



# HOLLYWOOD scriptwriter

**-COVER-**

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**Rolfe Kanefsky's  
Creepy Thriller  
Nightmare Man  
Already Taking  
Home Awards!**



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Joseph Greco's Feature Film Canvases has been a long journey in the making.  
Kitty Kavey Triumphs Over Life's Milestones Winning over 30 Awards**

Dear Readers,

We are at the end of another year and Hollywood Scriptwriter magazine appreciates your loyalty as a reader. We look forward to another great year. Our "E" magazine, aka Electronic publication has put us in line with a paperless society. We are able to go farther, faster, and our subscribers are loving it. Write us and tell us what you think! We always welcome your comments.

Make it a great day!

Angela M. Cranon  
publisher

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Dedicated to  
Children, Alexandria & Jeremiah Charles



## Synopsis

"NIGHTMARE MAN"- (Genre: Horror) ELLEN MORRIS believes that there is someone or something trying to get her. Her husband and psychotherapists believe she's a paranoid schizophrenic. On the way to the institution, the Morris' car breaks down. When her husband goes to get gas, Ellen stays and gets attacked by her mysterious assailant, The Nightmare Man. Escaping into the nearby woods for her life, Ellen stumbles upon a country house where two young couples are spending the weekend. Now, everyone is in danger. But is the killer real or is it only in Ellen's mind. Is he outside or already someone we know inside the house? As people start dying, nobody knows who they can trust or who is the real Nightmare Man!

# Rolfe Kanefsky's Creepy Thriller Nightmare Man Already Taking Home Awards!

by Angela M. Cranon

photography by Elizabeth Tichenor



Rolfe Kanefsky

Enter Rolfe Kanefsky, an award winning independent writer, producer and director whose talent transcends genres, who has not one but two feature films set to be released on more than 1200 screens in theaters throughout the country on November 9, 2007.

The much buzzed about films, which further reflect Kanefsky's unique ability to cross over into various genres, include the hilarious mainstream comedy *Blonde and Blonder*, starring Pamela Anderson and Denise Richards, which was written by

Kanefsky and the highly-anticipated horror flick *Nightmare Man* which Kanefsky wrote, directed and produced. *Nightmare Man*, which marks the latest on a long list of acclaimed horror titles generated by Kanefsky, also has the distinction of being one of the "8 Films To Die For" during this year's Lions Gate and After Dark Films Horrorfest 2007.

Following its big screen release, *Nightmare Man* will then be released on DVD through Lions Gate in early 2008 and will air on the Sci-Fi Channel later next Fall. *Nightmare Man* has already proven to be a fan and media favorite, winning numerous awards on the film festival circuit including two Best Director awards which Kanefsky won at the 2006 Horror, Sci-Fi, Fantasy and The Supernatural Film Festival and the 2006 IFFYNX Festival. Given a prestigious "double triple thumbs up" by Horror-Fantatics.com and hailed as a "must see" by KillerReviews.com, *Nightmare Man* has also been recognized with Best Picture awards as well as Best Actress for *B – Scream Queen* Tiffany Shepis (*Abominable*, *Bundy*, *The Hazing*), Best Supporting Actress, Best Score, Best Cinematography and Best Editing among many others. Kanefsky recently enjoyed success with another one of his films, the teen comedy *Pretty Cool Too*.

A sequel to his original *Pretty Cool*, *Pretty Cool Too*, did so well last June in such top chains as Blockbuster and Hollywood Video that a *Pretty Cool 3* is already in the works. What is really cool is that Kanefsky wrote his first *Pretty Cool* film five years before *American Pie*. Kanefsky began his filmmaking career in



1989 at the age of 20 years old as the writer, producer and director of *There's Nothing Out There*.

The film, which was also produced by Kanefsky's mother Alice Kanefsky

(former Broadway star Alice Glenn) and father veteran film editor Victor Kanefsky, was hailed by The Hollywood Reporter as a "Cult Hit" and has been recognized by many as a precursor to the blockbuster Scream franchise. To date Kanefsky has written 26 produced feature films of which he has directed 15 including film festival favorite Tomorrow By Midnight starring Jorge Garcia (from the hit series Lost), Carol Cane and Alexis Arquette (Pulp Fiction, Bride of Chucky) and Jacqueline Hyde, which was released by Warner Home Video.

