



dotted line?" he explains. It's an offer that works, even (or especially?) on Oscar-caliber actresses who may not be getting the juicy big-screen roles they once were. When she's not having sex with a minotaur (R.I.P.), Bassett's Laveau gets to luxuriate on a throne made of bones in the back room of her hair salon and proclaim things like "She done messed with the wrong *weeetch*." Meanwhile, Bates tears through Madame LaLaurie's vitriolic speeches like a raptor. "I love going to work," she admits. "Every scene has something exciting in it for me to do, and part of the fun, too, is reading every new script. I never know what's coming." Says Bassett, "I think one of the really satisfying things about the show is that more is more. More is best!"

This is a show where you can begin playing a teenage witch with a lethal libido and then, seven episodes in, have a three-way with two formerly dead, now-resurrected pals. "After I read the first script of season 3, when I found out I had a killer vagina *and* I rape this boy, I literally had a mini freak-out in my room," remembers Farmiga. "But then I calmed down. I was like, 'All right, sweet.' At this point most of the cast knows that being involved with *AHS* means going big or going home. "I'm really an actress who wants to have a peg leg and a black tooth," admits Paulson, whose character has had a sex scene with snakes and been blinded by sulfuric acid. "To me, the more insane, the harder, the more challenging, the better." Says Gabourey Sidibe, who plays human voodoo doll Queenie, "You sign up knowing that you're going to do something cool and knowing that you're going to stretch as an actor...and my stretch was masturbating for a minotaur."

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**"If you've already died, can you die again? That's like the American Horror Story riddle."**

THE NEXT DAY, Denis O'Hare (otherwise known as Miss Robichaux's mute doll-collecting butler, Spalding) arrives on set to chat with director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon and to take memento photos of his character's creepy lair. Sitting outside the bedroom, O'Hare says he didn't learn about Spalding



(Clockwise from top left) Bates with Raeden Greer as her daughter Pauline; Emma Roberts; Denis O'Hare

being bumped off until he read the script. "On a character level, it's cool," he says. "But on the practical level, you're like, 'Does this mean I'm out of a job? Do I pack up?' But I respect Ryan and Brad's sense of trajectory and know they're going to take care of the characters in the proper way." (Thankfully, O'Hare will stay employed: The actor later found out that Spalding will return as a ghost.)

Upstairs, in the main studio, Jessica Lange is hunched facedown over a toilet. While Fiona has enjoyed years as the coven's most powerful witch and therefore leader, a new Supreme whose identity is the main mystery driving *Coven* has arrived and begun sucking the life out of her, causing her health to deteriorate and her hair to fall out. As she prepares to fake-vomit, Lange—wearing a patchy blond wig and a black robe—remarks drolly, "Oh, we have so much fun!" Her costar in the scene, Emma Roberts, stands nearby clad in a red silk nightgown and studded designer heels. "Nothing says *witch bitch* like Prada," observes costume designer Lou Eyrich. Murphy was intent on having every character sport a "signature" look, so Eyrich worked with him to give each witch a distinct style. "We decided Marie's signature piece is the pantsuit," she explains. "Madison was a fur. Fiona was black sunglasses and black dresses. Nan was pilgrim chic. Misty was Stevie." (That'd be fashion shorthand for upcoming guest star Stevie Nicks.)

Lunch comes around 3 p.m. and is served buffet-style on an empty soundstage on the lot. Over steamed broccoli and chicken, the cast screens episode 5, "Burn, Witch, Burn!" Cheers erupt as Farmiga's Zoe defends the group from a pack of zombies by tearing into them with a chain saw. (Farmiga later says that the scene is her favorite *AHS* moment so far.) Lange walks through the lunchroom in full Supreme mode, sunglasses on, pausing only for a quick moment to sprinkle

