

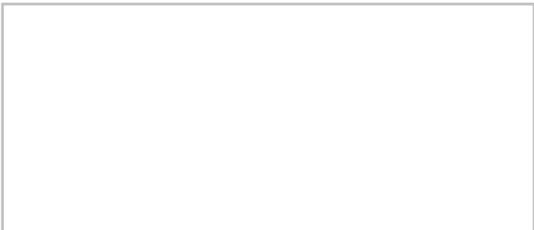
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# Full Moon Productions Offers Four Times the Frights

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To look at Amber Arnett-Bequeaith, one would not automatically think about blood-curdling frights. This petite mom of four, with her sing-songy voice

definitely doesn't look like a mistress of mayhem, however, she is co-owner and vice president of one of the country's most petrifying and successful haunted attractions. Kansas City, MO-based Full Moon Productions ([www.fullmoonprod.com](http://www.fullmoonprod.com)) is a development company that has established itself as a pioneer in haunted house production and its creepy roster currently includes: The Beast, The

Edge of Hell, Macabre Cinema, and The Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe.

“We offer different elements in all of our attractions, Arnett-Bequeaith notes. “We examine the psychology of fear – phobias, that natural adrenaline rush – that’s what we are looking for.”

## **The History and Future of Frights**

The Edge of Hell has the distinction of being the oldest haunted house in the United States. When it got its start in 1975, no one had done anything like it and every year since then the owners continue to up the

ante in terms of fresh frights.

“Edge of Hell is based upon my great grandfather, who was a pastor, Arnett-Bequeaith reveals. “The theme is that if you live life on the edge, you will encounter demons, hounds of hell, and travel through purgatory. Visitors travel up five stories and see a glimpse of heaven, but they did too many bad things and then slide down the straight shoot into the belly of The Beast.”

The Edge of Hell is also where a very special denizen of the dark resides – a 20-foot live anaconda named Medusa. Medusa is in fact, the longest snake living in captivity, according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Where The Edge of Hell is old school scares, The Beast, which was founded in 1991, is America’s largest haunted house and pioneered the open format design, meaning visitors are not in a line, but can rather wander throughout scenes. “It is more theatrical,” Arnett-Bequeaith describes. In The Beast, guests enter into a Louisiana

mansion. Then they go through a swamp where there is a live alligator which helps to enliven the fright when an animatronic alligator lurches from the dark to nip at guests. Then visitors time travel to London in Jack the Ripper's time, and wander through the ¼-acre Werewolf Forest. The fear there is based on not being able to find your way out. "We've created the forest so there is more than one way out," Arnett-Bequeaith says, plus, she reveals that the layout always changes, much to the chagrin of her husband. "He gets mad because he brings friends and they expect him to get them out but he can't find his way out," she laughs. Ultimately, the only way out of The Beast is a four-story straight slide.

As if The Edge of Hell and The Beast weren't enough to keep Kansas City residents reveling in screams, Full Moon Productions has packed two more attractions into this four-block radius. The Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe is completely inspired by the works of the macabre author. "The Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe is all about Poe," Arnett-Bequeaith explains. "The frightening elements are all things that in his time were scary. You're not going to see a "Freddy Krueger" in the

Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe. Being buried alive was more common back in Poe's era and that was a huge fear of his that you see in all his work. That is the sort of claustrophobic fear that we try to recreate in the Chambers."

Speaking of Krueger-like scares however, that's where the Macabre Cinema comes into play! The Macabre Cinema is a charity attraction, which has been a rewarding challenge for Arnett-Bequeaith. The Macabre Cinema is a haunted 1930s movie theater. Visitors will go in and sometimes will sit down in the antique seats, not realizing there is so much more to the experience and it doesn't occur in the seats. There is a slit in the movie screen that guests pass through and then they become the victim in the horror movie. "It's all about how you are going to respond," Arnett-Bequeaith explains "We have original movie sets that have been donated, including sets from the original Hellraiser Pinhead and The Mummy Scorpion King. We also have mannequins from Walking Dead." Overall, cinema-goers wander through more than 30 dramatic scenes housed throughout the four

floors and, if they dare, the dungeon.

## **Behind the Scenes Scares**

Inhabiting this world of chills and thrills are close to 300 seasonal workers, many who look forward to coming back every year. The audition process is far from benign, as haunt hopefuls are tested to see not only what talents they bring to the table, but on their stamina as well. Arnett-Bequeaith describes that when auditioning it might be all well and good that a performer has a great blood-curdling scream, however if he or she can't maintain that same level of scream all night until the last group leaves, then it doesn't matter. "Every scene needs to be of the same high caliber and the actors have to meet that," Arnett-Bequeaith asserts. "It changes the scene completely and basically it's like we are putting on a Broadway show every night. The energy has to be the same, so we will actually take the time to train our actors and give them tips such as how to project from the diaphragm."

The exhausting schedule doesn't deter performers from coming back year after year. "Our applause comes in the form of screams," Arnett-

Bequeaith says. “In some ways it’s harder than a Broadway show. You don’t just perform one time and receive roses – you have to do it again and again.”

## **High-Tech Horror**

The Full Moon Productions family has seen the evolution of the industry from their early days as haunted attraction pioneers. Today, the ever-expanding capabilities of technology and the expectations of visitors is the greatest challenge. “It’s just amazing compared to when my family started in 1975,” Arnett-Bequeaith muses.

Full Moon Productions’ haunts utilize laser beams that guests trigger as soon as they walk into certain rooms. These beams set off the computer programming which is timed to trigger certain features, like the alligator that lurches out at unsuspecting patrons. Cameras are tuned into each room to monitor visitors’ progress. “It has to be tuned into and watched,” Arnett-Bequeaith explains. “It’s all about the timing. Every one scares differently and it’s a very volatile reaction. If you are

even two seconds off – it can be all the difference.”

The need for constant evolution drives many of the changes within the Full Moon Productions family of attractions. Each attraction is changed slightly every year in order to maintain the interest and keep things fresh for returning patrons. In addition to that, larger scale enhancements are also in the works. “We are working on a complete re-set of the Macabre Cinema and we are installing a zip line,” Arnett-Bequeaith exclaims. “We are cutting a hole out of the side of building, so riders will go flying through that opening, over the road about 400 feet right into the parking lot for The Edge of Hell. We are so excited about that and hope to have it done by the 2013 season.”

## **The Family That Scares Together**

Full Moon Productions is in its third generation of being a family-operated outfit and the next generation is already poised to continue the tradition. Currently Arnett-Bequeaith is co-owner with her uncle, Monty Summers, who also serves as president. “I am very blessed to come from such a creative family,” Arnett-Bequeaith admits. “It’s a

blessing and curse I guess, because when you decide creatively what to do next – you can't sleep.”

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