Kanefsky was also the writer, producer and director of another critically acclaimed cult classic The Hazing which was considered one of the best horror flicks of 2004 and won best feature at the fright Fest Film Festival in 2006.

The film, which stars Brad Dourif and Brook Burke still airs on such prominent cable outlets as Showtime and Starz among others. Kanefsky currently has numerous new projects in the works including the horror film Caller Unknown, which he wrote and is set to direct, and will be produced by Marc Frydman, the thriller Hitchcock, Nebraska which he co-wrote and is attached to direct and Nevermore, a horror thriller he is in pre-production on with Maxim Entertainment that is based on the tales of Edgar Allan Poe.. As if he was not busy enough, Kanefsky also wrote Horror World a big budget action horror script that is currently being shopped around by producer Ed Tapia. Horror World is a screenplay finalist at L.A.'s Shreikfest 2007.

HS talks with Kanefsky about his career going strong.

Where were you born?

I was born in New York City; I lived in Manhattan until the age of three and then moved to Westchester County in upstate New York. My parents still live in the house that I grew up in.

How has your upbringing geared your career toward filmmaking?

Well, my father, Victor Kanefsky, was and still is a film editor; [He has] Over fifty years in the business and he ran his own post house in New York, Valkhn Films. He concentrated mostly on documentaries. He structured and supervised the post production editing system for the "National Geographic Explorer" series.

However, between acclaimed documentaries like "Style Wars", "Just Crazy About Horses", "U.S.S. Indianapolis: Tragedy at Sea", "Polar Bear Alert" and "Our Latin Thing", he also edited and/or supervised such cult flicks like "Ganja And Hess", "Just Before Dawn", "Bloodbath", and "Bloodsucking Freaks" to name a few. My mother, Alice Glenn, was a singer/dancer on Broadway, appearing in shows such as "By Jupiter", "Coco", and "Fade In/Fade Out". She would have been in the Hollywood movie version of "Hello, Dolly!" but was pregnant with me at the time and couldn't do it. So, luckily both my parents were very supportive of my career choice, although they let me follow my own path. They produced my first professional film, a horror/comedy, "THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE" and my father edited the film as well. We recently did it again, working as a family to make my latest horror flick, "NIGHTMARE MAN".



Rolfe Kanefsky directing Nightmare Man.

Without them, my career achievements would have been much harder to obtain.

Your films touch a variety of genres.

What are the benefits to being able to write more than one kind of genre?

Well, I love most genres of films. I grew up on the comedies of Abbott and Costello, was scared to death when I was ten by the 1979 version of "Invasion Of The Body Snatchers". I have always loved Danny Kaye musicals, Neil Simon plays, Agatha Christie mysteries and the films of Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, and Preston Sturges so my tastes naturally affect my writings. Comedy has always come easy for me. Horror scared me but I realized at a very early age that horror was the way for young filmmakers to break into the business. So, I started watching every horror film and quickly became a fan of the genre. I've tried to write a script in almost every genre because it's always good to have something that producers and studios are looking for. If you can have a comedy, a horror, an action script, and a thriller, it increasing your odds for finding that job opening and in this business it's best to be prepared for any chance that appears.

What are some of the disadvantages?

The only disadvantage I can think of is that Hollywood loves to pigeon-hole you. If you have success in one genre, they

want you to continue writing in that genre. Wes Craven has been so successful with horror, it's almost impossible for him to break out although he tried with "Music from the Heart". My favorite story is William Peter Blatty. He wrote the script for "A Shot In The Dark", the second Pink Panther movie, and after that people thought he could only write comedy. So, years later he wrote a book and then a screenplay entitled, "The Exorcist". After that, everyone said he's a horror writer and can only write horror. The fact is he's just a great writer! And a great writer can write anything!

Explain the difference in your approach to writing a horror film versus a comedy, or a romance film versus an action film?

Well, I have always written scripts, no matter what genre, from the audience's point of view. The worst thing to do is bore the audience so I try to keep things moving. If it's comedy, it's the jokes, if it's horror, then keep the scares coming, if it's a thriller, keep the suspense going. It's all about beats.

Comedy is a little trickier.

