Written by Marla Newborn
Wednesday, 21 December 2011 11:38

Sometimes dreams really do come true, as the team behind the wildly successful short film REMOTE learned weeks ago. The Ontario-based group, consisting of director Marc Roussel, Ron Basch (who stars, co-produced and is partners with Roussel in Red Sneakers Media) and editor/co-producer Mark Sanders exclusively shared the news with Fango that REMOTE has been greenlighted to be expanded into a feature, and Roussel and Basch discussed the project with us.

The go-ahead came after what Roussel says was “a lot of hard work and hustle,” doing everything they could to generate exposure for REMOTE without having to put the short on-line. Finally, Sanders’ Berkshire Axis Media (BAM) saw the feature’s potential and optioned the screenplay. According to Basch, distribution is also in the offing, but it’s too early to reveal the details.

So, what is all the hoopla about? One day back in 2009, REMOTE arrived at the Fango office, and this writer was so excited about it, it was immediately programmed into our short-film lineup at FANGORIA’s *Weekend of Horrors* in Los Angeles that year, followed by a screening at our New York convention. The film deals with a man who turns on his TV one stormy night and sees a young woman looking back at him; as they communicate through their screens, he discovers she’s from the past—and is in terrible danger…

FANGORIA: What was your inspiration for REMOTE?

MARC ROUSSEL: The desire to make a horror film set primarily in one location. I’m a big fan of Roman Polanski’s apartment trilogy—REPULSION, ROSEMARY’S BABY and THE TENANT—and I thought it would be an exciting challenge to create a suspenseful chamber piece. To heighten the sense of isolation, I set the film during a severe snowstorm. Then I got the idea of the TV’s satellite signal going out, and with that in mind, I set out to tell a familiar story about a young woman being stalked by a faceless killer, but with a genre-bending twist.

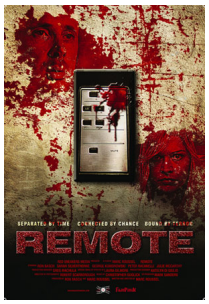
{youtube}Bgk2VQlnO_o{/youtube}

FANG: What was the first festival where it was screened?

ROUSSEL: We finished postproduction in late 2008 and began submitting it to as many fests as possible. Our very first public screening was at the Great River Film Festival in Granville, Ohio on April 4, 2009. It wasn't long after that when you contacted me about screening REMOTE at the *Weekend of Horrors*.

FANG: How many festivals has REMOTE played at altogether, and how many awards has it garnered?

ROUSSEL: We've played over 40 fests around the world, and picked up 11 awards. We were also nominated for a Director's Guild of Canada Award for Best Short Film.



FANG: Do you recall how you felt the first time you watched it with a live audience?

ROUSSEL: Nervous. Sick to my stomach. You never really know what you have until you see it with a live audience. As the film played, all I could do was watch the backs of all these heads, trying to determine if they were into it or not—so when the first "Holy shit" moment happened and I saw all these heads lean back suddenly and heard the collective gasp…well, it was then that I knew we had done our job right. I spent the rest of the screening enjoying the crowd react the way I had hoped they would, and walked away from it extremely proud of all our hard work.

FANG: Is it still on the festival circuit, or are things cooling off now?

ROUSSEL: The film has had a good three-year run. There is still plenty of interest in REMOTE—festivals still contact us about screening it—but we've taken it off the circuit as we work toward getting the feature version before the camera this spring.

FANG: When was the moment you realized you had to make REMOTE into a full-length film?

ROUSSEL: Pretty much right after that first public screening. Ron and I quickly came to that decision simultaneously. The film is 20 minutes long and plays like a minifeature. The feedback from the crowd made us realize there was so much more to be explored with the concept and characters. We knew we had something special that deserved a revisit.

RON BASCH: I would have to agree with Marc on this one. Clearly, once we attended the first screening and heard the initial response, it was evident that we put together a film that we could be proud of. I remember when I was in Palm Springs, I was inundated with questions about it and whether we had plans to turn it into a feature. As both one of the actors and producers, this was exhilarating, not to mention all the invites we got to play at other festivals after that screening.

FANG: Have you had to put other projects aside when it hit you that you just had to make the longer REMOTE?

ROUSSEL: Oh yeah, definitely. Ron and I were averaging about two short films a year, but when it was decided to concentrate on the REMOTE feature, our output ceased. I didn't want to split my focus from that script. The last thing we wanted to do was just whip something together quickly. I took my time writing it, figuring it out. It's an intricate story with multiple timelines that had to be handled carefully. Expanding the story meant rethinking the rules of those timelines. It needed to be sophisticated enough for a feature without being so convoluted that we would lose our audience.

BASCH: It was definitely a "good" setback. Marc has always been the creative force behind our work, and I knew it was for the better to leave him to do what he does best. Fortunately, I was still working as a represented actor, so my thespian life wasn't put on complete hold.

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