

Director's comments on SXSW Fantastic film "OUTCAST"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
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[Yesterday](#) we brought you a look at MONSTERS, one of the five midnight movies in this year's SX Fantastic lineup at Austin, TX's [South by Southwest](#), programmed by the [Fantastic Fest](#)

folks. Also part of the program is a beastly bit of UK horror, Colm McCarthy's OUTCAST, which the director happily says isn't exactly a whodunit but a "what-done-it."

OUTCAST is the dark tale of Mary (Kate Dickie) and her son Fergal (Niall Bruton), who are constantly on the run from a mysterious man named Cathal (James Nesbitt, star of TV's JEKYLL). When murders by an unknown force plague their latest neighborhood, fear sets in and the audience is left wondering whether Cathal is responsible—or trying to kill the beast that is.

Of Irish and Scottish descent, McCarthy (who wrote the film with his brother Tom) comes from a culture steeped in folklore and oral tradition, which helped shape his imagination and love of horrific tales. "I suppose it's partly based around Irish mythology," he tells Fango of OUTCAST. "I grew up between Edinburgh, where the film is set, and Dublin. My dad's from Ireland, and he was a big storyteller. He told us lots of great gory stories, like old folk tales—the oral versions, the kind of gritty, nasty, fun versions with lots of battles where people warp, spasm and turn inside out of their skins and ax through their enemies and leave a pile of heads and a pile of armor. All that great stuff led to my brother and me both being quite into darker material, and able to enjoy the fun of horror movies. I like films in general, not just horror, but I do get into a good, dark story—and the great fairy tales are pretty dark, so I have a love for that type of material.



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"And we grew up in a place quite like the estate where this film is set," he continues. "A fairly grimy, dirty type of housing estate, a very poverty-stricken place in Edinburgh. That's where I spent my teenage years, so I guess that all came together to ferment into this dark, nasty, f**ked-up movie."

No doubt Fango fans will perk their ears up at the director's reference to his own film as f**ked-up, but he also explains that it isn't just about the pools of blood. "It's not a gore porn film," he states. "When I was about 15 or 16, I loved all those melt movies and Troma flicks, but OUTCAST isn't one of those, I have to say. But there are definitely a few squirmy moments for the audience, for sure. Hopefully, it's kind of a grown-up film, without that meaning it's boring in any way. Sometimes people say grown-up and that means it's going to be dull. It's not dull, it's quite exciting, but it's not a total splatterfest at the same time. I think we do it pretty well, though. There is one scene that contains a 'four gallons of blood shot,' for sure."

What should get audiences' blood pumping for OUTCAST's grisly bits is the fact that not only were they created by the DESCENT films' Paul Hyett, the UK's current reigning makeup wizard, but that they follow the director's bias toward practical, in-camera gags—the proper approach for a film that hints at an animalistic presence. "I'm quite influenced by Chris Cunningham, who has not really made any movies but done some shit-cool music videos," McCarthy says. "He made Aphex Twin's 'Come to Daddy' clip, and that was quite a big influence on us because it's set in the same kind of estate. We had practical prosthetics by Paul, and then I did additional CGI afterward, but there are no digitally created creatures. It's really hard to do that stuff well; it's not even about budget, because you look at a film like I AM LEGEND, and it falls apart when the creatures come on because the CGI is very difficult to get right."

"So we did everything prosthetic," he continues, "and then had to augment that digitally, which is similar to what Chris Cunningham did in those videos. It's quite effective, and yeah, there's a beast in there, and it's kind of like werewolf mythology with an attachment to sexual coming of age and stuff. I don't want to give too much of the game away; the beast is tricky, because it's one of the aspects of the film that works quite well."

"In Neil Gaiman's SANDMAN, he talked about Little Red Riding Hood and told the original version, in which the wolf chops up Granny and drains her blood in a barrel, and Little Red comes round to the house, drinks the blood and eats the flesh, and then the wolf kills her and throws her clothes on the fire and that's the end of the story. And that version is a cautionary tale, isn't it? Little girl gets her period, what's going to happen? The big bad wolf is going to

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appear—that's boys—and he's going to come after you and if you're not careful, he's going to f**k you over totally. Similarly, our story is like a cautionary tale about male sexual awakening, and it takes place in what's the dark forest now. It used to be, if you couldn't afford to live in the city and couldn't afford land, you got stuck out in the woods—where there were still wolves and bears and bandits—to fend for yourself. The estates out in Edinburgh are a bit like that, and I'm sure they're similar all over the world—where the people we don't want to see live."

As much as McCarthy looked to stylistic screen and print influences, his own childhood surroundings played just as integral a role. "Edinburgh's a great place, but our story is set more in quite a mad estate. They knocked down all of the working-class areas in the city center, and did this thing about four years ago where they built these super-estates, a bit like the projects, right outside of town where everybody's completely broke and they just kind of stew in their own juices."

In the UK and Ireland, Vertigo will be handling OUTCAST's release, and hopefully its midnight premiere tonight at SXSW will help score some Stateside distribution interest. "I'm very excited about the festival, and the Fantastic program looks great," McCarthy says. "I'm curious to see how it'll play with an American audience. I'm hoping it'll be received really well, because I love seeing dark films from other places. I love Japanese horror, for instance. Unfortunately, when something's successful, it's replicated a lot, and we've seen that with all the remakes of the great '80s horror movies coming out. It's difficult—the studio system works that way, so hopefully OUTCAST can be something a bit different for American horror fans—if they can get past the fact that everyone speaks like they do in TRAINSPOTTING."

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