If you're writing slapstick, then it's really up to the actors and director to deliver the gag but if its dialogue, there has to be a pacing to the jokes to get them to work. I always go back to "His Girl Friday" as an example of great comedy writing. With horror, it has more to do with the atmosphere. You have to create a sense of dread and keep building the suspense, but it always comes down to the pacing. You want your script to be a page turner so it's a fast read. I just try to always keep things moving along. Same goes for when I'm directing.

Do you mix genres in a film? Explain, the purpose.



Rolfe Kanefsky



I have mixed genres in my films and scripts many times. I love to mix genres but Hollywood studios aren't so keen on that. To them it makes it a harder sell but look at "North By Northwest". It's got comedy, action, suspense, romance, scares and it all works together beautifully. For a great discussion about this issue, I always recommend Richard Rush's "The Stuntman" and then watch his amazing documentary on "The Sinister Saga of the making of The Stuntman". He explains why studios have so much difficulty mixing genres. Personally, I love to mix comedy and horror. Growing up watching "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein", "Fright Night", "Evil Dead 2", "An American Werewolf in London", and "Tremors"

shows just how successful this combination can be when done correctly. A good laugh



can help catch the audience off-guard when you hit them with a scare. Spielberg talked about this with "Jaws" and how effective it can be. A laugh that turns into a scream or a joke to break the tension for a moment can be a wonderful thing. Many of

my flicks, "THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE", "THE HAZING", and "NIGHTMARE MAN" have humor to heighten the horror and vice versa.

How did you learn how to write films?

I knew I wanted to get into the film business at the age of four; writing is just something that came naturally. I was always writing, even before I knew how to write. I would dictate stories to babysitters and make them write them down. When I finally started myself, I wrote my own Abbott and Costello stories. Then I moved into original "Winnie the Pooh" tales and then I finally created my own characters, "Nick and Neel"- a cross between Abbott and Costello and The Hardy Boys. I was basically writing screenplays but in novel form. I started buying scripts at Sci-Fi and Horror conventions and at age 14, I went to HB Studios in New York City and took my first screenplay class. During that class, I started writing my first script and never looked back. More scripts followed all through high school and I made some into home video feature length movies. By the time I graduated Hackley high school, I had written five screenplays and made two of them into features shot on video. I continued taking writing courses at Hampshire College and I did a weekend seminar of Robert McKee's screenwriting course. Much of this was helpful but like anything, the more you do, the better you get.

Tell us about your experience of branching out to become a director and producer?

Well, like I said, I was always writing but I also wanted to be an actor when I first started. In high school, I was in a few plays, but found they didn't have good directors. English and History professors were directing the plays and they didn't turn out very well. I started directing myself but quickly realized that even if you do a good job, if the play is badly directed, it's not going to work and if I was going to put this much effort into something, I want to be proud of the final result. So, I stepped behind the stage and camera and started directing my fellow



actors. I found this a lot more satisfying. So at fourteen, I knew I wanted to be a director. I was always producing my own homemade productions but I didn't become a real producer until years later. "JACQUELINE HYDE" was the first feature I co-produced, wrote and directed because I wanted to make sure the money went to the right places. I had recently worked on some very badly produced projects and had enough, so I took more control. However, I don't really enjoy the business side of producing. I'd rather stick to writing and directing.

You've directed 15 of your 26 produced feature films. What made the difference with each film in deciding whether or not you wanted to direct your own film?

Well, some of my produced scripts have been work-for-hire, where I was paid to write the script. Obviously those I couldn't direct even if I wanted to. Other scripts have been bought by producers who already have their own directors in mind. If it's a script that I'm willing to sell for money, I happily step away and don't get involved. Other scripts that I really want to direct, I've refused to sell. In every case it's different. With *BLONDE AND BLONDER*, that was a script that I wrote over ten years ago. I really wanted to direct that one but a producer came to me when I needed the money and optioned the script. In the contract, he would make "best effort" to attach me as director, but that didn't happen. The money came from Canada and it became a "Canadian content" production which meant the director would have to be Canadian; and since I'm not, I was out.

You were also the writer, producer and director of another critically acclaimed cult classic *The Hazing*, *Tomorrow By Midnight*, *There's Nothing Out There*, and *Nightmare Man*, to name a few. What gets into your head to write these kinds of horror movies? What sparks the scene after scene?

