

Clive Owen Confronts “INTRUDERS”

Written by Michael Gingold

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How do you protect your child from something that can't be physically harmed? That's the situation faced by John Farrow (Clive Owen) when a supernatural being called “Hollowface” threatens his young daughter Mia (Ella Purnell) in *INTRUDERS*, the new chiller from *28 WEEKS LATER* and *INTACTO* director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo that opens this Friday from Millennium Entertainment. Fango spoke to Owen about the terrors the movie explores, both on screen and off.

FANGORIA: *INTRUDERS* is the second genre film you've done with a director from the Spanish-language realm, after *CHILDREN OF MEN* with Alfonso Cuarón. Are you drawn to working with filmmakers from other countries?

CLIVE OWEN: Just good filmmakers [*laughs*]. They could be from anywhere. Alfonso Cuarón is a really special, visionary director, and I was a huge fan of Juan Carlos' two movies. I came across *28 WEEKS LATER* and really loved it; I thought it was a great, visceral take on that kind of movie. That was a huge influence on me in wanting to do *INTRUDERS*.



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FANG: Are you a father yourself, and if so, how did that play into your role in INTRUDERS?

OWEN: I don't think it's any accident that over the last couple of years, I've done three films playing a parent. I did TRUST, THE BOYS ARE BACK and now this, where parenting figures highly, and that's because it's something I know about now. I've got the experience with it. And also, I enjoy working with younger actors. It's quite refreshing, because they're so instinctive and reactive. It's less a sort of honed craft thing with them; it's much more raw and real, and demands that you act in a similar way. [Purnell] was great—I mean, way mature beyond her years. She's a fine actress, and she's the anchor for the suspense and tension and anxiety of the film. It's her fear of what's around that sets the tone, and she did a great job.

FANG: Like TRUST, INTRUDERS has you in the position of trying to protect your onscreen daughter, with a sense of helplessness and not being able to save her.

OWEN: Yeah, big time. I did TRUST because I found it discussed something very important [the dangers of Internet predators]; it's a real tragedy, what happens in that film. And I feel it deeply because I've got girls myself. People have asked a lot regarding this film, “What's your fear? What are you scared of?” And I would have to say it's the welfare and well-being of my kids. It's the biggest fear. You want them to be OK.

FANG: What was it about this particular script that intrigued you?

OWEN: It was the exploration of the central theme of parents passing on fears to their children, which is a very real thing. We go to a strange, spooky place, but the reality is, kids absorb everything from their parents. And if there's something deep down that worries us or makes us uneasy or frightens us, our children will pick up on it.

FANG: Did you have any fears as a child yourself that you find still trouble you?

OWEN: No, not specifically, but one thing this script and this movie reminded me of was the

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intensity of a bad dream when you're young. I've seen it also in my kids. You process them much better when you're older, and come out of them quicker. But when my young girl, who's 10, has a really horrible nightmare, it stays with her for some time. She needs to be eased and helped out of it. It's very overwhelming experience at that age, and this film explores that.

FANG: You worked a lot with visual FX in INTRUDERS—not only with the phantom, but in your scenes working atop a construction site. What was that experience like?

OWEN: Working with greenscreen now is becoming pretty commonplace for a lot of things. I just did a project with Philip Kaufman about Ernest Hemingway [the HBO movie HEMINGWAY & GELLHORN], and he used this incredible technique of placing us in all this original documentary footage. So we end up in scenes from the Spanish Civil War, China and all over the world. [Dealing with digital FX] wasn't that challenging on INTRUDERS, because the scenes where I'm fighting the bogeyman, it was real. We had a stunt guy who came in, and we threw each other around the room, and then the CG stuff was brought in afterward.



FANG: INTRUDERS is in the new tradition of Spanish horror that Guillermo del Toro and some of the filmmakers he's sponsored have been practicing. Are you a fan of those films in general?

OWEN: Yeah, I was a huge fan of PAN'S LABRYNTH. I thought it was just a stunning movie. And also, I had a wonderful time in Madrid shooting the majority of this film. It's a great city—great people, great food, great wine... It was a really creative set, but then they also know what's important. When they finish work, they eat well, they go home to their families. All anybody wanted to talk about was, what did you eat, where did you eat, what wine did you have with it? They've got it down. They know how to live.

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FANG: INTRUDERS has an interesting structure, with the parallel stories—yours set in London, and that of a Spanish mother and son also facing a haunting—that come together at the end. Without giving too much away, did that affect your performance, working toward that endpoint?

OWEN: For sure. We did all the London scenes first, and it would have been great if I'd been able to see some of the other stuff beforehand. I obviously knew it from the script, but I hadn't seen how Juan Carlos had visualized it, which would have been helpful.

FANG: Going back to CHILDREN OF MEN—given the long takes with which the action sequences were shot, was that the most physically difficult role you've had?

OWEN: No, I've had a bunch more physically demanding parts, but it was very technically demanding. Some of those long shots toward the end were half-day or whole-day resets if we messed up. They were very ambitious, and if we had to go again, it was very costly and time-consuming. I loved working with the camera operator, because it was like a very sophisticated dance. I was stumbling through it and had to look as real as possible; I had to see something over this shoulder, something over that... They were very well-constructed sequences that were then made to look as rough and as grabbed-at as possible. It required a real choreography with the cameraman, who was brilliant, and the operator. I find that stuff exciting, that kind of challenge, so I found those sequences truly thrilling. When we started one of those, it was like, “OK, we're going to blow up that side of the building and so on, and if you mess up, we come back tomorrow because we won't get another one today.”

FANG: Any memorable moments when something did go wrong?

OWEN: Nothing specifically like that, but I do remember something that happened during the big long shot where they go on the bus and the people are shot and the building blows up. I think it was about the third take we'd done, and George [Richmond, camera operator] and I both just knew that that was the one; we were like, “Wow, that really came together.” But then Alfonso came tearing around the corner going, “No! No!” What had happened was, if you remember it from the film, there was blood splattered on the lens. And it was his DP, Emmanuel Lubezki, who ran up and said, “But Cuarón, it's fantastic!” So Alfonso looked at it and went, “You know what—it is fantastic! Leave it, it's fine.” And they kept it in.

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FANG: What else do you have coming up besides HEMINGWAY?

OWEN: A film called SHADOW DANCER by James Marsh, the guy who did MAN ON WIRE and PROJECT NIM and RED RIDING. He's done a great job with this one. It was a really good script, and it went to Sundance and we got some fantastic reviews there. It's set during the end of the peace talks in Northern Ireland, and a girl messes up putting a bomb on a train. I come in as the MI5 guy and tell her she'll never see her kid again, she'll be in prison for 25 years, unless she goes back out and starts working for us. She's given no choice, really, so she goes back home to her IRA family, and that's the beginning of the movie. It's a great premise.