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## Johnny Depp: "I'm a big fan of revenge"

"Revenge is one of those things most people don't want to admit to, but I think we all have it secretly in there," says Johnny Depp. "I'm a big fan of revenge."

But he won't admit to exacting vengeance himself. "I really can't implicate myself," he laughs.

The 44-year-old has just won a Golden Globe for his performance in *Sweeney Todd*, his sixth collaboration with director Tim Burton.

The film also picked up the award for Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy (the awards ceremony was a one-hour press conference, thanks to the Hollywood writers' strike).

"It's about a man obsessed with avenging the horror that happened to him," explains Depp, talking to BT Vision at the *Sweeney Todd* premiere in London.

"*Sweeney* is as much a horror film as a musical," said the *New York Times*. "It is also something close to a masterpiece, a work of extreme – I am tempted to say evil – genius."

*Rolling Stone* said it was "scary, monstrously funny and melodically thrilling. A spellbinder of breathtaking beauty and terror. And Depp is simply stupendous."

Depp plays barber Benjamin Barker, incarcerated for 15 years for a crime he didn't commit. On his return to London, Barker reinvents himself as the murderous *Sweeney Todd*, who slits his customers' throats so his partner in crime Mrs Lovett (Helena Bonham-Carter) can bake them into pies.

Despite his throat-slashing antics, *Sweeney Todd* isn't painted as the villain of the piece. He's the victim of scheming Judge Turpin (Alan Rickman), who's responsible for Todd's false imprisonment.

Rickman's roles in *Die Hard*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* and the *Harry Potter* series have earned him a reputation as one of cinema's best villains, but he claims he hasn't played many baddies. "Very few actually," he insists.

"I don't judge characters. That's the worst thing you can do. I just step into their shoes and walk in their worlds. I think Judge Turpin's a sweetheart," he laughs. "I don't chop anybody up and eat them!"

*Sweeney Todd* is certainly gory, with copious amounts of fake blood used on set. This was made to a unique secret recipe, says Tim Burton. "It's very sticky, very sweet and burns your eyes."

"Blood is a part of this story. I've seen productions where they try to scrimp on it and the production's really lost something."

*Sweeney Todd* is based on Stephen Sondheim's Broadway show. "It's an amazing thing," says Burton. "You say you're going to make a musical with lots of blood and no professional singers about a serial killer and cannibalism – and you're told, great! That gave me hope there are still people in Hollywood willing to try different things."

None of the main cast, which also includes Timothy Spall (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) and Sacha Baron Cohen (*Borat*), had sung professionally before.

"I never even sang in the shower," admits Depp. "I'd be too mortified. This is the first time I've ever sung. I did do a musical many years ago, *Cry-Baby*, but technically it was only half me. It wasn't me singing. Tim's the only person brave enough to let me try."

"Once I got over the initial fear, it was kind of enjoyable. Sondheim's melodies and lyrics were a real pleasure."

"We thought we were going to lip synch when we got on set," he explains. "But the only way to do it was belt it out once again on the set, which was extremely mortifying. Everyone's very close and you just feel like an idiot."

"I don't think anybody would want to hear the early days of work on that song," says Rickman of his own vocal performance. Would he consider another musical? "If somebody writes something as good as this one."

"I loved every second of it," says Bonham-Carter. "I'd do another one in a minute." But Depp is less keen to repeat the experience. "I enjoyed it. Would I ever do it again? No!"

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### Alan Rickman

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### Helena Bonham-Carter

Catch the *Fight Club* star as evil Bellatrix Lestrange in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

### Sacha Baron Cohen

Most recently seen in *Borat*, comedian Sacha Baron Cohen made his name with satirical TV series *Da Ali G Show*.