Possibly the grisliest entry in the eight-film FANGORIA FrightFest lineup (available through Blockbuster stores and Blockbuster By Mail, as well as digitally via Blockbuster On Demand, beginning August 6) is the cannibal shocker GRIMM LOVE. This twisted romance is based on the real-life case of cannibal Armin Meiwes, who gained worldwide notoriety when he ate Jurgen Brandes, a man who responded to an on-line ad Meiwes placed seeking someone who would allow themselves to be consumed.

GRIMM LOVE (a.k.a. ROHTENBURG and BUTTERFLY: A GRIMM LOVE STORY), an English-language German production directed by Martin Weisz and scripted by T.S. Faull, uses this tragedy to explore what led these two damaged men down a path that culminated in such an atrocious act. It’s not the blood or severed limbs that will make you cringe, but the honest and horrific portrayals of these two (very) disturbed men, rechristened Oliver Hartwin and Simon Grombeck for the fictionalized feature and played by KING KONG’s Thomas Kretschmann and Thomas Hubar respectively.

It was the human side of the case that drew Faull (pictured right) to the project. “I heard about the news story and I found it fascinating,” he says. “Not only Armin Meiwes, but also Brandes—the guy who sacrificed himself, who offered himself up to be eaten. I found that really interesting. I mean, why would somebody do that? That’s what drove me to tell the story.”

Apparently the same question piqued the film’s producers, who were surprisingly eager to tackle such dark (and true) subject matter. “I wasn’t the one who started the project,” Faull explains. “The producers already had the rights to the story and were going to make it whether it was me or someone else. They were just interviewing writers, and they ultimately chose me.

“They were intrigued by these events just like I was, just like a lot of people who read about them on the Internet,” Faull continues. “It’s a very striking story. They’re independent producers, and one of the benefits of working with independent producers is that they’re not necessarily scared of dark subject matter. We had great freedom in telling the story we wanted to tell; there weren’t all the usual commercial considerations. It was very freeing.”

But freeing doesn’t mean easy, and the time constraints of the GRIMM LOVE production forced Faull to crank out the script (which frames the disturbing events with a subplot featuring a grad student, played by Keri Russell, researching them) at a breakneck pace. “They already had a start date,” he recalls. “It was a very unusual process; that’s not normally how movies work. They already had the financing, so they needed a script quickly. I wrote the first draft in three weeks, and that stretched out into two months or so with rewrites and notes and everything.”

Such a turnaround time would take its toll on anyone—and that’s before you factor in the copious amounts of research required for this script. “I was exhausted,” Faull says. “I did a lot of research on-line, and I also had access to the case paperwork from Germany. But of course it was all in German, so whenever I needed something translated, I had to ask the producer Marco Weber to find out what it said.”

Faull and the producers also had several meetings to discuss how the film’s violence would be handled. “Martin didn’t want it to be a bloodbath, because what really drew us all to the story was the men’s psychology. Even though we didn’t shy away from what eventually happened, we didn’t want it to be about watching a body being cut up. There were real people involved and it actually happened, and it was very tragic.”

After Faull turned in the script, the film went into production in 2005, but hit many snags on its way to release—including being banned in Germany for nearly three years. “It was crazy,” he recalls. “Literally, I believe, two days before it was to open in Germany, it was banned. The cannibal Armin Meiwes was objecting, saying that it violated his rights that a movie was made about him, even though it was fictionalized. I mean, they found all these similarities between our movie and his life, of course, because it was really inspired by that.” There was a happy ending, though: “The ban was rescinded last year, and the movie finally did get released in Germany.”

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