

Written by Tony Timpone
Thursday, 08 July 2010 11:55



Last December, the producers of RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE granted FANGORIA exclusive access to the Toronto set of the fourth chapter in their action/horror franchise, derived from the best-selling Capcom video games. Over the next 10 weeks, right up to AFTERLIFE’s September 10 release from Screen Gems, Fangoria.com will be presenting a series of one-on-one interviews with the movie’s cast and crew.

Written and directed by film series originator Paul W.S. Anderson, AFTERLIFE once again stars Milla Jovovich (Anderson’s wife) as mysterious heroine Alice, who teams with a small group of postapocalyptic survivors in a world overrun with zombies, monsters and agents of the nefarious Umbrella Corporation. (For more on the movie, see previous article [here](#).)

AFTERLIFE introduces to the screen saga the game character of Chris Redfield, played by Golden Globe-nominated PRISON BREAK star Wentworth Miller, who made his professional debut in the “Go Fish” episode of BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER in 1998. Fango catches up with Miller shortly after he wraps a zombie siege scene in a flooded prison corridor (bringing Miller back to his roots!).

FANGORIA: What were you shooting there?

WENTWORTH MILLER: You have this ragtag band of survivors holed up in a prison facility. Enter Alice, our savior, and we are now on our way to what we hope is a supply room filled to the brim with weaponry that we can use in order to attempt an escape.

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FANG: So tell me about your character of Chris Redfield in RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE.

MILLER: This is my character’s debut, at least in the film version. This can only be my Chris Redfield—I can’t give you what you want, I can give you what I do. If what I do is what you want, then we’re in business! If it’s not, I hope you enjoy the movie anyway. So after I was cast, I thought, “Well, let me start doing my research.” I went on-line and decided to Google a few images, and what I saw threw me just a bit, because the Chris Redfield that popped up...his arms were as thick as tree trunks. I thought, “Well, that’s never gonna happen, I only have three weeks to prepare for this shoot!” Then I had them put together key scenes from the video games so I could look at the original source material, and I was struck by how different that Chris Redfield was from those images I’d Googled, especially in the first game installment. He’s definitely capable and heroic, but there’s also something quite innocent. He was still freshly scrubbed, in a way, at the beginning of this horrifying journey. So I had the images from the Internet, I had the scenes from the game and of course I had Paul Anderson’s script, which in my mind comes first and foremost. My Chris has been walking down this particular road for quite some time. The edges are sharper, and they’re way more jagged. That was my launching point and inspiration.



FANG: What appealed to you about Redfield and entering this universe?

MILLER: Any young actor worth their salt in this town wants to be part of a successful franchise, to be perfectly honest. To know that this—10 years down the road—is phenomenally successful with a huge international fan base, definitely appealed to me, particularly because I’d just come off a TV show, PRISON BREAK, which has a sizable overseas audience. And I thought, “Well, I can do five independent films that nobody ever sees, or I can do a project that I know will reach the fans I still have and hope to hold onto, courtesy of the show.” It’s a way to stay on their radar in an entertaining format. I also love action/horror; I’m a huge fan of the

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genre. Thematically, there’s also an overlap between Michael Scofield from PRISON BREAK and Chris Redfield from RESIDENT EVIL that intrigued me, and that was something I was looking forward to exploring.

FANG: You’ve touched a little on the horror/action genre with UNDERWORLD, but this is a whole new ballgame.

MILLER: Absolutely, particularly the 3-D angle. I’ve never done anything this incorporated with technology, and I’m really happy to be exposed...to add this to my skill set.

FANG: What challenges is the 3-D offering you?

MILLER: My understanding is that when you’re watching the action with this technology, it’s as though you can see around corners. So if you’re filming a fight sequence and you throw a punch and it doesn’t actually connect—and it never would in a normal stunt sequence—the audience can see that. They can see that there’s distance between your fist and his face, so you have to figure out a way to lie or honestly hit the actors.

FANG: What action stuff do you get up to in this movie? You kick some zombie butt?

MILLER: [*Laughs*] There is some zombie butt-kicking. And there are a number of really intense scenes...very physical, very challenging, very demanding. I always try and do as many of my own stunts as possible, just because it’s half the fun of this job to begin with, and I also think it makes a difference in terms of what we see on camera. In a way, it’s like playing imaginary games as a kid—cops and robbers, that sort of thing, dressing up for Halloween—except I do it professionally. And when there are gunfights, fistfights, jumps, falls, punches, it’s all done in the safest possible set of circumstances. It’s a thrill, and I’m happy to be a part of it.

FANG: What is the appeal of RESIDENT EVIL that has made it such a popular franchise in both games and movies?

