“For anyone who’s spent a winter in Ottawa, Canada, there’s no hype needed. It’s f**king cold!” director Doug Aarniokoski tells FANGORIA, attempting to put some context around exactly how arduous the process was getting his new postapocalyptic siege thriller THE DAY in the can.

The folks behind THE DAY (just out on DVD and Blu-ray/DVD combo from WWE Studios and Anchor Bay) sat down a few hours before the movie’s world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival for this interview. Fango chatted with producer Guy Danella and four of the leads: LOST’s Dominic Monaghan, FROZEN’s Shawn Ashmore, BATTLE: LOS ANGELES’ Cory Hardrict and THE DIVIDE’s Michael Eklund. (Co-star Ashley Bell’s comments can be see in Fango #316.)

FANGORIA: What was it that made shooting THE DAY so particularly grueling?

GUY DANELLA: We shot the movie in sequence, which we were very lucky to do and sort of needed to do, catering to Doug’s vision of how we could break these actors down a bit. It was hell: long hours in the mud, in the real, unplanned rain. We were shooting in a house, and there was wind whistling through it at all times. We discussed that a lot with the cast going in—trying to talk them out of the movie. That was our only promise to the other actors, that every one of them would be all in, and they wouldn’t have to worry about any drama queen just coming in for a week off from a TV show or something, because they really would be rolling around on the

ground and getting thrown against walls. And we got a great group of actors who could embrace that sort of attitude and would want to do their own stunts.

SHAWN ASHMORE: It was the type of film where all of those elements would work for you. If you're naturally cold and tired and miserable and you look like shit, that's exactly what your character is going through, and half your job is done for you, in that sense. So when Doug and Guy were saying all those things, I was thinking, "Sold, sold, sold." If they had said, "We're going to build a set on a stage and shoot during the day," it would have made it a little harder to get to that place where you need to go. But above and beyond all of that, I really enjoyed the script [by Luke Passmore], loved the character and wanted to see what it would be like to think about being that violent, that desperate.

DOMINIC MONAGHAN: I met Guy and Doug and they gave me their pitch of this guerrilla filmmaking style, getting down and dirty. Not doing a huge amount of rehearsal and doing our own homework and coming to each day prepared and ready to go, keeping it raw and keeping it fresh. I thought that was a fun way to approach it. It was a nice group of people who were "on it" in terms of their integrity in making the film.

FANG: What made you decide to film in Ottawa during winter?

DANELLA: When you see the movie, you'll understand. [The characters are] not on the beaten path. They're trying to stay out of harm's way, and to do that, you wouldn't walk through Chicago city streets. You would try and find outlying areas where you would assume safety could be found by hiding out in little pockets. So when you see the film, it becomes very apparent that we needed a huge landscape that didn't have a lot around it. Because, listen, the elements are a huge character in this movie. The cast needed to be on their own, they needed to be cold and lost and dealing with this situation for 24 hours. And because of where they end up in the story, Ottawa served that purpose beautifully for us.

And let's be honest—on an independent film, you are seeking [location] tax credits wherever you can find them. That shouldn't really limit your scope, but it does highlight certain areas based on the credits you'll receive. New Mexico and Louisiana have great tax credits, but they wouldn't work for this movie because of the look [we wanted]. You do kind of narrow your vision based on your script and the story you're trying to tell.

FANG: Without giving too much of the plot away, describe your characters in the film.

MONAGHAN: I play a guy called Rick, who is friends with Shawn’s character. They have a pre-existing relationship; they went to school together. At the point where you meet him in the movie, he’s seen some things that aren’t necessarily communicated—which I like—that have made him kind of cold and turned him off emotionally to the world. He’s been through some shit, and he’s just living moment to moment, trying to get through the days. You find him a little dark and bleak, resolute and realistic about where he is in life, and he has placed himself in a sterile headspace that has him just mouthing out instructions as opposed to his actual issue, which is that he can’t deal with what he’s been through.

ASHMORE: I play Adam, who has experienced a huge tragedy, and as much as everyone else, has gone through loss. Adam is in a complete state of disconnect. He’s being led; Rick is the leader, and Adam fully gives him that. Adam, as far as I was concerned, has written himself and the rest of his life off. He’s obviously trying to survive, he has those instincts, but he’s pretty shut down. What jolts him back to life is the scenario that’s created in the film, and it kickstarts him to decide that life may be worth living, or at least striving for that. A little bit of meaning sparks into him as this day progresses.

CORY HARDRICT: I play a guy named Henson. He’s sick, and I had to lose a lot of weight for the role, 15 pounds, to help me embody his character traits. He’s a sickly guy, fighting with a group of his friends within a 24-hour timespan. We come together with one goal, just to stay alive, and we do that by all means. [Henson’s] a great character, and I had a lot of fun with this cast.

MICHAEL EKLUND: I play the character of Father, and the film is set up in a way where there are two sides. It’s a film that challenges you about which way you’ll go. I’ve been saying that there are no good guys and bad guys in this film; it’s just choice, what kind of decisions you’ll make. Father falls on the other side, as opposed to my castmates here. It’s a movie about a lot of gray, you know? I unfortunately went to a darker shade of gray.

FANG: Does the cause of THE DAY’s offscreen apocalypse factor into the story?

ASHMORE: One of my favorite parts about the script when I read it was that halfway through, I

still didn’t know what had happened. I knew that the people I was reading about were terrified about something, that something was after them, hunting them. All that does is give an audience the ability to plug in whatever their biggest fear is. If you’re afraid of, like, nuclear meltdown, that’s where your head goes. Ecological disaster, or whatever. That’s how I read the script. I’m sure my idea of the apocalypse when I was reading it was different from Dom’s, different from Shannyn [Sossamon]’s, different from Ashley’s. I thought that was kind of interesting. And I thought a lot about the violence you’d have to partake in to survive. These people, whether they want to be or not, are skilled killers. That’s the only reason they’re alive: They’re really good at killing, better at it than the people they’ve met along the way.

FANG: How was the experience of working with Aarniokoski?

HARDRICT: Doug was great. The thing I love about him is that he’s so calm on set, even if things are going crazy. He lets you find your character. He doesn’t force you to go one way or the other; he trusts his actors. He just has that quiet confidence about him.

EKLUND: It was a playground for us; we’d show up on set, and [Aarniokoski] would basically set up the camera and let us go. He’d take the leash off and let us play the scene and whatever would happen, would happen. He was very collaborative as well, in that he would ask you how you wanted to play the scene; he wasn’t telling you how to play it. He let us go and let our characters go where they wanted to, and he’d sit back and capture it all on film.

FANG: How would you describe the finished product to FANGORIA readers?

DANELLA: This is an audience-driven film. We made it, from the writer to Doug to myself, as fans of the genre and knowing the audience—the audience being us! What I want to say is that whatever lofty intentions we may have with the dramatic elements of the characters, THE DAY will 100 percent deliver on all the action thrills and kills. There’s plenty of blood to go around for everybody. We want people to go in with expectations for a postapocalyptic thriller, and hopefully we can surprise them.