“When a fresh-faced nanny arrives at her new job on a creaky farm in the English countryside, she is instantly caught up in the turbulent relationship of her employers. James is struggling to provide for his family and Rachel, an inexperienced mother, is unable to cope with the demands of her newborn baby.

“Unaware of his wife’s decision to hire help, a disgruntled James leaves them alone in the secluded farmhouse. When night falls and he fails to return, a sinister intruder invades the property, spurring a night of gruesome bloodshed and unprecedented terror. But who is behind it? What do they want? Can anybody escape alive?”

Everyone loves a horror icon; a bold image speaks 1,000 words, and what is more nightmarish than our fears personified, stepping from the shadows sporting a grisly mask and wielding a keen blade? All too often, however, this move is a cynical one, and all the robes of nostalgia cannot disguise a lack of heart, originality and, more importantly, execution (so to speak). The attempt to craft an icon is ambitious and success a rarity, especially for a short—but the Santoro Brothers’ tight and terrifying THE OTHER SIDE succeeds not only in introducing a potential new member of the esteemed horror pantheon, but in leaving you begging for more. It hits every tried-and-tested beat while simultaneously defying expected conventions, all without betraying its simple, chilling concept.

With THE OTHER SIDE being snapped up by festivals, FANGORIA caught up with the Santoro Brothers (Alex and Oli) and producer James Pears to discuss it.

FANGORIA: What was the genesis of THE OTHER SIDE?

SANTORO BROTHERS: We came up with the concept a few years ago, originally under a different title and also missing one key element: “The Classic Nanny.” Once we came up with her character, we knew we had something that could work, and from there the story developed organically over time. We have always been horror fanatics, and dreamed of making something special, something true to the history of the genre. Hopefully, THE OTHER SIDE delivers exactly that. The producer, James Pears, was a close friend from our school days, so it has been in the making for a very long time. Our cousin, Ben Scott, wrote the film with Joshua Van Hooke and Jeremy Drysdale, and they all deserve a special mention. It was their incredible script that provided the foundation we needed to complete the project. This is definitely just the beginning; we have a plethora of ideas for new projects in the pipeline.

FANG: The movie is visually very assured, and has class and experience written all over it. How did the production team come together?

PEARS: We approached John Schoonraad, our effects coordinator who’s a friend of [actor] Nick Moran. He introduced us to Nick, who came on board, and from there onward it was pretty easy to secure the production team and sponsors. John helped us so much, we even gave him a co-producer credit for all of his efforts. Without John, there would be no film.

SANTOROS: After we had the script written up, we really went full steam ahead. We did our best to sell the project to a well-established and experienced crew. I think they felt our passion and enthusiasm, our relentless determination and ambition, and wanted to be a part of it. Once a few names were attached, thankfully people jumped on board pretty quickly. The crew was fantastic and really played their part. We are so grateful for all their hard work and the huge effort they put in. It was an incredible team!

FANG: The film has what appears to be a classic slasher-movie setup, but expectations are deftly defied very quickly. To what extent did you study the genre tropes, or did the narrative develop in an organic way?

SANTOROS: We love slasher movies and pretty much grew up watching movies like HALLOWEEN. While THE OTHER SIDE definitely pays some homage to Michael Myers, we

wanted to create a killer with more mystery surrounding him. We played with a few ideas as to why this masked monster would go on a killing spree, something buried in the foundations of his character. We didn’t want to just put a guy in a scary mask and set him free. You could say that being subjected to these movies at such a young age helped us to subconsciously study the genre. The films we grew up with, like HALLOWEEN, CANDYMAN and CHILD’S PLAY, had a massive influence on our lives and on our ideas! It’s an ingrained culture. There’s a reason these films are considered classics. So with THE OTHER SIDE, there wasn’t really a particular formula; it just unfolded naturally over the course of its conception.

FANG: Tell us about your cast.

