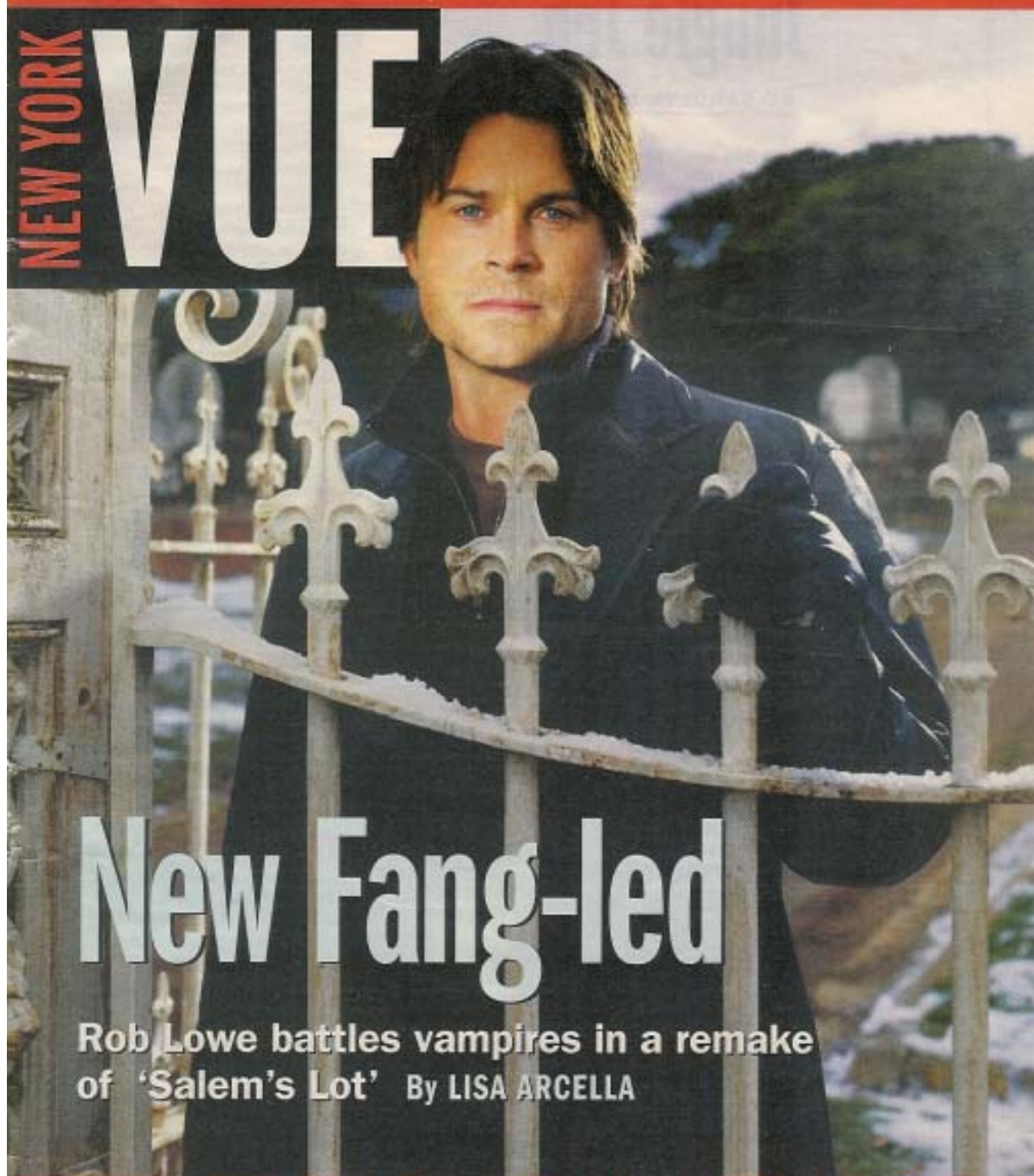


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VUE



New Fang-led

Rob Lowe battles vampires in a remake of 'Salem's Lot' By LISA ARCELLA

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No Lowe-brow horror, please

BY LISA ARCELLA

Rob Lowe has always seemed like the likable boy-next-door type — from a neighborhood with a remarkably good gene pool. So why is the guy who played “The West Wing’s” nice guy Sam Seaborn now so determined to scare you to death?

