

"COMPOUND FRACTURE" (Movie Review)

Written by Justin Beahm

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COMPOUND FRACTURE is the first feature from actor Tyler Mane's new production imprint Mane Entertainment, and what a debut it is. Genre mainstays Leslie Easterbrook (THE DEVIL'S REJECTS) and Muse Watson are on hand for this dramatic genre bender, but it's the promise of an on-screen monster mash between "Michael Myers" Mane, and Derek Mears (FRIDAY THE 13TH 2009) that is sure to have Fango readers salivating.

While these terror titans are perhaps best known for bringing silent, hulking beasts to life in their respective franchise reboots, here they enter very different territory, eschewing masks and grue for the gritty realism of fractured family mechanics. Mane, our lead, is Michael Silna, traveling with his wife Juliette (Mane's real life wife and co-writer Renae Geerlings), to the house where he grew up for a most unusual reunion. In tow is nephew Brandon (Alex Saxon), the morose son of Silna's deceased sister, as disinterested as he is unfamiliar with the new family surrounds.

As the trio approaches their destination, they find something less a home, and more of a military compound. High walls and security gates give way to a modest abode littered with security cameras and monitoring devices tucked in every nook, book, and corner. At the center of it all is Michael's estranged father Gary (Watson), the paranoid mind behind the voyeuristic confines and over-the-top protection methods. As downtrodden Annabelle (Easterbrook) explains, things are bad, and communication with Gary has become erratic and sparse. As Michael sets about repairing his crumbling family, a ghost from the past (Mears) comes knocking, and the Silnas are forced to band together against a presence most sinister...

Co-writer and star Geerlings is no stranger to turns of the pen, coming from a background that includes a long stint as Editor In Chief for Top Cow Comics, and now as Senior Editor at Radical Publishing. Her years toiling behind titles such as WITCHBLADE and TOMB RAIDER prepped her for her partnership with beau Mane on this ambitious freshman effort, and the results are admirable. What could be handled as a simple tale of an unlikely group forced to reckon with a murderous intruder, here turns into a taut slow boil that invests the audience first in the characters, and then in their harrowing struggle.

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Easterbrook is fantastic as the long-suffering Annabelle, sheepish in the shadow of the overwhelming Watson. As wide eyed Gary, Watson finds a nice balance between joy (as the father unexpectedly reunited with his long-lost son) and madness (his tireless vigilance protecting what he holds most dear). Newcomer Saxon brings a relatable affection to the alienated Brandon, shining in scenes where his character makes the turn from walled-off angsty teen to invested son.



What really stands out here is the maturity with which Mane handles the character of Michael, riding an arc that takes him from cold and distant at the outset, to focused and compassionate by the end. As Mane enters his father's house for the first time in decades, he explores the space with clear familiarity tinged with sadness and regret. Whatever has kept him apart from his father is simmering under the surface, and you feel the weight of the confrontations to come as Michael juggles duty as son, husband, father, and eventually, protector. Throughout it all, Mane remains grounded, and elevates the proceedings in his first leading role. Mears, comparatively, is appropriately violent and menacing in his performance, but the less said about his character, the better, for those who haven't seen the picture yet.

Director and cinematographer Anthony Rickert-Epstein handles the proceedings satisfyingly, managing to keep Mane's massive frame from dominating shots and overcrowding rooms—no easy task, considering his star's 6'9" stature. That being said, the editing was a bit jagged at times, moving uneasily through some sequences in a way that might confuse character locations within their space here and there, but this is nothing too distracting. It would also have been nice to see a bit more of the aftermath of Mears' nastiness, but the understated approach was likely a calculated one. The colors are a bit washed, lending a nice seasonal feel to the autumnal environment, and the few digital effects present, play nicely.

The climactic battle between Mane and Mears is less Freddy Vs. Jason and more Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, lending a humanity to something that could have easily been played over the top, considering its marquee value. It's a satisfying duel between giants, and neither character steps outside what is established prior, which is appreciated. Compound Fracture is a solid first outing from Mane Entertainment, utilizing an excellent cast in a layered story of

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madness, knotted family roots, and supernatural revenge.

