

Filmmakers look to Twitter, Facebook for stars

CANNES, FRANCE: Looking for a tattooed demon to be killed by an undercover virgin in your sex club? Well, as any good horror film producer knows, the best place to look these days is on Facebook and Twitter.



Image via [123RF](#)

The Z-list purveyors of schlock at Cannes Film Festival, hawking such memorable titles as *Jurassic Prey* and *Sky Sharks*, say social media plays an increasingly crucial role in casting actors.

When Ted Chalmers, president of Tom Cat Films, happened across the Facebook page of tattoo model Rachelle Nicole Hoffman, he knew she would be perfect for his new film *Angel of Darkness* that he was filming in Arizona.

Hoffman already had 200,000 followers on Facebook, thanks to her distinctive body art.

"All her tattoos have zombie films on them, so it was a dream come true for her to be in the film," Chalmers told AFP at his stand in the Cannes marketplace.

"And for us, her existing fan base is a great help. She can blast the film out to her fans, she helped generate financing and she'll help promote when it comes out," he added.

Hoffman ended up playing a tattoo artist who gets possessed by a demon in an S&M club. "As everyone knows, demons can only be killed by virgins," said Chalmer. "So she ends being killed by an undercover reporter... or something like that."

The biggest stars do not necessarily have the biggest followings on social media.

Top of the pile is currently Vin Diesel from *The Fast and the Furious*, who has 92 million fans on Facebook, eclipsing bigger names such as Tom Cruise (8.9 million) or Leonardo DiCaprio (12 million).

"Those who are good are those who value their connection with their fans," Oliver Lockett, a social media expert, told Hollywood website *The Wrap* recently.

Using social media to pick out actors has become a trend at every level of the industry.

"*Mockbuster*" producer David Rimawi, whose company The Asylum is responsible for the now-legendary *Sharknado* series, says they are often looking for actors with an existing fan base.

"I'll get names for actors, and one thing we have to do these days is jump on Twitter and see how many followers they have. That's become part of who gets cast," said Rimawi.

His own films tend to fish slightly further downstream for actors, compared with the two or three million Twitter fans desired by major TV and film studios.

But he has turned to actors such as Casper Van Dien (of *Starship Troopers* fame) whose 100,000 followers will help promote *Avengers Grimm*, which bears a certain resemblance to *The Avengers* blockbusters.

Tara Reid, with half-a-million followers, has been a prize asset for *Sharknado 2: The Second One* and *Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!*

In the past, producers tended to look primarily at IMDB Pro, a website that ranks actors based on how often their profile is viewed.

IMDB Pro "is a very powerful site for Hollywood... but that's sort of taken a back seat to Twitter. If it's something for television, tweeting live will drive people and it becomes much more important," said Rimawi.

When *Sharknado* aired on TV station SyFy in 2013, it generated 318,000 tweets during its broadcast and became the most watched movie in the channel's history, according to stats agency Nielsen.

Social media is ultimately just a new way of demonstrating your clout as an actor, said Chalmers at the Tom Cat Films stand.

And humans don't quite match up to the allure of an angry Tyranosaurus Rex, he added, proudly tapping the poster for *Jurassic Prey*.

"The bottom line is that anything with a dinosaur is going to sell."

Source: AFP

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