EMERGING PAST writer/director Thomas J. Churchill took cues for his first horror feature not from a genre classic of the past, but from its shooting site. During a trip to the Washington, DC area, “I was excited to see Georgetown for the first time since it was the home of one of my favorite horror films, THE EXORCIST,” he recalls. “I just had to see the locations. It was a must!”

“I started to shoot and write a treatment while I was in DC,” Churchill continues. “During that time, I started to feel a bit lost and alone. I took those feelings and wrote a storyline. I ended up shooting a version of EMERGING with friends and family. Maybe I will release it one day.”

In the meantime, the full-fledged feature version of EMERGING PAST is coming out under a unique distribution arrangement, with Spectra Records handling the domestic release of both the special-edition DVD (see the details here) and the CD soundtrack May 17, while The Phoenix Group is overseeing the sale of television, video-on-demand, on-line and foreign rights. Churchill’s second feature following his 1999 crime thriller DEVOURED, EMERGING PAST follows widowed photographer Pam (played by Krista Grotte, also the star of Herschell Gordon Lewis’ upcoming THE UH-OH SHOW), who is haunted by phantoms and visions of murder. The writer/director describes EMERGING PAST as a “big puzzle—a thinking person’s horror thriller. The film is like an onion, each time you peel away a layer, a new one surfaces. Each frame of the film has something hidden inside of it which means you have to watch and listen closely.”

Churchill gets increasingly excited as he talks about his heroine and the film’s ambiguous conclusion. “Pam is a woman who had it all but could not detect what was real and what was in

her mind,” he says. “The ending is basically for the audience to decide. It can go either way. What you see and hear brings you back to the beginning of the film.

“DEVOURED went under the radar,” he continues, “and therefore, I consider EMERGING PAST the film that I want to kick off my career. The biggest challenges of any film are securing the funding. Then, sometimes you can have a fantastic scene that is all written and ready to go and when you are ready to shoot, you ask yourself, ‘How am I going to do this?’ So that is when you get with your team and try to meet the challenge. It’s all about the team.”

EMERGING PAST may be Churchill’s directorial “kickoff,” but he’s doing so with a group of recognizable horror faces that he describes as “amazing. It was pretty surreal. To look up to Stephen Geoffreys [from the original FRIGHT NIGHT] and then direct this iconic actor who has worked with Steven Spielberg, Sean Penn, Christopher Walken, Tom Holland, Robert Englund and now Thomas Churchill—well, that was just awesome. Krista Grotte, our lead, was sick with the flu most of the film, but was a trouper through it. We pumped her full of flu meds and she nailed it. Brooke McCarter—here is the dude from THE LOST BOYS, an amazing actor who brought a lot to the table in talent. We also have Steve Dash [Jason from FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 2] and Tony Moran [the unmasked Michael Myers from John Carpenter’s HALLOWEEN], both pure professionals and great actors.”

For EMERGING PAST, Churchill and co. exploited the horror-rock connection. “When we headed into production, the only thing we had was the theme written by Duck 1,” he says. “That was very influential to shoot some crucial scenes with. Teaming up with Spectra happened once we had cut the film and inserted the songs. G Tom Mac contributed several of those and performed the score. He is best known for ‘Cry Little Sister’ from THE LOST BOYS and wrote the Internet hit ‘Soul I Bare’ for EMERGING PAST, and I’m getting a lot of feedback from fans of the video for it that I produced and directed. We also have another song, ‘Mud,’ which I produced and directed the video for as well. It took home Best Song at NYCIFF last summer. We have several recognizable as well as not-so-well-known artists on the movie, giving it a good balance.”

Churchill even wound up with the late Corey Haim on the EMERGING PAST soundtrack. “The one song in particular I am very happy and proud of is Corey’s ‘Mend Me,’ ” he says. “Interesting story: When Brooke McCarter came on board, he put me in touch with Corey. I wanted him to play the Mystery Man in the film. We spoke a few times. He loved the script and wanted a bigger role, but I assured him his part would be memorable and pretty big. For various reasons, Corey was not in the film. Later, the composers brought to my attention his song ‘Mend Me.’ I listened to it and knew exactly where it should go in the film. I listened to it again on the drive home, and had a private moment with some thoughts of how the Corey Haim/EMERGING PAST association came full circle. I am proud to say that Corey Haim is still very much a part of EMERGING PAST. I would have loved to have done a video for that song. It’s brilliant.”

If you know New York, it becomes apparent almost immediately that EMERGING PAST calls the borough of Queens home, and Churchill confirms that the area played an important part in his life. “I grew up in Queens,” he notes. “When I wrote the script, I included a lot of the locations that were significant to me as a child. The church in the film is St. Matthias in Ridgewood, Queens. I went to that school and spent a lot of time in that church. It’s such an amazing structure, which is over 100 years old. The train station is where I used to sell flowers at the staircase for a local florist when I was a kid. The school our leads walk past on their way to work, I used to play softball there. Pamela runs through Juniper Valley Park as she is being chased; again, I grew up there. I am from the Ridgewood, Glendale and Middle Village area. It had a big influence on me as a child, so I wanted to immortalize it.”

website [redacted] official

{jcomments on}