "cage," it becomes a battle of the wits and will of whether or not Rudy can get Herman to let her out or if she's going to have to die trying to escape. There are other twists....

Rudy is your typical average girl. She likes to hang out, party and have fun. She loves her life. She's sassy and strong and smart. That's what I think I loved most about her. Rudy wasn't some damsel in distress waiting for her knight in shining armor; she was very proactive in trying to figure her way out of the terrifying situation she woke up immersed in.

It was several days of being inside a teensy little box and shooting. The DP, Skye Borgman, and I would be squished in there together sometimes, and it was a BLAST!! I loved the whole process, truth be told.

**Nic - Rudy was an interesting character to watch on screen because even though she was trapped and at times helpless, she always gave the impression of being ready to strike back the moment Herman made a mistake. What do you do to get into character for something like that?**

Michelle- I utilize music in my work and do my best to saturate myself in the circumstances of the character. In my opinion, music can be like an umbilical cord to emotions. Then you have the story and what's going on driving the rhythm of each scene. I like finding songs that fit the rhythm and tone of each scene, do the breakdown homework of an actor and go from there. (i.e.-I used Coldplay's "Help Is Around The Corner" when Christa showed up in the basement....) It's extremely difficult to go into those "ugly" places in your psyche where fear and vulnerability live, but it's also exciting. The biggest thing I hooked into for Rudy was her inner strength and smartness. She had to have those going on as much as possible, even if in varying degrees. Bottom line, she wanted the hell out of that cage and was just waiting for the right moment!



Michelle Tomlinson spends most of her time inside this small prison in THE CELLAR DOOR



Herman (James DuMont) looks a little worse for wear after messing with Rudy (Michelle Tomlinson).

**Nic - What do you think was the most challenging part of your role in CELLAR DOOR?**

Michelle- We shot solid 12 hour days. And that's a short day, in comparison to other films I've shot and heard about. But 12 hours is respectable. In one day, the script would call for me to go from one emotional bracket/range to the extreme opposite and then fling into a whole new direction. Now while I say this was a challenge, it was also an amazing time. It's really difficult to go from being vulnerable and freaked out and stay there for several takes and angles, then go into eating chocolate cake with my captor trying to lure him into letting me go and letting him lick my fingers! But sooooo much fun at the same time.

**Nic - You also have a leading role in Kevin S. Tenney's BRAIN DEAD. That's a very different type of horror from CELLAR DOOR. Can you tell us about that role and what was it like working with the man who made the 80's classic NIGHT OF THE DEMONS?**

Michelle- Oh, Brain Dead is definitely a different flick from The Cellar Door! Brain Dead was a blast to work on! My character (Claudia Bush) was SO sassy, skeptical and smart. She just didn't take anyone's shit. Claudia would have never ended up in someone's cellar in a cage, ya know?

Brain Dead was cool for a plethora of reasons. It was fascinating to learn more about the Special FX that are done in gory zombie flicks while on set. You always see those types of clips and stuff in DVD extras, but it was much more fun to be RIGHT there.



Kevin Tenney rocks the house. I have nothing but a great deal of respect for him. He's an incredibly level headed director, even under a tremendous amount of pressure. We shot that film during record high heat, out in the middle of nowhere in a tented cabin. So the tent surrounding the cabin added about a zillion degrees of heat to the inside, as you can imagine! Kevin kept his cool, though. Besides the heat, we had some extraordinarily long days. Kevin never lost his temper, vision or sense of humor. That alone made the shoot incredible during that wicked heat wave.

A funny and little known fact of Brain Dead is that Josh Benton, who plays Clarence, and I had been dating for almost a year when we both randomly auditioned and booked the film. So we had a blast.



We thought the zombies were the flesh eaters in Kevin Tenney's BRAIN DEAD.

**Nic - I've heard from a number of actors that it is sometimes difficult to work with someone you're involved with outside of the set. Was that a problem for you and Josh?**



At THE CELLAR DOOR's DVD launch party: Hilary Six (Producer), Matt Zettell (Director), Michelle Tomlinson (Rudy), Chris Nelson (Writer), James DuMont (Herman)

Michelle- As with anything, it has its pros and cons. But as the old saying goes, you don't really know someone until you work with them or live with them! We're still together, so that definitely says something. I advise everyone to work with their other half at least once; it's a very quality learning experience!

**Nic - I understand that you have a new project that you're getting ready to start on is that true?**

Michelle- True! It's what I call a Horr-omedy. A Horror/Comedy called George's Intervention. I've been dying to work with JT Seaton since I read one of his other scripts Inner Demons. Long story condensed to Reader's Digest, he contacted me to audition for one of the leads in George's Intervention. He and his Business/Writing Partner, Brad C. Hodson, wrote George's in the style of Arrested Development, Shaun of the Dead and Death At a Funeral. A lot of the comedy is smartly written under the text and fed by fabulous circumstances. There's plenty of gore to please the hardcore horror

fans, of course!

The tease is that George's friends have gathered for an intervention for George. The twist is that George is a zombie who's addicted to eating people. Gnarley, right? Who knows where those people have been? It's really not a healthy way to live....☺ Mayhem ensues from there!

