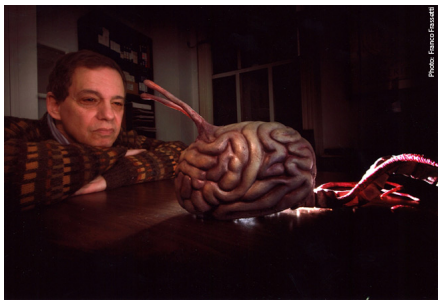
A modern redux of the 1958 cult classic FIEND WITHOUT A FACE (pictured) has been in the works for quite some time now, with filmmakers including Joe Dante, MAY’s Lucky McKee and NIGHT OF THE DEMONS’ Adam Gierasch involved at various stages. At this past weekend’s Saturday Nightmares event in New Jersey, Fango spoke to the man now holding the project’s reins: STREET TRASH writer/producer Roy Frumkes.

“I optioned the rights from [original producer] Richard Gordon, who has optioned them several times before,” Frumkes tells us; he’d like to have the veteran fear filmmaker play a scientist in the film. “We’ve been friends for 10 years, and he brought it up one day over lunch and we reached an agreement. Then I set my own deadlines: The option started January 1, and I gave myself two months to write the first draft of the script, which is done, and one month to research it. I’ve wanted to do this film for 40 years, so I already had it all in my head, and it wasn’t hard to write. What I didn’t have was the technical information; I’m no science buff. Now I’m interviewing scientists, getting the technology straight.”



FIEND WITHOUT A FACE is set at a scientific installation where experiments in telekinesis result in the creation of living, leaping brain creatures that literally suck out the minds of their victims. In aiming to make his version of this scenario plausible, Frumkes used a connection via *Films in Review* magazine, where he serves as editor. “One of my writers is Victoria Alexander,” he says, “and she’s married to Colonel John Alexander, who was head of the non-lethal weapons programs at Los Alamos; he’s the person the George Clooney character in THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS is modeled after. So I figured he might have something to say about lifeform

materialization. I called and asked if I could speak to him for a few minutes, and he said, ‘Certainly.’ He’s a military guy, very serious. I said, ‘I’m writing this script, and the theme is lifeform materialization,’ and he said, ‘It's already been done.’ So that call yielded some good information!

“June is when I’ll break it down for shooting and do the budgeting,” Frumkes continues, “and for the following six months I’ll be looking for the money, trying to find a deal I like.”

He’ll also be seeking a director, since he has decided not to helm the new FIEND himself. “I’ve directed two films, DOCUMENT OF THE DEAD and BURT’S BIKERS, which is a lovely movie that no one’s seen—I hope they do one day, it’s about handicapped children—and I’m proud of them both,” he notes. “But I’m not that great technically, and I don’t like hiring all these people who are so skilled and I’m sitting there gesturing impotently, trying to explain what I want [*laughs*]. Writing and producing is where I’m most comfortable.” As far as a FIEND director is concerned, “I’ll see when [the rewrite] is done and start thinking that out.”

While he isn’t sharing specific story details of his FIEND take at the moment, Frumkes adds that he won’t be keeping the central creatures hidden as long as the previous film. “I believe that since so many people have seen the original, I can’t wait for the third act to show the fiends,” he says. “They’re going to come in in act two, and then the third act is something completely new; it goes in a different direction there. My favorite screenwriter is Nigel Kneale, and I see FIEND WITHOUT A FACE as very much a Quatermass film; that’s the style it’s taking. It’s set in a think tank in the Berkshires, and it’s not about young people. It’s a mature film, but it has a STREET TRASH sensibility, so the people who like my work will not be disappointed.”

Frumkes has also been busy on the sequel to STREET TRASH and a new edit of his landmark DOCUMENT OF THE DEAD; look for his comments on those at this site shortly.

{jcomments on}