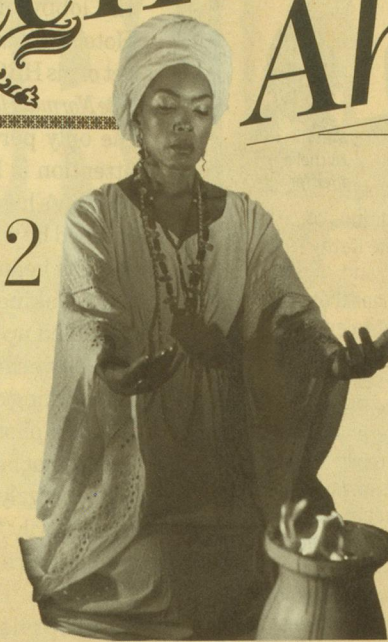
# The Horrors Ahead

What can you expect before *Coven* comes to a close in January? Co-creator Ryan Murphy shares some secrets.

By  
**TIM STACK**

1 **A new Supreme will be chosen**

*Coven*'s Jan. 29 finale, which reveals Fiona's successor, will unfold a tad differently from previous *AHS* conclusions. "It usually is a very nihilistic ending. But this year is different because it's an incredibly dark-comedy ending, which I like," says Murphy, who teases, "Nobody has guessed who the Supreme is."



**Marie Laveau isn't as invincible as she seems**

While the immortal voodoo priestess appears to be unstoppable in her quest to bring down her rival witches, Murphy says, "There's a very vulnerable, scary thing that happens to her that forces her to regret how hard she's been on the coven witches."

3 **The witch hunters become very important**

We know that Laveau hired Cordelia's husband, Hank (Josh Hamilton), to kill off the Salem bloodline. But Hank is actually just one of many witch hunters. "He's part of a group called the Corporation that has been around since European times," explains Murphy. "They have deep, deep pockets."

4 **That three-way has repercussions**

In the Nov. 20 episode, Madison, Kyle, and Zoe engaged in a dead-dead-alive ménage à trois that leads to tension (and not the sexy kind). "It makes them even more jealous than before. The last five episodes are really about those four [Robichaux] girls—five if you count Cordelia—and it's about who's going to rise and who's going to fall," says Murphy.



5 **We haven't seen the last of the religious-fanatic neighbors**

Promises the producer, "Joan [Patti LuPone] has a big story coming up. She has many episodes left."

6 **Cordelia will regain her sight**

Miss Robichaux's headmistress will see again...at least for a while. "She does get her sight back from something Myrtle does that's incredibly gory and devious," explains Murphy. "She's also going to find out a lot of secrets about her husband that throw her into a midlife-crisis breakdown, which is very juicy."

7 **Madame LaLaurie gets her (really, really vicious) groove back**

Once the racist sadist gets her head reattached, all hell breaks loose. "This is one of the most evil women of all time. At a certain point she's gotta fight back," says Murphy. "Those witches are going to rue the day they brought her into that house! When she gets her head back on, she's out for vengeance."

8 **We will see the Seven Wonders**

The new Supreme will perform the much-talked-about series of challenges that prove her dominance. "We have not done that ceremony [yet], and I always knew that would be the last episode."

9 **Get ready for voodoo Satan**

That would be *Coven*'s take on Papa Legba, who stands between the living and the dead. "You find out that's how come Marie Laveau looks so good—because she sold her soul years ago. He's a very dark, funny, popular spirit."

10 **And introducing... Stevie Nicks!**

Murphy persuaded the Fleetwood Mac icon to appear as herself in the Jan. 8 episode—and yes, there will be singing. "It's part of Fiona's ruse, in that Fiona is trying to get the true Supreme to reveal herself because she needs to stay alive. So she tells Misty Day that the Supreme gets so many great things like tickets to the Oscars and the Met Ball. So she brings Stevie Nicks in as a gift to Misty to prove to her that if she exhibits more power, she'll get that and more. Then the other girls come home and see Stevie and Misty singing, and it starts them trying to move much quicker to prove that they are the Supreme."