Well, "THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE" was the first professional low-budget film I ever made. It was shot in 1989 when horror was still very popular. My parents and I looked at the scripts I had written and decided that "TNOT" was the most commercial and affordable project. Seven actors, a house in the woods, and an alien creature. My twist

was that it was really a comedy and a send-up of all those horror clichés which made it different from all the other horror films of the time. Unfortunately once we finished the film, the horror genre collapsed. The comedy saved the film and it eventually went on to become a cult classic thanks to "SCREAM", but that's another story. I didn't make another horror film for almost 14 years. "THE HAZING" was my return to the genre and once again was a horror/comedy since "SCREAM" helped bring the genre back into fashion. So it was the industry demand that helped trigger the screenplay writing. Horror films are fun to write and fun to make, especially when I put my sense of humor into them.

They are quirky and offbeat. You can get away with a lot of things in horror that other genres won't allow. Dark comedy is accepted in horror films. You can also address issues in a subtle way. "JACQUELINE HYDE" has a lot of statements hidden under all the gore and nudity if you want to look for it. I was taking the Robert Louis Stevenson classic and melding it with "Looking for Mr. Goodbar". "TOMORROW BY MIDNIGHT" is more of a thriller that dealt with the issue when movie violence and real life violence collide.

It was my "Clerks" meets "Dog Day Afternoon" homage. In my opinion, it is my best work to date and has never been released in America. Typical. "THE HAZING" was an attempt to do "Breakfast Club" as a horror film with a lot of inspiration from Sam Raimi's "Evil Dead" trilogy. "NIGHTMARE MAN" takes a very simple story and twists it around so much that it surprises the viewers, it also allowed me to take horror fans on a journey through different decades of horror films in the same movie. As for what sparks each scene, it all comes down to the story. I rarely outline my scripts. I have a concept and maybe a good opening scene and then I just start writing to see where it takes me. This does not work for everyone but I really enjoy it. If I don't know where the story is going then the audience can't know either. I think that's why most people are surprised by the twists in *NIGHTMARE MAN* and they can't predict who the heroes will be in *THE HAZING*. I don't follow the rules on purpose and I love to set up cliché situations so I can flip it all around. Take a formula and play with it to make it

something fresh and original. I also usually try to make the characters think intelligently. If the audience can put themselves in the character's heads and the characters are trying to survive in a realistic but smart way, the viewer will be much more engaged with the events on screen. I discovered this by going to many horror films growing up where people in the audience would yell at the characters on screen. "Don't drop the knife! Don't go into the basement alone! Stay away from the open window!" I just take those comments and have my characters say those things and try not to do the stupid actions that get them killed. It makes for a smarter film and you can root for the people on the screen.

Since there are so many horror movies on the market, how do you avoid duplicating what an audience has already seen?

Well, I try to watch everything so I know what has been done. It forces me to figure out new ways to move the storyline along. A killer stalking a bunch of teenagers in the woods has been done a thousand times but it doesn't mean that you can't do it well and make it effective. Just avoid lazy writing. Like don't have a cat jump out of nowhere. Why a cat? A cat been done to death so think of something else. Twist it around and the audience will appreciate it. When I made *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE*, it was favorably received but there were two different camps.

The non-horror fans liked the film but thought it was a standard silly script. The horror fans though it was very intelligent because they understood what I was doing. I think the same can be said for *THE HAZING* and *NIGHTMARE MAN*. On the surface, they are very traditional stories but inside the structure of the film I mix things around to give it a freshness that people can enjoy. That's my goal. It's like a game a filmmaker can play with the audience; see if you can guess what I'm going to do now. If you can smartly surprise them, the audiences love it!

What puts you in the mood to write a comedy film as opposed to another genre?

Well, I like to jump around with both the movies I direct and the scripts I write. Mixing it up helps keep it fresh. I tend to jump back and forth mostly between comedies, thrillers, and horror scripts. Just

this year, I tried something new just for the hell of it. I had a good idea for a horror script and a good idea for a comedy so I decided to try to write them both at the same time. The comedy script one day and the horror script the next. I went back and forth like this for a few weeks until both scripts were completed. Most of my writer friends thought I was nuts to voluntarily write this way but in the end, I wrote two new scripts and one was just optioned by a Hollywood producer and I'm attached to direct it early next year. My moods change all the time, but whenever I start a script, I always finish it. That's a rule I stick by. I don't commit myself to something unless I intend to follow it through to the end.

