

Wes Craven talks remakes and other “NIGHTMARE”s

Written by Antonio Camarillo
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Horrormeister Wes Craven has been busy overseeing the development of new, updated versions of some of his better-known films for a few years now. When it came to the just-released A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET remake, however, the man responsible of dreaming up Freddy Krueger found that letting go was the only reasonable thing to do.

“I don’t think about it very much,” says Craven, whose involvement as director of a fourth film in the SCREAM franchise was recently confirmed (see item [here](#)). “I mean, it’s something that happened with other people, and I didn’t have any involvement.”



Craven’s lack of control over his most famous creation has, of course, been well-documented, and it’s no secret that he has always resented not having the opportunity to participate in the franchise’s huge success, both creatively and financially. “It’s a little sad; [NIGHTMARE was] the first film I did where I wasn’t doing it with a friend I could trust to give me my fair share,” he remembers. “On that movie, somebody said to me, ‘We’re friends, just sign the contract. Otherwise, this film is going to disappear.’ And my lawyer said not to do it, and I did it. And lo and behold, other people got rich and I didn’t.

“So that’s kind of sad, and I don’t have control over something that turned out to be a really powerful element in our society’s film [heritage], you know? But those things happen. It’s Hollywood.”

It may not make him feel any better, but it’s difficult not to draw comparisons between this situation and the premise of WES CRAVEN’S NEW NIGHTMARE, the only sequel directed by

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Craven and a film-within-a-film in which Freddy turns out to be the cinematic embodiment of an evil that its creator has no control over once it has been set free in the “real” world. “Well, that’s true,” the former humanities professor acknowledges, well aware of the volatile nature of the subconscious processes that his films depict so well. “It’s hard to imagine, but it’s like that stood for something invisible that is in humanity, whether it’s the bad father or the one who’s more clever than you are, or the one that goes to the most unguarded places, and stalks you there. That’s a very powerful notion, but it has probably been around in different forms over the centuries.” And, as it turns out, it just won’t go away.

Famously inspired by a series of newspaper reports from the late 1970s, Craven wrote and directed the original NIGHTMARE at a time when horror films were called, in his own words, “dangerous and irresponsible” by most media. “What I was trying to say in that film was, if you ban that kind of expression, whatever it is that’s out there is not gonna be watched by anybody, and is gonna creep up on you,” the director explains. “You have to put that stuff in stories, or it is dangerous.”

Undoubtedly one of horror’s most important, original and meaningful voices for the past three and a half decades, Craven has become a source of inspiration for countless up-and-comers, many of whom have helped legitimize the genre from within the industry’s very trenches. “There’s not a long history of horror films that have been interesting to an audience, starting back with NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD and maybe TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, my movies and John Carpenter’s films. Those are really appreciated by a certain generation, and now that generation is sometimes writing reviews, sometimes running studios.”

This long overdue re-appreciation has finally allowed Craven to regain control over some of his previous properties and re-introduce them to audiences, an effort that has already delivered the bloody goods with Alexandre Aja’s THE HILLS HAVE EYES and Dennis Iliadis’ THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT, both produced by Craven himself. “There’s the opportunity to make original fare, which only the audience can allow you to do,” he says, alluding to his struggles with studios that would prefer to make “safe” horror films. “And then there’s the chance of doing remakes, giving new life to films that were done generations ago and finding directors who are really talented and gifted, and giving them the freedom to do it without making exactly that film [over again]. That’s the key; otherwise, it just becomes kind of a stillborn, you know? Because you’re just trying to figure out what was done once, and how.

“So don’t try to make my film,” he advises. “Think of the story, and make your version of that.”

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