

## Patrick Lussier Directs "ANGRY"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
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Tomorrow, MY BLOODY VALETINE cohorts Patrick Lussier and Todd Farmer finally unleash their mad 3D vision of Nic Cage dealing out supernatural revenge, DRIVE ANGRY, upon the world. In speaking with Fango, Lussier discussed the nature of the film, directing the wild cast and working within a format currently taking cinemas by storm.

**FANGORIA:** Is it a different feeling completing something original like DRIVE ANGRY vs. MY BLOODY VALETINE, which, while all your own, was still derived from prior source material?



**PATRICK LUSSIER:** Yeah, I look at them as two very different movies. DRIVE ANGRY is, in certain ways, an extension of VALETINE. We took a lot of what we learned, both in the 3D and in the storytelling, and went more aggressive with it. We wanted to make something that wasn't a horror movie, had a different vibe, yet still had some horrific, supernatural overtones. So it seems like it's the next escalation from VALETINE in a really good way. We were thrilled both that we got to make the movie we set out to make and that it was original, when so often these days that doesn't happen.

**FANG:** What were some of the lessons you took from VALETINE and applied to DRIVE ANGRY?

**LUSSIER:** Mostly it was about the physicality of shooting the 3D; how to be more economical timewise. VALETINE was a very complicated, tricky shoot, using the 3D cameras underground in a real mine. We weren't on sets, we were dragging around in the mud. By virtue of all the things we learned technically, when we got to DRIVE ANGRY, we could take all that knowledge and compress our shooting time so we could get more footage. We actually shot DRIVE ANGRY in about 30 hours less than we shot VALETINE in. The day count on DRIVE

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ANGRY was more, but we had far less overtime, so you look at the man-hours involved and it became 30 hours less for a much bigger film. And so much of that was because we had a great crew. The core crew, myself and Todd, having already gone through the 3D process with Paradise FX before, knew a lot of what to expect. We’ve made a number of technical advancements with the cameras in conjunction with that so we could do everything we needed faster. And by virtue of that, the actors were more engaged; they didn’t have to wait around for the technology, the technology was right there waiting for them.



**FANG:** Speaking of the actors, you have an incredible cast who seems to have all the bases covered, beginning with Nic Cage. Was it intimidating engaging with such a lineup?

**LUSSIER:** I remember the first time we met Nic. [Producer] Mike De Luca and I went to see him after he had just read the screenplay and loved it, and he was so easy and welcoming and completely professional and just said, ‘This is the craziest script I’ve ever read. I’ve never played a character quite like this. I have to play this part.’ He was convincing us he wanted to do it, when we went in thinking we’d have to convince him. And he came to the project with such passion, and was such a wonderful collaborator both with myself and the other cast; we could talk through all sorts of different variations in performance and directions of even the look of the character, right down to how he speaks. Nic is completely approachable; you just have to be smart and thorough in your direction of what you have in mind, and he’s willing to engage on every level.

**FANG:** His counterpart in the film, Piper, is played by Amber Heard, and seems to kick all kinds of ass. How did you and Farmer approach this strong female lead?

**LUSSIER:** When Todd and I were writing the script, it was sort of unspoken, but it was definitely a pact we had, that we never wanted Piper to be a victim even though terrible things happen to her. She’s always somebody who comes at things with a huge amount of strength, sometimes to her own detriment, and we never shied away from that. Both of us have responded to so many of the great genre films in which the strongest characters are frequently women, hence the whole conflict of the final girl. We wanted to really accentuate that idea with Piper—that she could definitely hold her own with anybody or certainly wasn’t going to give in or cave or

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become some sort of whimpering weakling. She's every bit as strong, and it's just not part of who she is to give up, even if she should give up, even in the face of insurmountable odds or a massive beating; she will keep rising up to give back all she can.

