

“KILL LIST” director talks “ABCs,” “MEGAEVIL...,” etc.

Written by Michael Gingold
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British director Ben Wheatley (pictured) is poised to join the ranks of the hottest horror filmmakers as his film KILL LIST begins its theatrical release today. He's already got a number of follow-up projects in various stages of readiness, including FREAK SHIFT, MEGAEVILMOTHERF**KERS and a segment of the anthology THE ABCs OF DEATH, and he chatted about them all with Fango.

Actually, when it comes to ABCs, “I’m under strict orders not to talk about it,” Wheatley tells us. “I think people have been flashing their segments about to people, to journalists and stuff, so there was a terse e-mail saying, “*Don’t* show anybody, or talk about it!” But it was great fun doing it, and a terrific project to be involved in, and I’m really intrigued to see what the other ones are like. Ours is covered in blood, and we have some axes and hammers... [KILL LIST’s] Michael Smiley and Neil Maskell are in it, and Rob Hill from DOWN TERRACE is in it as well, so we’ve kind of covered all the bases with that. We had a laugh spending the evening in the woods. There were some maritime flares that we set off. Make of that what you will.”



The filmmaker can say a little more about MEGAEVILMOTHERF**KERS, a claymation gorefest on which he's collaborating with Lee Hardcastle, whose T IS FOR TOILET (pictured right) won a competition to be included in THE ABCs OF DEATH. “That’s quite exciting,” Wheatley says. “We want to make something spectacularly violent, and you can go so far with claymation; there are no boundaries there. It’s set in a mixed prison called the Castle of Pain; there’s men and women together in there, and it’s all about the fun they get up to. There’s a giant monkey in

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it, too... It's basically like RIKI-OH in clay.”

Wheatley and Hardcastle are currently working on the MEGAEVILMOTHERF**KERS script, as well as a teaser to help secure the financing. An animation team has yet to be hired, “but Lee will lead it, basically. He works so fast, and the level of animation in T IS FOR TOILET is brilliant. This will be like the whole SOUTH PARK thing, lo-fi animation, which in a way is more charming than if it's super-slick like how Aardman animation is. This is something for the midnight scene, the genre film festivals and so forth. You just know it will play like gangbusters in that environment. There hasn't been a really f**king balls-out claymation thing like this before, and as long as the story's strong, you can't go wrong with a prison movie.”

Casting hasn't been finalized either, though Wheatley wants to use all of his regular actors for the voice work, “and I think they'll be doing multiple roles. We're trying to figure out where to set it, whether there should be American accents or if there should be a weird transatlantic melange of American and British.”

Gearing up to shoot this year is FREAK SHIFT, which looks to be Wheatley's biggest film yet and a serious beast blowout. “It's basically HILL STREET BLUES vs. monsters,” he says. “It's set in this alternate future where creatures come out of the ground, and there's a police force specifically created to defend everyone against them, and it's been going on for years. They get a bonus for each monster they kill, and they tag them and send them off to be recycled. This team is mainly made up of ethnic minority characters and women, so it's this situation where everyone was trying to get into the police force, but these people were kind of diverted off onto this other thing. They're treated really badly—like ratcatchers, basically. It's not very glamorous and everyone kind of hates them, but they're basically defending the city every night, and when the light comes up and the creatures go away, they have to fill up the holes with concrete. Then the next night, the monsters all burrow back out again.

“It's really exciting,” he continues. “It will be about \$10-15 million, which isn't much in real terms but is quite big-budget for us. We shot a CGI test the other day just to make sure the creature effects are going to be good, and we'll go out for financing around March, with a new script and loads of artwork.”

The digital monsters will be created by the UK's Jellyfish company, a BAFTA Award-winning FX house with credits including the BBC One series PLANET DINOSAUR. “I've just been getting concept art done by various people,” adds Wheatley, who promises a mix of ensemble

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drama and high-powered action in FREAK SHIFT. “You’ve got a Robert Altman-type thing with lots of characters moving around, and then you’ve got creatures as well, and a lot of scare moments. They’re armed with pump-action shotguns, so for me, it’s kind of like my experience playing DOOM when I was a kid, firing guns at monsters that won’t die. I wanted to get to see that [in a movie], and you know, the DOOM film was just like [*groans*]. There’s all sorts of creatures in this film—big, lumbering ones and spiders and all sorts of things, so it’ll be cool. It’s all handheld and urgent; not crazy handheld, just kind of documentary-style in the same way KILL LIST is, so it’ll feel very real.”

Check back later today for more from Wheatley on KILL LIST!