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MILLER: We’ve got thrills, chills and spills. I mean, the special effects we have in store for the audience are off the charts. I saw a little bit of a teaser trailer the other day that the producers put together, a sizzle reel, and it’s jaw-dropping. But beyond that, we also have characters you can relate to and care about, and that’s the actors’ job: to enter this universe that is about zombies, horror, mayhem and edge-of-your-seat thrills, but layer in some complexity, authenticity and integrity, so that when something happens to one of these characters, you care. It’s not just fireworks in the sky—magnificent but representing nothing, signifying nothing. That’s what’s cool about Chris and Claire Redfield [Ali Larter], because what you have is a complex, layered, believable sibling relationship. And while the audience can’t automatically identify with a postapocalyptic universe where zombies are running rampant, they can identify with a brother. With a sister. With having a family member in danger and what you must do to protect them.

FANG: Were you a fan of horror films before you hooked up with this production?

MILLER: Absolutely. From way back, the action/horror genre has been very good to me—I got my start in *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*. There’s been *UNDERWORLD*, of course, and *DINOTOPIA*. In a way, it feels a bit like a homecoming.

FANG: Zombie films are more popular than ever. What do you think it is about them that appeals to people?

MILLER: I don’t know. I’ve heard conversations about zombies as metaphors for A, B and C, capitalism, mass something-or-other, consumerism run rampant. For me, it’s all about mayhem. It’s all about a little blood spattered on screen, and that’s what works for me on a primal, basic level. I like being scared, I like being shocked, I like being taken on a ride. If you want to get into it beyond that, it’s absolutely cool, but for me it’s entertainment.



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FANG: How has it been working with Milla Jovovich, the institution in these movies?

MILLER: She’s a rock star! She’s our Sigourney Weaver in the ALIEN franchise. What I especially appreciate about this project is that it’s essentially female-driven, which is not particularly—unfortunately—common in this business: to have a woman at the center of the action, driving things forward. And coming from a television series that was soaked in testosterone, it’s a nice change-up.

FANG: And it seems like you have a nice ensemble going on in this movie as well.

MILLER: Yes. No one’s a throwaway. Every character gets their moment, and everyone’s bringing something specific and useful to the table. It’s an international cast, playing international characters, and that’s representative of the fact that it’s a movie made for international audiences. That’s one of the cool things about the business; it’s not about making film and TV for a domestic audience now, we’re looking overseas for this stuff. That’s where the fans are, that’s who we’re trying to entertain and who the stories are for.

FANG: How is it working with Paul Anderson?

MILLER: He’s amazing. Having Paul and Milla at the helm of this movie has been such a godsend, because it trickles down from the top. They set the tone. To have her on screen and Paul off screen, it’s like having the best safety net in the world. You know exactly where you are, and you know they’ve got your back.

FANG: Some actors resent working with a director whose lead actress is his wife. You know, “She’s gonna be in all the shots and I’m not going to get any close-ups.” That’s the opposite here?

MILLER: I haven’t seen anyone suffer for lack of attention as far as Paul’s concerned. He’s on it. And to have someone who is both writer and director, he has the most complete sense of the

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universe and exactly where you fit. That has been a treat.

FANG: Do you have a fight scene with Wesker (Shawn Roberts)?

MILLER: There is a showdown.

FANG: Cool.

MILLER: He’s an incredible screen presence. I don’t know if you’ve gotten to see any of that [Wesker] footage, [with his] sunglasses and black overcoat—it’s very iconic. And many of the influences are a direct nod to what you see in the video game. But again, to go back to the challenges of the new technology, there were moments, pieces of that sequence, where I actually had to lean my face on his fist, wait for them to call action and pull away like I’d just been socked in the jaw.

FANG: You’re attached to another video-game adaptation, BIOSHOCK. What’s the scoop on that?

MILLER: Um...

FANG: I didn’t mean to make you gag there!

MILLER: That rumor started as an April Fool’s joke, and suddenly it wound up here, there and everywhere. So there’s no truth to that at all.

FANG: What I saw before in the tank, were you wearing a wetsuit?

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MILLER: No wetsuit. We’re all just down there in our regular costumes. There’s a whole tank sequence taking place next week that I’m looking forward to—I used to swim back in high school, so the water is second nature for me.

FANG: Best exercise in the world, right?

MILLER: That’s right. Of course, we’re also carrying guns and flashlights and this, that and the other. So the only problem is that you tend to sink like a stone, but you get your workout.

Stop back next week for an interview with RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE editor Niven Howie. And check out the cover story of FANGORIA #296 (on sale in August), featuring an all-different AFTERLIFE set visit article.

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