How do you create your titles to a film?

Titles come from different places. **THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE** wasn't named until I finished it. I just looked through the script and a character said that line. I thought it was perfect for the attitude of the movie. **TOMORROW BY MIDNIGHT** went through a lot of changes. It's a black comedy thriller about a group of college friends who take a video store hostage. My original title was "VIDEO STORE...The Movie!", but the producers were afraid that the word "video" would make people think it was a direct-to-video movie. So many titles were thrown around. The film is called **MID-NIGHT 5** and/or **AFTER MIDNIGHT** in Europe. **THE HAZING** was about a college hazing so that title came pretty easy. **JACQUELINE HYDE** is an obvious pun on "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and I was surprised nobody had done it before. **NIGHTMARE MAN** came from a line in a Broadway play that I saw. I thought it was a great simple title for a horror film. Titles are important. **BLONDE AND BLONDER** says it all. That's the title and the tagline all rolled into one. It immediately says "Female Dumb and Dumber", and since it stars Pamela Anderson and Denise Richards, the tagline-"It's a No-Brainer"- is practically a given.

What would be your most valuable lesson in filmmaking as a screenwriter, producer and director (each separately).

As a screenwriter, I think the biggest rule is not to overwrite. A script is not a novel and people in Hollywood generally don't like to read. If they see lots of big paragraphs, they get scared, so try to keep

descriptions down to a minimum. Also, avoid camera direction. Directors like to direct their own movies. The trick is coming up with the best description to tell the action and story in the shortest way possible. I tend to look at shows like the original "Twilight Zone" to see great examples of telling a cool story in only twenty-four minutes.

Television format forces you to make everything tight, and Rod Serling was a master storyteller. Great characters, interesting situations, twists, and morals, all in less than a half hour. As a producer, you obviously need to understand the limitations of money and time while acknowledging the creative side. A good producer understands what the story and director are trying to achieve while keeping the finances in check. When I'm the writer, director, and producer of the same project, I have to have a very clear idea of what I can and can't do within the budget and schedule. Luckily, if I'm all three, I can simplify the script depending on the money, and force myself to creatively tell the story as a director with limited means. Roger Corman, who I worked for, was an expert at this and it was a great training ground for young filmmakers to make a movie with a limited budget.

The thing is, and this is what Hollywood doesn't seem to understand, is that it is much harder to make a film without any money and time. If a filmmaker can pull that off, when he or she gets a real budget, it only becomes easier. But they think that if the filmmaker has never worked with millions of dollars, it's more risky. I think the filmmakers who began their careers with multi-million dollar music videos and commercials might know how to make a slick two or three minutes but don't understand storytelling and tend to just throw money at any problem that arises. I think as a director, the most valuable thing to know is how to work with actors. Many directors get caught up in the technical aspects of making movies. But remember even if you've got that great crane shot with wind machines blowing and the streets are all watered down and lit with that cool blue neon moonlight, if you don't care about the people on the screen, it's all meaningless. Story and characters always matter the most. Don't forget about your per-

formers while you're setting up your cool shots.

What changes have you made over the year as a writer to help improve the quality of your films?

Well, like I said, I think the more you write the better you get so the longer you keep at it, the more you improve as a storyteller. Styles develop over time and you learn from your successes and failures. From previous movies, you can see when the pacing is off and when the dialogue is overwritten. With each new script, you hopefully hone your craft and improve. I'm a fast writer but every writer works differently. My script to **NIGHTMARE MAN** was written in seven days and it has received some of my best reviews as a writer. "Taxi Driver" was written in a weekend. "The Breakfast Club" in a week. Other scripts take years. It all depends on the writer. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to write.

Why have you decided to work independently?

