Written by Michael Gingold
Tuesday, 12 April 2011 10:18

As the vampire epic STAKE LAND approaches its theatrical debut April 22 from Dark Sky Films, its themes and characters are also infiltrating the Internet via a series of webisodes. Fango spoke to producer Larry Fessenden about these mini-prequels, which explore the lives of the characters before the feature’s action.

Fessenden and his Glass Eye Pix previously teamed with director J.T. Petty, Lionsgate and Fearnet on a similar project, the on-line BURROWERS tie-in BLOOD RED EARTH. “That was a really good experience,” he tells Fango. “We felt like we did a really good job, so as soon as we were getting into STAKE LAND, we started talking with [Dark Sky parent company] MPI about doing a couple of webisodes to promote that movie. I had the notion—because I enjoy doing things like this—of bringing in all the directors who’ve done stuff with us before and having each one of them tell a story associated with STAKE LAND. I just loved the idea of building this community, using all these filmmakers to sort of complement [director Jim] Mickle’s film. It was a combination of me and Mickle and Nick, and we thought, ‘It should be the moment before you meet the characters in the story, so when people finally see the movie, they’ll go, ‘Oh, that’s crazy—that was obviously just a moment before!’ or whatever. That wound up taking on different guises, but it’s still pretty much true.

“So in one webisode, for example, you see [the nun played by] Kelly McGillis and this guy taking his clothes off,” Fessenden continues. “Well, when we meet Kelly [in STAKE LAND], she’s just been raped, so that’s literally moments later. What I love about all this is that those who get involved in the world of STAKE LAND will be able to put the puzzles together. In the episode with [Damici’s character] Mister, we see that his family’s been ravaged, and then he goes off to be this great vampire hunter who’s the star of STAKE LAND—but there’s something he takes that will only make sense at the very end of the feature, so you’ll go, ‘Oh, that’s so cool!’ Any of this stuff that works for the fans is exciting, and that’s what we always want to do: give the fans a fun ride.”

The directors involved included I SELL THE DEAD’s Glenn McQuaid; Petty, who helmed the McGillis episode; Glass Eye Pix sound designer and I CAN SEE YOU director Graham Reznick, who did a segment featuring Danielle Harris’ Belle character (one of two you can watch here); and Harris herself. “She tried her hand at directing, which was awesome,” Fessenden says. “As a producer, that’s one of the fun things, matching projects with people. Then we ran out of money, so I did the other three, cause I work cheap [*laughs*]. I did mine much later. The idea was to shoot them during production, when we had the actors on contract. But when I did mine, [STAKE LAND villain] Michael Cerveris very kindly agreed to come back, and Nick is a pal, so we did one together.”

STAKE LAND makeup FX master Brian Spears was also involved in conceiving the webisode titled “The Uprising Has Begun,” which you can see below. “On the set, Brian was always talking about doing this origin story, so we conceived that and he wrote this very complex script,” Fessenden recalls. “I said ‘Dude, we don’t have any money left, but let’s do it as if a kid was making a video of his father.’ That’s kind of a strange and frightening one, and it was fun to bring in John Speredakos,” a regular in Glass Eye flix including WENDIGO, THE ROOST, I SELL THE DEAD and THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL. Casting his youthful co-star was a little more difficult: “He’s a family friend. It was very hard to go to his parents and say, ‘Do you mind bringing your little kid and having him get mauled by vampires?’ ” Fessenden laughs. “But he was great.” See STAKE LAND’s official website here and the New Eden tie-in site here , and check out our latest magazine story on the film, focusing on Spears’ FX, in Fango #303, on sale this month.

{youtube}LliR_5EGUqM{/youtube}

{jcomments on}