

Getting the Fear: Walking With Frank Darabont and the “DEAD”

Written by Philip Nutman
Friday, 25 June 2010 13:19



(FANGORIA memoirs will return in the next blog; meanwhile, here's a taste of things to come...)

A kid with a shovel whacks the protagonist around the head, not realizing a zombie is shambling up the street toward them.

Gunfire.

The dead thing drops.

Welcome to writer/director Frank Darabont's vision of THE WALKING DEAD, his TV version of writer Robert Kirkman's best-selling, acclaimed comic book/graphic novel series THE WALKING DEAD. "We can't say 'F**k,' but we can blow a zombie's brains out!" quips the three-time Academy Award nominee with a twinkle in his eyes and a broad smile of horror-movie-fan glee on his face between takes.



It's Monday, June 14, and I'm back in my old neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia, delighting in watching (for the first time) a consummate storyteller orchestrate a sublime adaptation of the

Getting the Fear: Walking With Frank Darabont and the “DEAD”

Written by Philip Nutman
Friday, 25 June 2010 13:19

only comic book that has kept me up at night—unquestionably the best take on a zombie epidemic outside of “uncle” George A. Romero’s original NIGHT/DAWN/DAY OF THE DEAD.

(Personal aside: I was deeply disappointed with LAND, and felt that the first 10-12 minutes of DIARY were flawed, but that movie started to kick after 20 minutes and finally won me over. But *boy*, SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD delighted me no end. As is the case with Clint Eastwood, the more he ages like fine wine, Romero is doing his best work—what’s not to love about a zombie Western populated by mad Irish bastards?)

I am in Grant Park, on the west side of Zoo Atlanta, blocks away from the house I lived in for several years back in the 1990s, and Darabont, who has made the best cinematic Stephen King adaptations of the past 20 years, is bashing zombies for the AMC channel. *Darabont's killing the walking dead in my old 'hood—how surreal is that?*
29 years writing for Fango, and life is still filled with splattery surprises...

And believe me, there *will* be serious gore. Based on the photos I was shown during my preliminary set visit last week, AMC is going to push the envelope of what you’ve ever seen on basic cable with this show (pilot and five episodes, debuting after the channel’s annual Fearfest in October; exact airdates to be announced, but likely just before Halloween.)

“Frank is not pulling any punches with THE WALKING DEAD,” states KNB head honcho Greg Nicotero, who I’ve had the pleasure of knowing for 25 years since he accidentally sprayed me with blood and slime in Rome on the set of Stuart Gordon’s FROM BEYOND. And seeing some digital stills of Greg and his crew’s work...man, those zombies rock!

Arriving on location, Frank, who I haven’t seen in a decade, immediately hugs me and my friend/WET WORK publisher, Dave Hinchberger. Darabont is always dapper in his laid-back manner: gray cargo slacks, signature Hawaiian shirt, a Nat Sherman in hand and a big grin on his face. We are made welcome before he runs back to the next setup.

“AMC is completely supporting this series,” says legendary genre producer Gale Anne Hurd. “We love having the executives here with us when they visit, because they so believe in what we are doing.”

Getting the Fear: Walking With Frank Darabont and the “DEAD”

Written by Philip Nutman
Friday, 25 June 2010 13:19

Hurd is a terrific producer (c'mon, you know her credits! Do I need to mention ALIENS?) and a very sweet person, and I'm very humbled and flattered she remembers me from the night we spent blowing up a car in the parking lot of Saint Basil's Catholic Cathedral in Los Angeles back on BAD DREAMS (Andrew Fleming's debut feature, shot in 1987 and released the following year; another Fango cover story). It was a strange night in LA—but that was then and this is now...

Frank runs back on set, full of his typical passion. I just sit in my chair, smiling, sipping my bottle of water in the hellacious Georgia heat.

There's nothing like watching a master storyteller at work, partnered with a great producer, making bloody magic for the screen.

Lock and load, because AMC is bringing Kirkman's THE WALKING DEAD to life—and they are coming for you...

{comments on}