Well, I don't know if that was ever my decision. I always wanted to make movies but I never had an "in" with a Hollywood studio so the choice was fairly simple. Over the years I've kept making movies and have found the money to do so with independent producers. I also made most of my movies without any kind of representation. Getting through those studio doors isn't easy. The advantage is that in a low budget independent film, you have more control over the final product that I like. If I'm proud of the final result, at least I know I did the best job I could. The disadvantage is that without enough time and money you have to make compromises all the time that changes your vision. So, that's the trade off. I'm not against trying to make a studio film but the opportunity has never really presented itself...yet.

What does it really mean to work independently?

It means you may have the freedom to do something that is not totally mainstream with less hassle, but you will have limitations of time and money. Independently you usually have less interference from producers who are trying to appeal to every demographic of moviegoer. The final film may end up being more pure to your original vision. However, I have worked for many low budget producers on



independent films who have made my life a living hell. When money is pocketed on a low-budget film, you really feel it. There's only so much you can do when you have 100,000 dollars or less. It's quite challenging making a feature length movie in five days. I've done films for \$25,000 to \$1.2 million with shooting schedules ranging from five days to 24 days. Very limiting but I have gotten to make my movies my way more often than not so I can't really complain.

Does working on your own decrease your chances of ever getting your films to the big screen?

Yes! It is very hard to get a film released theatrically in general and the studio system controls most of the screens. Without that kind of muscle and advertising money, it's next to impossible. My very first and most recent films have been in the theaters because we four-walled them, meaning paying the theaters to open our film for a week. It's an expensive proposition and you will most certainly not make your money back but it can help get you on the map. If you add the cost of advertising, you could wind up spending a lot of money for this exposure. However, a good review in the trades or the L.A. Times could mean a lot career-wise. The little guy can't compete with the studios but some are trying, which is why I'm so excited about festivals like "HORRORFEST 2007: 8 Films To Die For", where eight small independent horror films get to open in 300-500 screens nationwide for a week. Getting my little independent flick, NIGHTMARE MAN into this festival through After Dark Films and Lions Gate is pretty amazing, and it shows that small breakouts can still occasionally happen. It's like winning the lottery after working for twenty years at it.

What are your future plans to make this happen?

Well, unless I get hired by one of the major studios, there's not much you can do except maybe cast Tom Cruise or Tom Hanks in the lead role. Not the easiest thing to do. Names are important but even big names don't mean you'll get a theatrical release. I just saw the straight to video flick "The Contract", starring John Cusack and Morgan Freeman, directed by Bruce Beresford! It's not bad and if those names don't give you a theatrical, what can you do? My advice is just to try to make the best film you can. Distribution is a whole

other world and many times it has nothing to do with how good or bad the film is. It really comes down to what studio is behind it because they have the deals with the theaters, independents do not.

What's next for you?

Immediately next up is the theatrical releases of my comedy BLONDE AND BLONDER and my horror flick NIGHTMARE MAN, both coming out on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007. After that, the next feature on the slate might be another horror film I wrote and will direct entitled CALLER UNKNOWN with producers Marc Frydman and Alain Siritzky. I also have two projects in Louisiana that independent producer Blaine McManus and his Maxim Entertainment are trying to finance. One is a horror thriller based on the work of Edgar Allan Poe entitled NEVERMORE and the other is a supernatural comedy called DEMONS SUCK! I'm the writer and director on both projects. I am also attached as director and am the co-writer of a thriller called HITCHCOCK, NEBRASKA, with my college friend, Paul Carro. I think it could be a great project.

I also wrote a spec action horror script called HORROR WORLD that is doing the Hollywood rounds and recently won top honors in the full-length feature film competition at L.A. Shriekfest 2007. It's the first time I ever submitted a script into a competition and am very happy to have it recognized out of more than 400 entries. So, basically I'm trying to have as many irons in the fire as possible and am currently finishing up a teen comedy script called TIME TWISTER. Now, I just need some money to film these suckers!

Final Advice ?

Final advice: Well, I've been plugging away professionally in this business for almost twenty years. Being a screenwriter, producer and/or director is a major commitment and it can take a long, long time to "make it". But I feel if you stick with it and refuse to let all the rejection get to you, a career is possible. And if you're making a living at it, you are a success even if you're not at the level you want to be. Enjoy the ride and keep your sense of humor. To borrow a famous horror movie ad line, "Just keep telling yourself...it's only a movie, only a movie, only a movie...".

