

Comic Coverage Weekly

New Jersey Nerd News

DECEMBER 3, 2016 JANUARY 16, 2017 KATELYN FATZLER

Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel Interview

During the New Jersey Comic Expo on Nov. 19 and 20, Vincent J. Roth, co-director, co-writer, and star of the upcoming film, Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel met with Katelyn Fatzler for an interview on the first openly gay superhero to appear on the big screen. Following is a transcription of the interview prepared by Brian Kane.

Katelyn Fatzler: Can you give us some background on yourself?

Vincent Roth: Background on me? On me personally?

KF: Yes.

VR: Okay. I was born and raised in Philadelphia. I'm a corporate attorney by trade. I have been what is referred to as a cosplayer for several years, and then one company that I worked for, their marketing department developed, to promote a new product, a character... and I wore a costume of that character and they liked it so much they started taking me to trade shows, to essentially be the mascot and essentially be the character... and that's what led me to create a character of my own and a movie of my own.

KF: So what got you into writing?

VR: Oh well. I have six degrees, so I've written so many papers, and I've had so many professors critique me, and my degrees are in different things: one in sociology, two in business, and three in law. In my job I have to explain complex simply, in an order that makes sense, and then to wrap it up at the end. So that sort of writing guided me for the kind of writing for the script. It was not too much of me getting into writing, it was more like the costuming I was focusing on and making the character real, and the writing goes part in parcel with that.

KF: So did you have the costume in mind before you wrote the character then?

VR: I had the character in mind for many, many years. Long before I created the costume for the movie.

KF: And was there influence for the character being gay, because that's a big part of the promotion for the movie as well.

VR: So for myself, I feel very fortunate that I had an easy time coming out. I was 17. I figured, if I was going to put a super hero on the screen, I wanted to do something meaningful, and I looked at the other super hero movies at that time. X-Men was just getting started, then Affleck's Daredevil, so when I was making the first Surge of Power, it was really more of a spoof of the super hero genre. I was kind of like poking fun at the conventions of the genre: the lame weaknesses, freak accidents giving powers, hair and glasses that disguise you, and things like that. So I took the ambiguously gay subtext of superheroes and enhanced that, but it was important to me personally because there wasn't representation. Even now with superheroes, ten years later, there still isn't an openly gay superhero on the big screen. In the comics, you see that gay relationships are more becoming more common with characters... They are starting to show up on the small screen, but this is sort of my contribution to the genre.

KF: And I know this is your fifth screening, so can you explain the reception the film has had so far?

VR: Well I kind of know what the audience is, I have three audiences. There's the gay audience that wants to see a gay superhero, there's the sci-fi/comic geek audience that love the super hero genre, that get a kick out of the spoof and references. I put a lot of references. There is a lot of homage and it is jam-packed with Easter eggs, and so that's for that audience, and the third audience is the folk that just love to see all of the celebrities that they know from all the sci-fi shows.

There's Nichelle Nichols who was Uhura on the original series of Star Trek or Lou Ferrigno who was the incredible Hulk, or even like Linda Blaire who was from the Exorcist movies... so there's fan that want to see these actors that they know from all these things. So I've picked these notes up over time and so I designed the sequel to cater to all of them. I already have expected the response I'm getting. People are laughing and cheering and clapping in the places I expected, and sometimes they even do in places I didn't necessarily think I was making a joke, but somebody thinks it's funny... So it's really fun, and I love watching a movie with an audience so I can hear the audience and hear if did I do my job, do the right thing. So far it has worked well with audiences and it has done well so far.

KF: So you mentioned the celebrity cameos, is there anyone you enjoyed working with the most?

VR: Quite several of them, trying to think. In the first film, we shot Nichelle Nichols one day, and we shot Lou Ferrigno the next day, and this feeling welled up inside me like, "Oh my God! I'm making a movie!" Here I am with two childhood heroes of mine who are in a movie with me, on screen, in front of a camera. I was like thrilled to death. I had three featured celebrities in the first one: Lou, Nichelle, and Noel Neill. They just came back for the sequel, so it was delightful to have the back, bringing more friends along. So Nichelle brought her star trek friends along, Lou brought some of his friends as well, and others came in as well. There are so many of them that were delights. Linda Blaire and I seemed to connect very well. Even though we weren't on set together, I'm not in any of her scenes, but just the process of working with them.

I was thrilled to death to read lines with Shannon Farnon, she played Wonder Woman on the Superfriends for ten years. Before Lynda Carter was Wonder Woman, before Cathy Lee Crosby was Wonder Woman, Shannon Farnon was Wonder Woman. Even though our characters didn't interact a lot in the movie and her stuff was shot separately, but working with her and hearing her voice. I was like, "This is my Wonder Woman" who's now the personality of my car that turns into a robot, it's so cool. Another actor that I really enjoyed working with was John Newton who played Superboy on the Superboy TV show. I had met him many years ago on a convention, we were on a panel together about "Playing the Hero". He, I, and another actor were on it together. I met him and I kept his contact

information. I had mentioned to him, we weren't making the sequel at the time, but I told him how it turned out for the first film and played the trailer. Years later I reached out and he said that he remembered me, and that I was passionate about my first project and that worked out.

KF: Since you mentioned working with all the big celebrities that you have in the film, was it difficult getting some of them on board?

