Written by Caelum Vatnsdal
Wednesday, 09 May 2012 10:18

SILENT NIGHT

Santa Claus in May is an unusual sight, and when he’s carrying a flamethrower, the effect becomes slightly alarming. The good citizens of Selkirk, Manitoba, Canada have certinly been given “Claus” for alarm this month as the cameras roll on the latest 1980s-slasher remake, SILENT NIGHT. Read on for Fango’s first report from the location, an exclusive look at early promo art and two stills.

The filmmakers have unleashed upon these good burghers not just the homicidal red-suited antagonist but a whole parade of decoy Santas, streets filled with unseasonable ornamentation and, perhaps most disconcerting of all, genre vet Malcolm McDowell (1st photo below), here playing his first-ever sheriff. A loose remake of the controversial SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT, which outraged parents’ groups with its moppet-terrifying TV-ad images of an ax-wielding Kringle broadcast during the leadup to the 1984 holiday season, the new picture has already stirred its own minor rumpus courtesy of the truncated title. “You’d have to ask [screenwriter] Jayson Rothwell about that,” producer Shara Kay tells Fango. “I think he felt that SILENT NIGHT on its own was a more haunting title.”

A haunting fact for the filmmakers might be that, even in Canada, there’s not much snow in May. (The snow in this region has in fact been gone since early March; thanks very much, global warming!) If the film were set in California this might not be a problem, but it takes place in wintry Wisconsin. But in true low-to-medium-budget genre-professional form, the SILENT NIGHT team have simply rolled with the conditions and, says Kay, “addressed it in the script.” Sticklers for climatic verisimilitude will have to wait until the film’s release to find out exactly how.

The movie, directed by Steven C. Miller, comes courtesy of The Genre Company, an organization headed by Richard Saperstein and Brian Witten that’s no stranger to the remake rodeo; their previous projects include Darren Lynn Bousman’s long-delayed, finally-just-released MOTHER’S DAY (Bousman’s upcoming original THE BARRENS is also on their slate). But why redo this particular slalker flick? Despite the original’s notoriety, Saperstein says, it “wasn’t seen by a lot of people.” Diplomatically understating the case, he adds, “It was imperfect. It was more daunting to remake HALLOWEEN, when we did that back at Dimension, than it was to remake this. It was in the minds of the horror fanbase, but something that we could make our own, so that’s what we did.”

Screenwriter Rothwell has come up with a fresh approach to the plot (no nuns in this one), but has carefully maintained many of the original’s most beloved aspects. Antlers are once again used for purposes other than mere decoration, and while the picture of course takes place over Christmas, it also (taking a cue from the sequel) intersects another important calendar landmark, namely Garbage Day. And while Santa’s delightful gifts of murder come via the aforementioned flamethrower and other highfalutin modern methods, he is careful not to neglect his trusty ax.

For director and major-league horror fan Miller (of AUTOMATON TRANSFUSION and the upcoming THE AGGRESSIONS SCALE), the project is a dream come true. “I love slasher

movies, and I wanted to make one that worked, that was scary,” he says simply. “This is the goriest film I’ve ever made—and I’ve made a zombie movie!” The bloody makeup FX for this Yuletide package come courtesy of THE DEVIL’S CARNIVAL’s Vincent J. Guastini and MOTHER’S DAYS’s Doug Morrow; Guastini is building the FX elements in Los Angeles while Morrow, ably assisted by Emerson Ziffel (from Jennifer Lynch’s upcoming serial-killer thriller CHAINED) is applying them on the Selkirk set.

In addition to McDowell, himself a veteran of the HALLOWEEN redux and its sequel, the cast includes fellow remake veteran Jaime King (pictured above, from MOTHER’S DAY and MY BLOODY VALENTINE) as the besieged town’s deputy, as well as SHARK NIGHT 3D’s Donal Logue, FINAL DESTINATION’s Brendan Fehr, Ellen Wong and Lisa Marie (SLEEPY HOLLOW, Rob Zombie’s upcoming THE LORDS OF SALEM), with a special appearance by Jamie Kennedy, famed in horror circles as the rules-cataloguer of SCREAM. Stuntman/actor Rick Skene (WRONG TURN 4, EYE OF THE BEAST) plays the killer Kringle. (“This was a middle-aged killer, so I got the call,” says the affable grandfather.)

The movie has been picked up for North American distribution by Anchor Bay, and will see a release in time for Christmas 2012, natch. Will it whip up the finger-wagging hysteria of the original? While we wait to find out, stay tuned for more coverage here and in the pages of FANGORIA magazine.