

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Friday, 30 July 2010 10:39



No doubt, LET ME IN was a huge winner at this year's San Diego Comic-Con. Matt Reeves' adaptation of John Ajvide Lindqvist's novel and the Swedish film by Lindqvist and director Tomas Alfredson built upon the positive reaction many found themselves surprised to have at its first trailer and with an excellent clip, turned it into actual excitement. Fango sat down exclusively with writer/director Matt Reeves and actors Richard Jenkins and Kodi Smit-McPhee at the convention to discuss the film, its relaunching of Hammer films and the meaning of true love. Hit the jump to check it out!

"Chloe Moretz (Hit Girl from KICK-ASS) stars as Abby, a mysterious 12-year old girl, who moves next door to Owen (Kodi Smit-McPhee, THE ROAD). Owen is a social outcast who is viciously bullied at school and in his loneliness, forms a profound bond with his new neighbor. Owen can't help noticing that Abby is like no one he has ever met before.

As a string of grisly murders occupy the town, Owen has to confront the reality that this seemingly innocent girl is really a savage vampire.

LET ME IN, a haunting and provocative thriller written and directed by filmmaker Matt Reeves (CLOVERFIELD) and produced by legendary British horror brand Hammer Films, is based on the best-selling Swedish novel LAT DEN RATTE KOMMA (LET THE RIGHT ONE IN) by John Ajvide Lindqvist, and the highly-acclaimed film of the same name."

FANGORIA: I was told to ask you about the new Hammer logo playing before the film...

Matt Reeves: I don't know if I'm allowed to, it's like a brief presentation of a history of Hammer and it kind of goes racing by. This company, PIC, did it- they actually did the stuff for CLOVERFIELD. They did all of our titles and Hammer hired them to do a new logo so there's a very cool bit of flashback-quick movement through highlights of Hammer.

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Fango: You're basically launching the new iteration of Hammer, is that exciting, is it daunting? Hammer is such an icon of horror.

Reeves: To me, it's really exciting. My memory of Hammer films is- when I was a kid I was a total chicken. I was afraid of everything and I literally, my father took me to see THE EXORCIST when I was too young to see it and to this day I have a hard time looking at images from it because it terrifies me.

Kodi Smit-McPhee: It's very terrifying.

Reeves: (to McPhee) You have that same thing, we talked about it when we were working on the movie. When we first started working on the movie, he said "the one thing I'm really scared about is.." and he showed me this site where you're playing this game and then all of a sudden it shows you the Linda Blair image and how it really freaked him out. I literally still have that reaction to this day. So when I was a kid the thing that I remember is, Hammer Films being on TV, like channel 9 late at night and being horrified. And seeing Christopher Lee and all that vampire stuff and really being freaked out. So there's a certain weird irony that we're going to be the first vampire film that Hammer's done, I guess in almost 40 years, it's 36 years or something, Somebody was telling me THE SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA, I think was the last Hammer film.



Fango: Speaking of daunting, this film in general- you've spoken about signing on before it hit America and the whole zeitgeist happened with LET THE RIGHT ONE IN, did you expect what was going to come with the film and it being so beloved and having to fend off everyone?

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Reeves: No, I absolutely didn't. The thing is, when it happened though I was not at all surprised because it was a very similar reaction to- I was so taken with the story, with the film and with the novel. And again, this was almost a year before it came out in the States and before it started to really get the passionate response that it did. It surprised me only in that I just didn't expect it because I hadn't been thinking that clearly about it, but then when it happened it made total sense. The thing that we try to do is, these guys hadn't seen the film and actually, my director of photography- as many people as possible had not seen the film while we were making LET ME IN because what was important to me was for us to make our version of Lindqvist's story. And so, the thing that I hope people will take away from what we did was that it was a labor of love experience for all of us. It will be very interesting to see how people take it because I feel like that film will always be the classic that it is and hopefully people will be able to see this as another interpretation of that story.

Fango: Did you guys read the book or did you just go into it cold?

Richard Jenkins: Yes, but I didn't want to see the film. When I signed on, I didn't know there was a film. I just loved the script.

Reeves: He almost quit halfway through, actually.

Jenkins: When I found out there was this amazing movie I said, 'What are you crazy?' I have seen it since. My agent said there's a vampire movie. I said, 'Oh, please.' He said, 'No, no, no. Read it.' And I read it and I went, 'Oh yeah.' I had met Matt at the Overture party at the Chateau during the awards season.

Reeves: For THE VISITOR.

Jenkins: At this time in my life, to be at Comic-Con is incredible for me, but I just loved the script so it didn't matter if there was another movie, even though I have seen it since and it is really good.

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McPhee: I didn't even know a book existed. I knew the movie existed, but I didn't even know there was a book. Usually, I read the book before, but I didn't and I remember Chloe had seen the movie. Did she?

Reeves: No, but she had watched scenes against my urgings. You saw the trailer, I think.



Fango: I don't know how much you can say regarding it, but based on the book, how much farther did you take Richard's character? The Swedish film obviously doesn't take it past a certain point.