VR: Some. I mean that there were some that... you know at this point it's a testament. There were 20 celebrities in the first film and over 50 in the sequel, so now having dealt with over 70 managers, assistants, handlers, and themselves as a director. I don't always get the celebrities on board and sometimes there is a reason for that. Maybe they don't like the project, sometimes it's the schedule. It took me a lot of effort to get Lou back for the sequel. At first I was wondering like "Did he not like the first movie? Did he not like working with me? Or is it really his schedule?" So I talked to his handler and we tried several times and he was always busy. Then we struck it at one point, and they said "Okay, he can do it on this day" so we put a crew together and we shot it. So it was a really good indicator that it wasn't that he didn't like the movie, it was that he actually was that busy. So sometimes that happens. In the first movie, people were like "Oh you should get John Barrowman." He himself was very open...

KF: That would be amazing.

VR: Yeah that would have, but you can see him in Big City Chronicles webisodes. We have a third project we're about to launch called Big City Chronicles where I dress up as Surge and I interview celebrities who have either played superheroes or some sci-fi characters, and one of them includes John Barrowman. So I was able to interview him on there. He wouldn't come on board (for the first film), his agent was like "he has three tv shows he's trying to do, and he's flying around" so schedule-wise it wouldn't work for him. John said yes, the agent said no, but that's a timing thing. Sometimes they really are busy with another project, I don't take personally.

Obviously a lot of people have come on board. So I don't take it personally if someone says no. If someone says no, that's just an opportunity for the universe to provide something better. There were other people who were considered for the Omen role before Nichelle, who said no. And overall, not to put people in tiers, but when we arrived Nichelle she was the best of them and the most recognizable of them. Even though the others said no, we tried and still arrived at the right one for that role. So that's a part of my personality. So I don't take it personally when someone says no. I just say "Hey, wasn't meant to be and God will provide something better."

KF: So is there any reason that, I know the first film came out in 2004?

VR: The first one started screening in 2004 and was released in 2006. So the screening phase is like we're doing now: getting exposure, playing in festivals, playing comic conventions, getting some attention from the media. So we screened August of 2004 through March of 2006 and we got picked up for distribution. We did a limited theatrical release, played in a few cities, then it had a home release. So it was in Blockbuster, Tower, BestBuy, and other outlets. Then we streamed on Netflix for several years. Then it had done its thing. So now we stream the first one on our website, there's a page on the website so they can go watch the first movie. Now with the sequel, we had just finished it in August, had our premier in September. So we're screening now, we just started screening, and as you already know, this is already our fifth audience.

KF: Is there any reason for the 10 year gap?

VR: Well um, life. Life gets in the way. I got another degree. There was some troubles between the two companies I work for. There were a lot of legal problems that interrupted a lot of projects, and the time needed to do this was something I thought about. The emotions going on and then getting the degree, but that in mind, we were really pushing to make a sequel. I figured in the end, God's timing is perfect.

Everything gets done when it gets done. We started a couple years ago and there were different starts and stops. We sort of reinvigorated a couple years ago, in 2014, we were like "Okay, we're gonna do this" and so we kind of did it within the means that we had. I was very busy with my attorney life, so I'd take off time, little chunks of time needed to do certain scenes, to do the story but also financially because I couldn't afford to do the whole thing. So I was like I can afford this, I can take time to do this, and do it in chunks until it was done and then finally August. I hope there's not- so people already asked, "Are you going to take another ten years before you make the next one?" I hope I don't take ten years. In fact, I've already put some things in motion. And at that point, I think I probably will be finished, from a movie standpoint. I want to do a trilogy, and that story arc. Originally I wanted to do four films, but I think the trilogy model seems to be more standard. So I will keep with the trilogy standard.

KF: Great, because you did answer a question I was going to ask. I was going to ask you where will be the finale, where is this leading up to?

VR: Well, part of it. The first film is introducing, so it's an origin story. So it's the superhero condition. The second one, we do start to explore more of the villain, but we do explore more about homophobia. We learn about that through my villain's parents, Linda Blair and Gil Gerard play the homophobic parents of the Metal Master. So the sequel gives us a bit more landscape to work with. The origin story, obviously that's establishing the world, but being that the character's already established. We can now expand it a lot more. People also commented, not only that they wanted to see more about the villain, but they wanted to see more of the romantic side of Surge, so there's more romantic interest with his character. So I think that sort of expresses what I wanted to be in the sequel. We see at the end of the film that we start introducing other superheroes characters. Another colleague of mine has their own superhero characters which are introduced at the end of this one, so we're going to build a team after this, and then have a gay superhero in a team amongst non-gay superheroes, and see their interaction.

So that's where I'm headed. A lot of folks' characters are coming in at the end, so the third movie will be an ensemble.

KF: Final question, have you done any acting before this?

VR: A little bit. I had some training at the Weist-Barron School of Television Commercials. I did a couple of commercials and then I dabbled in bit in the drama department in undergrad. So not a lot of acting experience, but I have done onstage performances so I am comfortable in front of audiences. I had that in law school, and in trial and my trade so I am comfortable. Also the costuming and cosplaying, being in front of the camera has made me comfortable.

Advertisements (<https://en.support.wordpress.com/about-these-ads/>)



INTERVIEWS

- COMIC NEWS
- SUPERHERO
- LGBTQ
- SURGE OF POWER
- NERD
- VINCENT ROTH
- NEW JERSEY COMIC EXPO

