

“NINJAS” kick in from Coffin Joe scripiter; exclusive pics

Written by Michael Gingold
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Brazilian filmmaker Dennison Ramalho may be best known to some genre fans for co-scripting the latest Coffin Joe feature EMBODIMENT OF EVIL, but he's also a powerful director in his own right, as anyone who has seen his occult-horror short film LOVE FROM MOTHER ONLY can attest. He went back behind the camera last year with another short, titled NINJAS, which makes its world premiere this Wednesday, July 21 at Montreal's [Fantasia film festival](#), as part of the prestigious Small Gauge Trauma showcase. Ramalho gave Fango some background and exclusive photos from the movie—which has nothing to do with silent Japanese swordsmen.



“In Brazil, especially the very poor areas of the big cities,” Ramalho (pictured right) tells us, “the police commit summary extermination acts dressed as civilians, and ‘ninjas’ is a nickname these groups have been given in these slum regions—whenever they go into the favelas to commit an extermination, people say that the ninjas have been here. A friend of mine who’s a police reporter wrote a short story called ‘A Good Soldier’ that I adapted into this film, which suggests that there is a second evil nature that takes hold of the cops when they commit these heinous, illegal murders. That’s where the supernatural gets into the story: Whenever the ‘ninjas’ wear their ski masks to hide their faces and kill people, they are possessed by an evil force and do these monstrous things.

“There’s a lot of violence and torture in the movie,” just as there is in the real-life incidents, the filmmaker notes, “and I think it’s more extreme than LOVE FROM MOTHER ONLY.” And as in that film, “there is religious drama in the story, because the protagonist is a born-again Pentecostal Christian rookie policeman. He has just joined the force and never expected that he would be patrolling the streets; he always thought he would be doing bureaucratic work. He ends up killing an innocent who comes back to haunt him, and the ninjas, his alleged friends inside the force, teach him not only how to kill but also to live with this ghost. There is one hallucinatory part in which the guy has a very weird, macabre encounter with Jesus Christ

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himself. So just like LOVE FROM MOTHER ONLY, NINJAS is very harrowing both in terms of the violence it portrays and with the very nihilistic and odd vision I have of Christian religion.”

Traditional faith took a beating in EMBODIMENT OF EVIL as well, and Ramalho reveals that he and director/Coffin Joe actor José Mojica Marins have another grisly feature project cooking. “I wrote a new script for him recently called EYE GOUGER; it’s not a Coffin Joe story, but he would play the protagonist again. It’s based on the very weird phenomenon of the healing mediums, people who get into a state of trance and perform grisly surgeries using spoons and kitchen knives, removing eyes and internal organs using kitchenware. It’s very gruesome, and these guys exist for real. In this story, Mojica would play one of these mediums, who receives the spirit of a dead person to do these operations. He becomes an odd miracle man in his little city, and we get to know that the ghost within his body is not very well-intentioned at all. It’s an evil spirit.”



That project is currently seeking financing, and Ramalho also hopes to find backing for his own feature directorial debut soon. “I have five projects in the works,” he says, “and one of them is very close to happening. It’s called FATHER UNKNOWN, and it’s a macabre story like LOVE FROM MOTHER ONLY involving Quimbanda, which is kind of a Brazilian voodoo. But it’s different from voodoo, which is a benevolent religion; that’s often stereotyped in films, but when

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you see how real voodoo is in Haiti, it's a good religion. Quimbanda is hardcore black magic and you can do very evil stuff with it, and I got to interview some of its priests. The story is about the creation of an Exu, a demon god; the followers of this religion believe that whatever gods exist were human at their first stage, and it's the energy of the souls they receive that makes them gods in the astral plane. So this is about a man who's a cannibal killer in human life and addicted to human flesh, and when he dies, he needs to keep feeding on it in order to become a demon god. He uses the body of his own son, which he possesses to go hunt human prey for him.”



Also getting close to finalizing its backing is THE HELL WITHIN, an English-language feature which Ramalho would helm from a script by MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN's Jeff Buhler. “The producer is very optimistic,” Ramalho says, “and it's a project that has evolved conceptually in a very positive way. We got some good money for development which allowed me to go deep into the jungles of the Amazon to research the region where we want the story to be set.”

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