It's going to be a fun ride and is filled with extremely talented people I'm excited to work with: Lynn Lowry, Carlos Larkin, Peter Stickles, Shannon Neil, Eric Dean, Vince Cusimano, Adam Fox, Brian Nolen and Matthew Herrick.

**Nic - Your resume is very impressive, not just for the roles you've had but also for the many skills you list. Among those listed that caught my eye was Kung Fu. Is that something you do outside of your acting career?**

Michelle- I did train for about a year and a half. I've been on a bit of a hiatus and am about to pick up training again. What I did study is called Kwan Mu Do. It mixes Hand Techniques with Foot Techniques and Weapons. It's absolutely a blast. I've never tested for a belt—that's not where it's at for me. I'm

interested in the challenge of combinations, kicks and blocks and whether or not I can execute them. I am thinking about training another style called Moto Bu Ryu. I don't know enough about it, but I believe it mixes Tae Kwan Do with Aikido and perhaps one other style.... I'm intrigued though, and intend to check it out. But I love, love, love it!

**Nic - I also have to ask about the "speak Erdega" skill. What's that?**

Michelle- Erdega. It's a really silly language. I was SHOCKED when I watched the flick "Thirteen," they actually use a version of Erdega in there and I didn't know people outside of New Mexico had even heard of it! It can kind of be compared to Pig Latin. You put the word "Erdega" in between syllables and sometimes at the start of words, if the word starts with a vowel. Like your name: Nerdegic Bredegown. My friends and I used to speak it from Middle School on and I'm just one of the dorks that never forgot how to speak it!

**Nic - Many actresses want to move beyond their roles in front of the camera and take a turn at writing, directing or both. Do you have any desire to take your career in that direction?**

Michelle- ABSOLUTELY! I'm not ready for those added responsibilities though, I have to admit. My friend Brooke Lewis inspires me to produce, and my friends Alexis Adkins and Kimberly Amato really inspire me to write. I just recently had a powerful vision for a Feature Film I'd like to write and produce from the ground up. I'm too young to play the character in mind, but it certainly gives me some time to put my ducks in a row to set out and accomplish the vision. It's a drama that intertwines several aspects of a life and how they meet together to complete the whole. Now that I've been extremely ambiguous, I will end by saying YES! The desire is in me. It's in my new 5-Year Plan. ☺

**Nic - When you're considering a role, what do you look for?**

Michelle- Honestly? Solid writing. I know that sounds horribly judgmental, but when you have quality writing, it's a great journey to embark on. You know your director has a clear vision. The story is the nucleus of EVERYTHING. If the story is weak or hard to follow, it's hard to figure out where your character really fits. I like characters that I can sink my teeth into and have a good time. Especially if it's brutally challenging and stretches me as an actor, I enjoy every second.

**Nic - What are some of your favorite films to watch?**

Michelle- That's a massive range! I'm a huge fan of the Harry Potter series. Love the books. Love the flicks. I also grew up watching all the Nightmare On Elm Streets, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>s, Halloweens, etc. with my Dad. Eli Roth's Cabin Fever rocked and so did Hostel. I love Vietnam War Flicks—but I'm pretty picky with those. I think 84 Charlie Mopic is my favorite in that genre. The Indiana Jones series is a blast and so is the Matrix series. And then I love the Kill Bill flicks.... What Dreams May Come with Robin Williams is amazing, as is High Art and Gia. I love anything Jason Statham's in; he's incredible to watch and I absolutely want to work with him one of these days!

**Nic - How does Michelle Tomlinson spend her free time?**

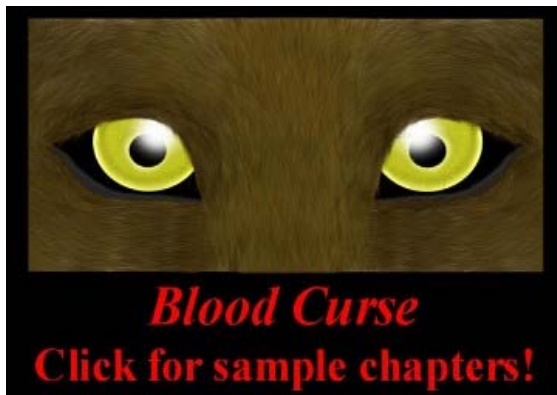
Michelle- Free time.... Those words are like a golden harp to my ears. I'm usually pretty hard pressed for free time, but I do enjoy a lot of things.... I like hiking, rollerblading in Venice, playing air hockey, crocheting, (It's true! I'm working on a huge baby blanket right now!) taking trips back to New Mexico when I can and reading... I love to read.



**BRAIN DEAD**  
MICHELLE TOMLINSON SARAH GRANT-BRENDECKE  
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When you're done reading about Michelle Tomlinson, check out B-Movie Man Nic Brown's new novel:

["Blood Curse: Werewolf For Hire Book One"](#)



To Learn more about Michelle Tomlinson visit one of these websites:

Her Website page:

[www.michelletomlinson.net](http://www.michelletomlinson.net)

Her Myspace page:

[www.myspace.com/mojochicken](http://www.myspace.com/mojochicken)

Her IMDB listing page:

[www.imdb.com/name/nm1009589/](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1009589/)