To us, her character was the very nature of the heart of the story, and it was essential to have that. There are a lot of people who have issues with strong female characters, and I never understand that. Even from feminist groups. 'Oh, how can you have violence against women?' and things like that. But as a whole, it's about the strength of a girl combating the obstacles in front of her. It's about women who are every bit as strong as men, every bit as smart, every bit as capable. That, to us, was compelling: the fact that we could take this gorgeous girl that Amber played so beautifully and have her be a complete bad-ass motherf\*\*ker.

**FANG:** You've also brought back VALENTINE's Tom Atkins, to Fango's and many other fans' applause...



**LUSSIER:** To meet Tom is to fall in love with him the second you see him. When I went and met him for VALENTINE, within five minutes, it was like we had known each other forever. He was such a great professional, he's got such an amazing face, he's a wonderful actor, he's just the best guy to be around. As long as we can, we'll always try and have Tom in everything, because he is such a fun performer. He has such an amazing pedigree of both genre films and non-genre films, and he just comes in, knows exactly what he's doing, he's playful, he can mix it up, he can give you nine million variations. He does movies like DRIVE ANGRY and VALENTINE, yet just played Scrooge in a musical in Pittsburgh, eight or nine shows a week, and can be just as energetic. That, to me, shows the amazing diversity of Tom as a human. He can engage on any level and is amazing to everyone. Who wouldn't want to put him in their movie?

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**FANG:** How did you approach the cult aspect of the story, especially its fearless leader?

**LUSSIER:** There's something about the nature of the occult, how that works in the story and how it worked in previous movies. Billy Burke plays the cult leader in the story; he's the villain, and one of the things we wanted to do was make him sort of a combination of Jim Morrison and Charlie Manson—somebody who's incredibly charismatic and compelling, yet absolutely psychotic and dangerous. And there are a few tricks we did early on in the story to really show that this guy is unbelievably vile and ruthless, and whatever else he may be or however charming he may come across, you will never forget the fact that he is completely psychopathic, and whatever happens to him and his followers at the brutal hands of Nic Cage's character is completely earned and deserved. We wanted to make sure audiences understand that whether you believe he actually has occult powers or not, whether you believe he will succeed in his dark mission or not, the simple fact is that he believes it and is willing to murder anybody to get it. We wanted to capture that fanaticism, where you really feel this guy is a true believer and unbelievably dangerous.

**FANG:** Fantacism is an interesting way to put it; does Burke's character have any real-life parallels with current religious groups?

**LUSSIER:** I'll leave that up to people to watch the film and talk about whether we're doing that or not. I grew up in a certain religious way and have certain beliefs about it, but I'll leave it up to audiences to take from the film whatever they want to take.

**FANG:** Does Satan make an appearance in DRIVE ANGRY?

**LUSSIER:** You know, nobody's asked that. I'm not going to answer that. If I say yes, then that leads to spoiler territory. If I say no, then people will go, 'What do you mean, the devil doesn't show up?' You'll have to see it to find out.

**FANG:** Is 3D now your preferred method of shooting?

**LUSSIER:** After this last experience, I really enjoy working with the format. We had a good

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experience with VALENTINE, although it was not overly easy, and while there was still a certain degree of complexity with DRIVE ANGRY, we quite simply feel we got better at it, and so if there was an opportunity to keep working with the format, if the project warranted it, then absolutely, I'd keep using it, but I don't feel any compulsion to exclusively do it. I think that would really depend on the movie and whether it would lend itself to the rollercoaster that 3D can provide. My hope is that we won't get into the post-conversion stuff unless that gets way better, because it doesn't have the massive range of depth that shooting in the format has, between looking at the world with one eye closed and seeing it with both eyes open. When you shoot in 3D, you get such a beautiful depth and immersion, and it's such a compelling format to work in.

**FANG:** Are you envisioning your upcoming HELLRAISER reboot with 3D?

**LUSSIER:** That's something we're discussing with the studio; we're in the early stages of that, so we'll see how it all comes together.

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