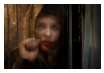

LET ME IN, writer/director Matt Reeves' excellent English-language adaptation of LET THE RIGHT ONE IN, hit DVD and Blu-ray this week. Fango had the chance to speak with Reeves about the film's surprising critical reception, personal subtext and stylistic choices. Head below for the chat!

FANGORIA: After the film was released, did you feel vindicated by the overwhelmingly positive critical reception?

MATT REEVES: More than vindicated, I was relieved. I was pleased. I cared about the movie so much and it meant so much to me that there was something that I kept trying to block out during the course of making it, editing it, was the sense that maybe people would just never give the movie a chance. You can't really work with that hanging over your head in any kind of way that's too present or you would probably just shut down completely. But I was aware of it and so when people responded positively to it, I was very relieved and pleased. A movie, when you work on it, becomes kind of like your baby, and so the idea that people might somehow throw rocks at your baby when you bring him out into the world is a very frightening prospect. So when that didn't happen, I was thrilled. Probably one of the most exciting things that happened in addition to the reviews and the festivals was that I had had some communications during the film with John Lindqvist, who wrote the novel and also wrote the screenplay of LET THE RIGHT ONE IN. He had been very, very generous with me in terms of my asking him some questions and him actually being someone who told me he thought I should make the movie. And so I was worried, though—when he finally watched it, what if I let him down? The day that it opened, he had seen it a night or two before in London; he had flown from Sweden to London to watch it with his wife and they loved the movie. He was so kind and I was so excited, he actually invited me and my wife because we were going to be traveling to do press for the movie at different festivals in Europe. He said, "Please, please come stay with us in Sweden," and so that was one of the most exciting reactions I got was at the end of it to know that he was pleased.

FANG: You also must've been blown away by Stephen King's endorsement, since the novel itself is very King-like.

REEVES: Oh, my God, so exciting. It's funny because, when you do something like make a vampire film or if you do a giant monster movie, suddenly you're considered one of the resident experts or something, so I was invited by The New Yorker to do a panel on vampires, which is kind of funny because I love vampire movies, and obviously this is a vampire movie, but it's so much more and so much of a coming-of-age story, it's not as if I know everything about vampires, I just wanted to know as much as possible about telling this story. So I was invited and someone on the panel, of course, was an expert, and that was Stephen King. So I met him there and it was very surreal. I walked in the room in preparation to go into the panel, and they introduced us and he said, "Oh, you're Matt. Let me talk to you for a second." And he's quite tall and very, very warm and he put his arm around me and he pulled me aside and said, "Come here." It couldn't be more surreal, this is Stephen King and he said to me how much he loved the film and I was completely stunned. It was very exciting. And then he was so kind to choose it as his favorite film of the year, and it was all very, very thrilling for me.

FANG: The personal aspects of LET ME IN really make the film so provocative, scary and genuine. Can you discuss your approach?

REEVES: That was the whole reason that I wanted to do it, is that what I clearly felt was so amazing about the story was that Lindqvist was telling a story about his childhood. For me, the exciting thing about genre films is the idea of using them as a metaphor for something under it that is very real. You can do that with a giant monster and make it about real anxiety, trying to take something absurd and ground it in something that feels real to you. But this story was so beautifully shaded in the pain of growing up that I almost thought of that first and foremost. Obviously there are horror elements and I was very concerned with making sure there was a sense of dramatic and horror tension in the film, but that's really what it feels like to be this kid. The most horrifying parts of the story were actually some of the scenes where Oskar in the book, or Owen in my movie, was being attacked at school, when he's being humiliated by the bullies and beaten. Those scenes needed to be as horrific as anything else in the film in a way. I wanted those scenes to be very intense because those other scenes to me were a kind of a reflection of a world that this kid was growing up in and what it felt like. So that was kind of the way I approached it, what would it feel like to be Kodi Smit-McPhee's character in this situation.

I was bullied and I grew up in the ’80s, so there were lots of things that I tried to certify that were familiar to me to try and create that sort of texture. But really, it was about focusing on the situation that he was in and drawing that out as much as possible in a way that felt horrific but was actually less of a horror story and more coming of age.

TO BE CONTINUED

{jcomments on}