

## Evil Flies the “IRON SKY”

Written by Roberto E. D'Onofrio  
Monday, 11 February 2013 14:40

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Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich left a deep imprint on not only history, but modern society and the movies. But while some filmmakers have been inclined toward the dramatic and political aspects of Nazism, others have opted to poke fun at the Führer's mad ideology—revealing, beyond the surface silliness, more interesting ideas than in some serious titles. One such feature is Finnish director Timo Vuorensola's IRON SKY, which just had its new Director's Cut screened at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Since Charlie Chaplin's 1940 classic THE GREAT DICTATOR (edited in IRON SKY into a 10-minute celebration of Hitler to indoctrinate a moon colony's children into Nazism), through Troma's 1987 release SURF NAZIS MUST DIE and Adam Green's "The Diary of Anne Frankenstein" segment of 2011's anthology CHILLERAMA, filmmakers have utilized black humor to allegorically criticize the Nazi creed. In IRON SKY, Vuorensola turns the threat of a possible Fourth Reich, into raw material for pointed satire. The plot concerns American astronaut James Washington (Christopher Kirby) landing on the dark side of the moon and discovering a post-1945 Nazi city. Toward the end of WWII, it seems, a group of German scientists launched a rocket to our satellite in a last-ditch attempt to survive defeat and regroup, assembling a new army in order to return to Earth and overtake humanity once and for all.



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With a circus of hilarious characters, highlighted by Udo Kier as the moon's Führer, sexy Julia Dietze as an idealistic and kindly Nazi educator and Stephanie Paul as the ultraconservative President of United States (who bears a strange resemblance to Sarah Palin), Vuorensola whips up a refreshing black comedy imbued with shades of political commentary. Although modest in budget, IRON SKY (currently available on DVD and Blu-ray from Entertainment One) boasts amazing visual FX, among them an effective space armada of zeppelins and Nazi saucers and a swastika-shaped moonbase. But what makes the movie even more remarkable is its long production process (six years), with a portion of the funding crowd-sourced from fans on the Internet, who donated money on the basis of a teaser trailer and are all acknowledged in the closing credits. For the new Director's Cut, which will see further screenings and release later this year, Vuorensola reinstated 20 minutes of footage to create a new cut more in keeping with his original vision. FANGORIA chatted with the director (who will next helm the sci-fi Western JEREMIAH HARM, a co-production between Finland's Blind Spot Pictures and Stateside company Cheyenne Enterprises), who sported an appropriate ILSA, SHE WOLF OF THE SS T-shirt...

**FANGORIA:** What was the genesis of the project?

**TIMO VUORENSOLA:** IRON SKY was born in a sauna, like all good things from Finland! Basically, it started as a joke, trying to come up with the craziest subject for a movie. “Nazis on the moon” was a mad idea, but then we decided to elaborate on that concept and give more character to it. We started in 2005, and it was a long financing process; as a matter of fact, this was the most expensive film ever made in Finland. We eventually ended up shooting in Frankfurt, Germany and Brisbane, Australia, which is just on the other side of the world. They have a really good tax credit system—actually a 40 percent refund—and great studios, so we found the perfect partner in the Australian company New Holland Pictures.

Shooting there, I almost felt we were as close as possible to being on the dark side of the moon without leaving Earth, but it sort of fit the whole nature of the project. I mean, it was a crazy movie, and of course we had to go and shoot it as far [from home] as possible. Seriously, though, Australia was perfect, and we had great fun over there.

What I miss today is good science fiction; it's very rare to find a good movie in that genre. MOON was fantastic, but otherwise, TRANSFORMERS and stuff like that is not even science fiction. I wanted to bring back the fun of this genre; I really enjoy space battles, and I haven't seen a good one in a long time.

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**FANG:** How did the idea of crowd-funding come up?

**VUORENSOLA:** It was quite natural, because we were in a situation where we didn't have enough money, but we had a lot of fans on the Internet asking, “Can we help you in any way?” “Is there anything we can do?” According to Finnish law, you can't just accept donations—you have to be a Red Cross or wildlife-preservation foundation to be able to accept money—so we had to find a way to let those people help us. We then came up with this crowd-funding approach, where people invest in a film and get their money back from the profits when the movie starts making a profit. We got 1.2 million Euros from the Internet, while the whole budget of IRON SKY was 7.7 million Euros, so it was about 25 percent of the final cost, but it was very important to us. I think we'll see many more crowd-funded pictures in the future, as it's a very worthwhile option for independent filmmakers to get the money to make their movies.

**FANG:** You were able to gather an impressive cast, like iconic actor Udo Kier.



**VUORENSOLA:** He is such a nice person. He was the only actor on my wish list, and thanks to our German co-producer, we were able to contact him and sent him the script. We didn't hear anything from him, so we thought maybe he didn't like it. Then one day I was in a shop buying groceries and got this phone call from him saying, “Hello, Timo—I read the script, it was really good and I want to do it!” At first I thought it was a joke; I mean, Udo Kier calling me! Could you believe it? When we first met, I felt a bit uneasy, but he is such a kind and great person who makes you love him immediately.

Julia Dietze, as Nazi officer/teacher Renate Richter, is absolutely great as well. I remember that when she entered the casting studio, there were about 20 other people lined up for the part, but I realized immediately that there was no reason to see anybody else, as she was perfect for

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the part. I fell in love with her. One thing I like about this movie's cast is that I had the chance to work with a lot of female actors in important roles in a science fiction film, which is not typical; usually, sci-fi pictures are more male-driven, or if there's a woman she's subordinate to the hero. I had fun creating three proper female roles for IRON SKY.

**FANG:** Your movie is certainly not politically correct; did you have any trouble with pro-fascist groups, or from people in North Korea, which is made fun of in the film?

**VUORENSOLA:** Actually, I heard that there's a North Korean group on the Internet that banned me, saying, "You are not welcome here!" Then there were some neo-Nazi groups in Slovenia that were not very happy with the film, because in that country, the distributor wanted to release it on April 20, which is Hitler's birthday. They said, "We will come there and burn the place to the ground, and beat everybody who's there!" Luckily, they never showed up, but I have a theory on this group: They were really aggressive in the '90s, but then they found girlfriends and now they have kids and got fat and lazy, and became domesticated. But I believe that the Nazi ideologies are still present in politics nowadays, and even if something doesn't look like Nazism, there is the same ideology behind it that was a threat in the '40s, so we have to be very careful; also, the world financial crises can hide that ideology.

**FANG:** I heard that a bad accident happened during the shooting of IRON SKY.

**VUORENSOLA:** Yes, Peta Sergeant, the actress who plays Vivian, broke her leg badly on the second day of shooting. It was a stupid accident, but she couldn't move at all; she had this big blue cast on her leg, and we had to call on a body double for her. Any time you see her move, that's her body double. But she was fantastic; she told me, "This is not going to ruin the film!" She did everything in her power that she was able to do, and though she was in terrible pain, she did a wonderful job. I don't know if people noticed it.