

## Penning "THE CHERNOBYL DIARIES," Part Two

Written by Phil Brown  
Thursday, 24 May 2012 09:40

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Continuing our discussion with PARANORMAL ACTIVITY director and CHERNOBYL DIARIES producer Oren Peli, begun [here](#) .

**FANG:** Even though it's not a found footage movie, CHERNOBYL DIARIES has a striking handheld, almost documentary aesthetic. That level of realism seems very important in your horror films. Why is that?

**PELI:** That style, whether it's found footage or something that feels like a documentary, really helps me get into the movie and feel like I'm following real people as opposed to watching actors read lines. I feel like when you can connect to the characters that way, it removes some sort of a barrier and puts you right into the action as a viewer. So with CHERNOBYL DIARIES, even though it's not found footage, we decided to shoot it in the style of a Paul Greengrass movie or CHILDREN OF MEN or TRAFFIC. No one pretends that those movies are found footage, but there's something about their style that makes them feel very realistic and visceral. That's what we wanted to capture, so that's why we shot it the way we did and allowed the actors to improvise and talk over each other. As a viewer, when that kind of style is done properly, it has a much stronger effect on me.

**FANG:** Do you think that style will be integral to all of the horror movies you make personally? You also produced INSIDIOUS, which was much more stylized.

**PELI:** Yeah, there's no real set formula for me. It really depends on the nature of the film. This approach made sense for PARANORMAL ACTIVITY and CHERNOBYL DIARIES, but there may be other movies that ask us to go with a totally different style. So there are really no rules for me. But I will say that personally, I do prefer things that are raw and natural and gritty. That's what I'm drawn to.

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**FANG:** I have to ask about the status of AREA 51. I believe you started production on that shortly after PARANORMAL ACTIVITY was released, so is there any update on when that will be completed or released?

**PELI:** Unfortunately, I have a policy of not commenting on any future projects. I'm sorry, when the time is right I will talk about all the other stuff.



**FANG:** Can you talk about the producing role you've really embraced?

**PELI:** Well, strictly speaking I don't really have a production company. I have a few different things going on like the PARANORMAL ACTIVITY sequels and CHERNOBYL DIARIES, which was fun to do. I really had a blast working with Brian Witten (DARK CITY, FINAL DESTINATION). When the opportunity comes up, I would like to make more films with him in the future, but I don't really have anything official set up. I still don't have an office set up or anything like that.

**FANG:** Are you committed to continuing to help other horror filmmakers get their work produced like Rob Zombie or James Wan on INSIDIOUS?

**PELI:** I don't know if we're going to be doing any more movies as part of that particular shingle of our productions. But, in general I really love the idea of working with young, emerging filmmakers. That's why I had such a great experience working with Brad Parker on CHERNOBYL DIARIES. It was his first feature, even though he's an expert on filmmaking

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through his work in commercials, second unit directing, and as a visual effects supervisor. There's something very exciting about working with a first time filmmaker because they are so enthusiastic and passionate. And thanks to the kind of low budget horror films we're working on, they can be a great launch pads for directors' careers. I love being able to offer that opportunity.

**FANG:** What sort of involvement do you have with the Paranormal Activity franchise now?

**PELI:** Well, it's definitely mind-boggling that we're now working on the fourth movie. I'm working as a producer involved with developing the story. Luckily, on the previous movies we've had great directors. So I'm not incredibly involved once they come on board because I trust them. But I'm definitely involved in the franchise and it's rewarding to see that against all odds we're able to crank out good movies that the fans embrace, and seem to want more.

**FANG:** What was your experience delving into TV, with THE RIVER, like?

**PELI:** Well, TV is very, very different from movies. It was definitely a crash course. I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to work with at ABC and our producers, but it was definitely very challenging for me to adjust. The schedule is so short and there are so many limitations on what you can and can't do. You have to make sure every episode is a very specific length and accommodate for commercial breaks, so there were a lot of little things that I wasn't used to and had to figure out on the fly.

**FANG:** Was it challenging to try and make a horror project within the confines of network TV?

**PELI:** Actually, ABC was really cool with us and didn't hold us back too much. Obviously, you know that there is a limit on how far you can go on network TV. When you're working in horror, that is a very delicate line to walk while trying to find the right tone.

**FANG:** Do you think that you will continue to work exclusively within horror?

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**PELI:** I'm not specifically committed to horror. If there's an idea that comes along that interests me and isn't within the genre, I'll entertain it. I am having a lot of fun at the moment doing what I'm doing, so again without giving away details, there will definitely be more horror films in my future. But hopefully, at some point there will be projects that aren't strictly horror.