SANTOROS: Great story, really… when we went to meet John Schoonraad, we were having a chat about our cast and he suggested Nick Moran, whom we had already outlined as a potential male lead. Luckily, he was just downstairs! He came up for a quick chat, and the rest is history. Nick is very supportive of the short-film medium and a great Method actor! We’d seen Amelia Warner in the Australian horror flick GONE a few years prior to THE OTHER SIDE being made. CHERRY TREE LANE is where we spotted Jennie Jacques. The baby, Harry, is our nephew, which was very handy and made shooting a lot easier. I’m pretty sure most parents wouldn’t want their infant interacting with a 6-foot-10 monster, especially when he was lurking around on set with a gigantic knife! Yes, Paul Davis stayed in character throughout the entire shoot!

FANG: How did Davis, who made the AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON documentary BEWARE THE MOON, come to be cast as the villainous Death Face?

PEARS: Paul was recommended to us by John Schoonraad; as I said, without John there would be no film. Paul and John were great to work with! Hence, I produced Paul’s new short HIM INDOORS and the forthcoming SILENT NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD.

SANTOROS: We met with Paul, and quickly realized he had all the moves of a homicidal serial killer! But what really sealed the deal was finding out that he knew horror movies and killers inside out. We instantly shared a vision. We had the idea of integrating the traits of some iconic characters and creating a new “super icon.” With Paul’s knowledge and experience, I hope we were able to deliver exactly that.

FANG: Death Face’s monstrous physical presence makes him one of the most striking screen villains in quite a while. What can you tell us about his conception and creation?

PEARS: Oli Santoro came up with the concept. Essentially, he checked out numerous mask builders [websites], ordered one that was unique from the rest and ultimately handed it to John Schoonraad, who worked his magic. John took the original mask, and together with Oli they used it as a canvas to create something highly original.

SANTOROS: Coming up with a concept for Death Face was a lot of fun. At the very start, we made some basic drawings. We always envisioned a towering figure in tramp-like attire, and really liked the idea of a killer crying. We thought that black tears streaming down a white face would provide the perfect contrast, exactly the impact we were looking for. There was also another incentive, to do with a certain character toward the end of the film—but we don’t want to give too much away. Lifecast was very effective in pulling off our ideas, working day and night to turn them into something real and tangible. So a massive thanks to them as well!

FANG: There’s a vein of inky black humor in the film; I’m thinking particularly of the banter between the two policemen.

SANTOROS: Charlie De’Ath [pictured above] and Mark Cameron are brilliant actors and very spontaneous. They came up with a lot of their own dialogue on the spot, and we happily encouraged it. I remember standing by the catering bus on set; they approached us and started performing their routine, asking for some feedback. We couldn’t help but instantly fall in love with their ideas!

FANG: THE OTHER SIDE screams for development into a feature. Any plans?

SANTOROS: Really, we would love to do it, and it’s certainly a possibility! So if there are any executive producers reading this, all we need is the finance to do it! In all seriousness, we’ve contemplated and entertained the idea on a number of occasions, but we decided that we would wait to see what kind of reaction the short received, and if anyone would approach us about making the feature. The feedback we are getting is that there is most definitely a demand for it. So you never know. I think it could definitely be expanded, and of course we believe we can deliver it too. The original script came out at around 30 pages, which we had to cut down significantly. Inevitably, we lost some great scenes, but if we do make the feature, we have a lot of ideas already down on paper.

We’re also in the middle of writing a new feature horror-thriller called CONFINEMENT with Ben Scott. We’ve literally grown up with this guy; he’s our cousin and best friend, an extension of “the Santoro team.” We’re very excited about this project. It has that classic, intense feel you just don’t get anymore. It’s relatively low-budget—pretty much the perfect first feature. That said, if we did receive the funding for a longer OTHER SIDE, we would probably put it on hold. I think we owe that much to Death Face.

FANG: And finally—how on Earth did you land legendary Brit artist Graham Humphreys to create your poster?

PEARS: That was Paul…

SANTOROS: Thankfully, Graham came highly recommended by Paul Davis. Having seen examples of his work, we knew Graham was exactly the right person to pull off that classic style associated with the old-school horror-movie posters. He did a phenomenal job; it captures people’s immediate attention and imagination, that’s for sure!

A NEW KILLER IS BORN...
THE OTHER SIDE