Lowe is starring in the two-part TNT remake of Stephen King’s “Salem’s Lot,” premiering tonight, with Donald Sutherland, Andre Braugher, James Cromwell and Rutger Hauer. He promises that viewers will be “petrified.”

“It really comes down to how you like to be scared,” the 42-year-old actor tells the Daily News. “I hate bad horror. Hate it. But I love good horror. I am an M. Night Shyamalan [“The Sixth Sense”] guy. If that’s the way you like your horror, you are going to love this movie, but if you are looking for ‘Freddie meets Jason,’ then this isn’t going to be for you.”

Lowe plays Ben Mears, a writer who returns home to Maine and the picturesque town of Jerusalem’s Lot (called Salem’s Lot by locals). He’s looking for the peaceful existence of his youth, only to discover the town is inhabited by a vampire masquerading as an antiques dealer (Sutherland).

‘It was one of the first books I ever read and the movie was one of the first things I ever Betamax.’

Stephen King wasn’t involved in the project, having sold the rights to his novel, which was originally

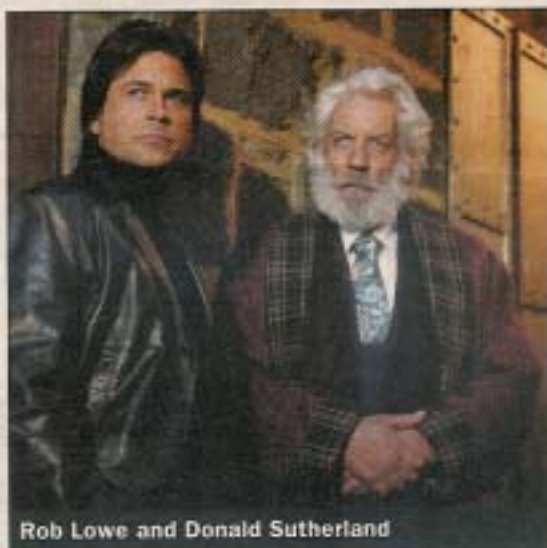
turned into a TV movie in 1979 starring David Soul as Mears.

Lowe says he was a fan of both the book and the movie. “It was one of the first books I ever read and the movie was one of the first things I ever Betamax,” he says, laughing. “Betamax! That’s how long ago that was.”

The film was a chance for Lowe to work with Donald Sutherland, father of his close friend Kiefer.

“He is one of my idols,” Lowe says of the senior Sutherland. “We did know each other, but not like I knew [“West Wing” co-star] Martin Sheen. I have been doing this a long time and I am always excited to go to work, but on the day I was going to work with Donald I was extra pumped.”

The actor is reluctant to talk about leaving “The West Wing” over a salary dispute or last year’s flop



Rob Lowe and Donald Sutherland

series “The Lyon’s Den.” But he says he’s ready to try prime time again with a new CBS medical drama, “Dr. Vegas,” scheduled to debut in the fall.

“I think this series is going to be a really provocative, fun drama. It’s loosely based on a house doctor at Caesars Palace, so you can imagine all the stories that go on there. I play a young, single doctor with a gambling problem.”

Unlike the charming Sam Seaborn, his new character’s gritty style is a complete departure for Lowe.

“I wanted to play a guy who was a little more fun, a little more wild,” Lowe says. “He’s someone with flaws, but someone who still wants to be a hero to his patients and his friends.”

The show will do some filming in Vegas, but will be shot for the most part in Los Angeles. Lowe will commute 166 miles, round trip, to the city from his home in Santa Barbara, where he lives with his wife, makeup artist Sheryl Berkoff, and their two sons, Matthew Edward, 11, and John Owen, 9.

“It’s as close to small-town living as I can find in Southern California,” says Lowe, who grew up in Dayton, Ohio. “It’s easier for me to coach Little League, everybody knows everybody, there are people from all walks in life and it is the most beautiful place in the world. There’s nothing better than taking my boys fishing off the Santa Barbara pier.” ■

“Salem’s Lot” premieres tonight at 8 on TNT.
The conclusion airs Monday night at 8.