Written by Tony Timpone
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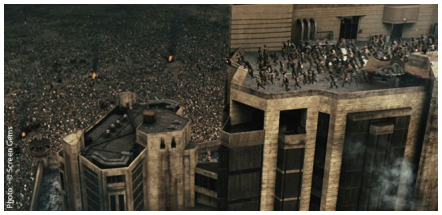
Last December, the producers of RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE granted FANGORIA exclusive access to the Toronto set of the fourth chapter in their action/horror franchise, derived from the best-selling Capcom video games. For 10 weeks, right up to AFTERLIFE’s September 10 release by Screen Gems, Fangoria.com will be presenting a series of one-on-one interviews with the movie’s cast and crew. For more on the movie, go here to start tracking back through our previous interviews.

Today we continue our talk with AFTERLIFE writer/director/producer Paul W.S. Anderson (see the first part here).

FANGORIA: What other creatures are in AFTERLIFE?

PAUL W.S. ANDERSON: There are the dogs, but again, we’re doing the version from RESIDENT EVIL 5 [the game], that are split open. We’ve done dogs in every movie, and on this one I was like, “Ugh, can we really do them again?” And then I played RESIDENT EVIL 5 and saw the things split open. It’s quite like THE THING, but a more sophisticated version, although clearly inspired by it. We took what was in the game and pushed it again to another level, so they’re pretty exciting. And Wesker himself is almost like a creature; he’s beyond human in that regard. There are a lot of burrowing undead, because a great deal of the last game was set underground, in tight, claustrophobic earthen tunnels. These zombies are creatures who eventually get to this prison fortress that our characters are locked in. They’ve burrowed through the earth to get into it. They’ve clawed through with their bare hands, so their nails are all torn away and they’re covered in filth, and they’re pretty scary.



FANG: Will 3-D help reboot the franchise?

ANDERSON: Yeah, definitely. If you look at what’s been done with sound in the last 10 or 15 years, there’s been a huge step forward in Dolby and THX to make it immersive in cinemas. When I was a kid and went to the theater to start with, the sound just came from the front speakers. That was it. And then slowly, sound started coming through the screen, then it kinda crept around the sides of the cinemas and then from the back. So now, if you go to a theater, you’re immersed in the audio; it’s all around you. But yet, vision has always stayed just flat on screen in front of you. Finally, with 3-D, vision will become as immersive as sound is, and because of that, it’ll pull you in a lot more. For horror, it’s exceptionally good. It can pull you into these underground spaces, or push out these grotesque mandibles of the undead. It’s a very, very exciting tool to be using and applying to the RESIDENT EVIL series, and I do feel that’s part of its reinvention.

FANG: Not many filmmakers stick with a franchise the way you’ve stuck with RESIDENT EVIL. Why? What is it you find so appealing about this universe?

ANDERSON: The reason why I became involved in the movies to start was because I loved the game; I’ve always loved it. And they’re my kind of movies, and I love the genre. These are the films I pay my own money to go see. I’m not someone who dabbles in the genre; I have a genuine love of it. I guess that’s why I stuck with it, and I’m very proud of the franchise. Each movie has found a broader and broader audience.

FANG: Have you ever wished you had directed the second or third one?

ANDERSON: I’ve definitely missed directing the RESIDENT EVIL films, although I’ve been very heavily involved in them creatively. Even though my name wasn’t on the sequels as director, I was very happy to be involved in those movies, because I really do see it as my franchise. We’ve always put a lot of effort into the films. They’re made with a lot of passion and energy. And no one’s here to collect a paycheck and go home; we’re really excited to be making them. That’s from my point of view, but Milla and the other cast are generally juiced up about them. There’s no franchise fatigue, that’s for sure.

FANG: What do you think is the appeal of the RESIDENT EVIL movies and the games? There seems to be no end in sight.

ANDERSON: When we made the first RESIDENT EVIL, no one had made an undead movie for 15 years. And I was sitting there playing the game thinking, “This is a really good idea.” Those games were clearly inspired by the Lucio Fulci and George A. Romero movies, and that was a big genre when I was growing up. And I thought, “No one’s made one of these movies in a while and I used to love them; let’s make another one.” And RESIDENT EVIL was the first of the new generation of zombie films.

It’s an enduring genre, but RESIDENT EVIL in particular has always had other things than just the undead. It has a lot of science-fiction ideas in it, with the Umbrella Corporation as a great villainous entity. It’s zombies-plus in my mind, with all the creatures as well. So the games and the films reach beyond just a zombie audience, and that’s one of their attractions. And again, just speaking for the movies, we are always trying to make really strong, strong films, and fresh ones. We try to deliver familiar elements, but do it in a fresh way. That’s helped the longevity of the franchise.

FANG: Each film seems to be a setup for the next one. Does that continue with AFTERLIFE?

ANDERSON: I couldn’t possibly give away the ending.

FANG: Without giving away the ending.

ANDERSON: It has been an aspect of each of the movies; it’s kind of an open-ended saga. And I like that aspect, definitely.

FANG: After AFTERLIFE, do you have your next project lined up to direct?

ANDERSON: I’m working on the next version of THE THREE MUSKETEERS, which, again, is

gonna be in 3-D. 3M 3D. I’m very into 3-D; I feel like it’s the future of cinema. So everything I’m developing is definitely for 3-D.

FANG: 3-D HD?

ANDERSON: I don’t think I’ll shoot anything on film again. I was a believer in film, but this movie looks so beautiful and it’s all HD. I don’t think I’ll go back and shoot on film again.

Stop back next week for an interview with RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE star Milla Jovovich. And check out FANGORIA #296 (on sale this month), featuring an all-different AFTERLIFE set-visit cover story.

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