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Ballet Austin Mines Poe for ‘A Tale of Madness’ Cinematic Trailer

By [T.L. Stanley \(https://www.adweek.com/agencyspy/author/tstanley/\)](https://www.adweek.com/agencyspy/author/tstanley/) on Mar. 18, 2024 - 1:30 PM

Ballet Austin, for its upcoming show Poe: A Tale of Madness, has dropped a dramatic movie-style trailer that uses the same cutting-edge technology that viewers have seen in *The Batman* and *The Mandalorian*. Hint: it’s not AI.

As ambitious as that may sound for a local nonprofit group, here’s another kicker: There’s almost no dancing in the ad, which is a major departure for marketing in the category.

Ballet Austin, under artistic director Stephen Mills, collaborated with Virtigo Pictures for the cinematic spot that runs nearly three minutes. Its elaborate, custom backdrops come via Unreal Engine, a 3D creation tool, with the project shot on an Austin soundstage equipped with a curved 50-foot LED screen.



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The open-source tech, initially developed by Epic Games, allowed “narrative storytelling inside a virtual production,” saving time and money and creating more realistic settings than a green screen, per **Justin Kirchoff**, founder of Virtigo Pictures.

“Edgar Allan Poe, his work, it’s very dark, very sinister, and it’s also period, so finding locations in Austin was going to be a huge challenge,” director **Paul Michael Bloodgood** said in a behind-the-scenes video. “So having the ability to build these environments, build this world and live in this world—there’s really no other way to do it.”

"The Making of the Cinematic Trailer w/Virtigo Pictures" - Stephen Mills' POE / A TALE OF...



As part of the campaign, the team put an Edgar Allan Poe character in a pedicab that toured around the popular SXSW festival last week, stopping to interact with attendees and read passages from the iconic writer’s work. A QR code on the transport vehicle pointed people to the trailer, while its speakers played creepy music. Poe: A Tale of Madness opens March 22.

CREDITS:

Directed, Produced & Edited by Paul Michael Bloodgood

Executive Producer, Stephen Mills

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Virtual Production & Volume Stage by Virtigo Pictures

“Poe,” “Madeline Usher” & “Death” Costumes by Margaret Mitchell