Jenkins: Oh, I'm marching down Main St.

Fango: Yea?

Jenkins: No (laughs).

Reeves: The thing about it is, the book could be a ten-hour miniseries. It's like a great Stephen King horror story and really, the only way... In the original film, there's Virginia and Lacke and the neighbors, the guys who hang out at the Chinese restaurant. All of that, those people have a weight in the novel that is equal to the Hakan character and Oskar's character. The thing about taking all of that and adapting it down to a two-hour film is in a way you have to focus on certain aspects and other ones have to be jettisoned because they'd be too distracting. Obviously, I had no idea of Hakan's background based on watching the first film and I only knew it by reading the novel and again, I really had responded to the way that Lindqvist adapted his own story in focusing through Oskar's character and making it the coming-of-age story that really is

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clearly at the heart of the of it. The film essentially is the autobiography of his childhood in Blackeberg and so in doing what we did, we actually took it a bit further in terms of trying to understand what it would be like not if you were that character but this idea that maybe he was a parallel to Owen's character- to Kodi's character.

McPhee: Was the mom in the original?

Reeves: The mom was in the original but that relationship was a bit different too. The father was also in the original. And you had the phone call scene.

Jenkins: He goes to visit the father in the original.

Reeves: Yes, and it's a very lyrical, beautiful scene. All of that was adjusted and changed to give it a different context. When we were doing auditions, one of the first things I did was, I really wanted to know that moment where after Oskar/Owen sees what she is and discovers what it is, I wanted to see how that affected him and I remembered back to that scene in ROSEMARY'S BABY where Mia Farrow is on the phone and she's talking and she's in the phone booth and there's that sheer paranoia and basically holding a phone conversation on the verge of a nervous breakdown. And I thought it'd be really interesting to see him so alone and to reach out to someone and to incorporate the father in our story that way. Not to have him in the story but to show his absence in the story. And I remember thinking, 'this is going to be really hard finding someone who can do this.' And Kodi came in and he started reading that scene and I was like, 'Kodi has to be in this movie.' That was what let me know I can make the movie, because Kodi came in and just blew me away by how brilliant he was.

McPhee: That's pretty awesome, I didn't know that.

Jenkins: That's not what he told me. Kodi, your name barely came up. (laughs)

Fango: Kodi, you're coming off THE ROAD and Chloe off KICK-ASS. Both of you guys have been in much bigger, adult roles. Are you ready to do something lighter?

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McPhee: Yea, I kind of noticed looking over my "career", it's kind of very adult stuff and a lot of sad stuff. I wouldn't mind changing it up a little. Right now I'm doing animation but once again, it's not even a kid animation, it's for adults. Actually, it's about a kid who can see the dead. I'd like to do a comedy or something fun like KICK-ASS. I saw that and Chloe and it was awesome how the whole movie came in the end on her, just something different. Just have a bit of fun.

Reeves: What's so amazing about Kodi is that he, when I think about what we've done, regardless of what people think of the film, because it's that story, this series of relationships between these three people, you're seeing themes and story and a complexity of character that is not something that a twelve year old or a thirteen year old would normally play and what's remarkable about Kodi is how incredibly authentic he is. And so, there's a reason why he's the person who gets chosen for those things, it's because he expresses himself in a way that is extraordinary for someone his age.



Fango: Horror and coming-of-age were made for each other, is that what drew you to this?

Reeves: It was exactly what drew me to it. The thing about genre films, as a kid these were the kind of stories that would horrify me. There's no way I would even want to watch them because they were too scary for me. The thing that I really enjoyed about getting into genre film is that because of those things you get to explore your fears and the fun thing about genre movies is, in an environment today where it's harder and harder to make personal films- what's cool about genre films is you can always sneak and smuggle something in that's actually about something. That's what I really responded to in this story was that though it was a vampire story it was about the pain of adolescence and peoples' sort of loneliness and empathy.

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McPhee: That's why Richard says it's not 'the vampire movie.' It's got that whole different thing under it of all the feelings and it's not just about the whole vampire thing.

Reeves: It's an unusual mix to see a vampire film that asks you to relate to people in this way because normally the vampires are a figure of fascination that you keep apart from and here the idea is that it can relate to the vampire in all of you.

Jenkins: And basically saying, 'You know, I don't think I really want to be a vampire.'

Reeves: That's true, it doesn't romanticize it at all.

Jenkins: It is maybe the most desperate, lonely, trapped life one could imagine. And that's what's so fabulous about it. Both of these kids are trapped.

Fango: Well even the relationship your character has with her, he's trapped. How did you approach it?

Jenkins: You start to think about, how did this happen, where did this come from? He was twelve. That was the decision that we made, that I was twelve and I met her and fell in love with her and decided to devote my life to her. So that means I didn't go to school. Could I write?

Reeves: That was a great thing, there's a point where Richard has to write something and he said, 'What if I didn't spell correctly?' I was like, 'Oh, that's great!'

Jenkins: I hadn't been to school, and it's like you've devoted your life to this. And that's true love, baby.

LET ME IN releases October 1.

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