

Exclusive pics & comments: “ABOLITION”

Written by Samantha Fox
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Up-and-coming director Mike Klassen spoke to Fangoria.com about his new project, a Canadian-lensed chiller called ABOLITION, which features PHANTASM’s Reggie Bannister and TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2’s Caroline Williams. The movie concerns a troubled man named Josh (METHODIC’s Andrew Roth) who may be a savior—or an antichrist.

ABOLITION is a dark, supernatural thriller that questions one’s faith, mortality and the end of humanity as we know it. Co-starring DREAD’s Elissa Dowling, the film is an ambitious—and impressive—achievement for first-time director Klassen, who only graduated film school in early 2010. Klassen was “schooled in the indie way of filmmaking,” which he says allowed him to pursue the creation of ABOLITION. “I saw how guys like Sam Raimi, Tobe Hooper and Robert Rodriguez just went out and ‘did it’ and, yes, maybe the times were different but the concept and the passion were still the same,” he says.

Klassen also explains how inspiration came from a single line. “The idea for the film came from a one-sentence tagline I had written in 2008 that said, ‘What if your next door neighbor was the end of the world?’ ” Klassen recalls. “I thought I had a relatively original idea that could be made for a relatively small budget. It didn’t matter to me that I was just out of film school or that it was my first feature—I just knew it’s what I had to do.”



What Klassen cares about most is not just people watching ABOLITION, but how they interpret and think about the meaning behind it. “There were two things that were important to me from the inception of the film all the way through to the end,” he says. “One, was to put something original on the screen. I wanted my first movie to really have something that people hadn’t seen before. The second was to have characters with solid arcs and three dimensions. All of the leads and supporting roles aren’t the same people they were at the start of the film, and that was very important to me. That aspect is something I don’t think is always in the forefront of horror films, but to me all the best ones have it. I was interested in taking a more dramatic spin on a supernatural story, so the film isn’t just about the gore or the loud noises. At the end of

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ABOLITION, I want people to talk about it. What it meant to them, what they got out of it. The film puts a lot of pressure on the audience to pay attention and really look at what’s going on.”

Although sporadic, ABOLITION’s special makeup FX (supervised by Mitchell Stacey) look sufficiently gruesome. “Since there isn’t tons of gore in the film, the moments where there are I wanted to make sure they were memorable,” says Klassen. The carnage isn’t the only raw thing about ABOLITION—so are the actors’ performances. “There is a scene in which Elissa’s character Mia discovers the body of another character who meant a lot to her,” Klassen says. “Elissa’s performance was so strong that one of the extras actually started crying in the take. Elissa had a personal experience that mirrored her character’s, so her performance as a whole was very real, but especially in this one scene. We set up multiple cameras and only did one take. It was a difficult thing to see a person just unload that much emotion right in front of you.”



Klassen also praises the performance of Williams, who surprisingly beat out an Oscar-nominated genre star for a key role. “Caroline’s part [of Joshua’s mother, Eva] was originally going to be played by Linda Blair,” the director reveals. “I thought she would have been perfect. We went back and forth for a few weeks, she had a script and an offer, but it seemed like nothing was really moving. I was referred to Caroline, and it was one of the best decisions I made on the film. She was so perfect for the role. Her energy on set was contagious, and she played the part beautifully. Just interesting to think how it could have been different; things happen for a reason they say, and I am very glad Caroline was able to be on the project. I now can’t see the role as anyone else.”

And—could it be a sign?—shortly after meeting the principal actors for his movie, Klassen bumped into a noted horror director. “I flew out to LA to meet with Reggie, Caroline and Elissa,” he says. “Then I went out with Elissa to a party in the valley, which we didn’t get back from until 4 a.m. My plane left at 6:45 a.m., and I missed it, of course. The woman was so nice at LAX that she put me on the next flight to Toronto, one way. I couldn’t believe my luck. So there I was at my gate, waiting for the plane, when who should walk in? Eli Roth. I recognized him immediately and caught his eye. He knew what was coming—I couldn’t control myself. How

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random of a meeting is that? I had to talk to him. We chatted for about 10 minutes; he was coming to Toronto for a screening of THE LAST EXORCISM. I told him one of my favorite films was CABIN FEVER, and he looked at me and smiled and said, 'Me too.' I was vibrating for the whole plane ride home. Before we left, he wished me luck with ABOLITION. Such a small moment—one he probably doesn't even remember—but to me, it was just the boost in confidence I needed since we were going into production in less than 14 days. It felt to me almost like a 'pass the torch on' type of moment, if only our little film could be as good as his first go."



In addition to directing the film, Klassen also co-wrote, co-produced and supervised the post as well. "I have control issues," he laughs. "I understand how important your first film is. I have seen what it has done for filmmakers like Peter Jackson and Eli Roth. I had to be involved in all aspects of the film, but I did have help by some amazing people: the other writers, producers and our small but very determined post team."

A public release date has yet to be set for ABOLITION. "My main goal for the rest of the year is getting the movie out on DVD and getting the premieres done this summer," states Klassen. Check [here](#) for the most up-to-date news on the film and future screenings.



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