

Sean Patrick Flanery talks “SAW 3D”

Written by Michael Gingold
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At last weekend’s Monster-Mania convention in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Fango got a chance to chat with actor Sean Patrick Flanery, who was there with his BOONDOCK SAINTS co-stars Norman Reedus and David Della Rocco. Flanery next hits the big screen in SAW 3D, and despite the usual cloud of secrecy hovering over this franchise entry, he spoke quite a bit about his experience on Jigsaw’s first dimensional adventure.

When it comes to the new movie’s plot, of course, there’s “not a lot I can say, unfortunately,” Flanery tells Fango. “I play a guy who’s a little misguided and I fabricate a story about my life for financial gain, and somebody doesn’t like that very much.”



We can guess who that is... Someone Flanery likes very much is Kevin Greutert, the longtime SAW editor taking his second turn in the director’s chair after SAW VI. “Kevin was killer,” Flanery says. “I’m a firm believer that the most difficult aspect of filmmaking to learn is the technical side. Anybody can make an artistic choice as far as composition goes; they can be right or they can be wrong. Anybody can talk to an actor and try to get it, in their opinion, a little more realistic or flavorful on the day. But you can’t make up the technical aspect; you can’t make up [knowledge of] lens sizes and screen direction, and Kevin’s background makes that pretty close to flawless. Technically, he’s 100 percent there, and then he adds his own flavor to it, which is as good as any director I’ve seen. He’s completely well-rounded; I see so many brand new directors come onto the scene who technically know nothing.”

Fango expresses a bit of surprise at that statement, since a complaint sometimes heard about first-time filmmakers is that they’re well-versed on the craft side but are lacking when it comes to guiding actors. “The thing is, anybody can learn how to work with an actor in 24 hours,” Flanery

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states. “You can sit down with somebody who knows how to talk to an actor, and they can teach you how to do it in a day. And everybody develops people skills growing up, and learns how to speak to people and coax things out of them to some degree. That’s the easiest part to learn, how to speak to an actor: ‘That sucked, do it again.’ Realistically, that’s one method; it may not be the best! But nobody learns the technical aspect of filmmaking growing up. Telling somebody what a prime lens is—they don’t come out of the womb knowing that.”

For his part, Flanery was something of a baby on the SAW 3D set, joining a crew and a few returning cast members (including Tobin Bell, Costas Mandylor, Betsy Russell and, back from the original, Cary Elwes) who have, by all accounts, become a tightly knit family over the course of the franchise. But he says of the team, “They were very welcoming, with open arms. They treated me really well. A lot of those guys have been doing it since the first one, and this is the seventh, but it was my first. I’d never even seen a SAW movie,” he admits.

It’s also both Flanery and SAW’s first plunge into 3-D territory. “That was a little time-consuming, because literally after every setup, they had to recalibrate the camera,” he recalls. “So it’s not like you could turn and burn, and there wasn’t a lot of room for improvisation. We needed to pre-think everything, and we had to have a game plan and stick to it. With the new [video] technology and the speed of shooting, it makes for people not planning things out; they just want to shoot it a dozen different ways and see what works best. Any time it takes you 20 minutes to recalibrate after every setup, it makes you think about things. It’s just like in the old days. John Ford—that guy knew exactly what he wanted to shoot and he shot it, nothing more, nothing less. Nowadays with digital, people are like, ‘I’m not really sure, shoot it from over here and over here.’ They don’t take the time to consider what they want, and then they direct it in the editing room. Ford didn’t have that luxury; he directed it on the day, and with 3-D, you’ve got to do the same thing. And Kevin’s exactly the right guy to do that.”

It’s likely we’ll be seeing Flanery in another sequel fairly soon; with BOONDOCK SAINTS II having become a sleeper hit this year, part three is on the way. “Everybody’s talking about it, and it’ll definitely happen,” the actor says. “We should know more about that in the very, very near future.” And might it be...BOONDOCK SAINTS 3D? “Comin’ at ya!” he laughs. “Maybe...”

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