

## Tony Timpone's Elegies: In the Good Old Summertime

Written by Tony Timpone  
Sunday, 27 June 2010 09:44

---



A recent article in industry trade Daily Variety talked about how 50 percent or more of the upcoming big-studio release slates are filled with tentpole franchise movies: remakes, sequels, comic book or video game adaptations or movies derived from old TV shows. With the average movie budget topping \$100 million and marketing costs about half that, film companies, more profit-driven than ever in a faltering global economy, are taking less chances than ever when greenlighting new films.

They want movies with built-in audiences and brand recognition, which is why, if you look at the current box-office charts (as of June 24, as I write this), eight out of the top 10 movies all sprang from older properties (SHREK, KARATE KID, A-TEAM, etc.). The only two “original” films on the list, KNIGHT & DAY and KILLERS, are screwball comedy/thrillers that steal their plots from several other films, including 2005’s MR. & MRS. SMITH and James Cameron’s TRUE LIES. It’s easier to sell warmed-over rehashes to the multiplex set than challenging, unique films, which is why June’s box-office disappointment SPLICE never had a chance.

As we have seen time and time again in recent years, horror films don’t seem to do very well in late spring/early summer—DRAG ME TO HELL, THE DESCENT, THE DEVIL’S REJECTS and LAND OF THE DEAD being just a few examples. Smaller films like these, and SPLICE, lose the battle to the big-budget, saturation-marketed studio event pictures. SPLICE garnered good reviews and boasted a great marketing campaign, one comparable to the fine job Warners applied to ORPHAN last July, which bucked the summer curse and earned sleeper status. I expected SPLICE (like ORPHAN, a Dark Castle/Warners release) to do better than the \$15 million it has grossed so far, but go figure. (On the other hand, I was not surprised when the truly awful supernatural Western JONAH HEX tanked on June 18.) Luckily, by August, moviegoers seem to grow weary of all the overblown special FX, fantasy and action movies and are ready to give horror a chance again.

So, what do we have to look forward to this season, to get our fear fix? Give me a monster and I’m there. Give me a planet of monsters hunting kidnapped humans and I’m there faster than a World Cup soccer goal. PREDATORS opens July 9, and this one has geek cred all over it, thanks to the close supervision of producer Robert Rodriguez. Though the GRINDHOUSE/DESPERADO auteur has been getting the lion’s share of press on the movie, let’s not forget that this latest alien stalker movie was directed by the talented Nimrod Antal, who previously helmed the taut suspenseur VACANCY, as well as 2003’s brilliant Hungarian cult item CONTROL (a.k.a. KONTROLL). Hopefully, star Adrien Brody will have better luck with the Predators than he did with Dren. Rodriguez also co-directed MACHETE, out September 3, spun

## Tony Timpone's Elegies: In the Good Old Summertime

Written by Tony Timpone  
Sunday, 27 June 2010 09:44

---

from the infamous GRINDHOUSE trailer and boasting the season's coolest cast (Danny Trejo, Robert De Niro, Jeff Fahey, Tom Savini, etc.).

For a while, it looked like THE LAST EXORCISM and PIRANHA 3D would play chicken on August 27 (just like HALLOWEEN II and THE FINAL DESTINATION last August), but the fish tale blinked and will now open on August 20. Dimension could really use a hit, and 3-D killer fish may be just the ticket. Alexandre Aja directs his third remake in a row (after THE HILLS HAVE EYES and MIRRORS, the latter a Korean redux), though he refuses to call it one in FANGORIA #296, on sale in August. PIRANHA 3D promises a good dose of summer schlock right out of a '70s drive-in, albeit with better production values and bigger stars (Richard Dreyfuss?!). Winning advance raves and coming courtesy of Lionsgate, Daniel Stamm's THE LAST EXORCISM does the old "found footage" routine again, but advance word says it takes the concept to scarier heights than the dull PARANORMAL ACTIVITY (sorry, not a fan of that one).

If PIRANHA 3D and THE LAST EXORCISM had gone head-to-head, then Eli Roth would have been competing with himself. Well, sort of. You see, Roth produced LAST EXORCISM and has an amusing cameo as a wet T-shirt contest emcee in PIRANHA 3D. He also stars alongside Henry Thomas in Fruit Chan's direct-to-DVD DON'T LOOK UP (a remake of Hideo Nakata's GHOST ACTRESS), due July 27 from E1. Yeah, INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS' "Bear Jew" is all over the place these days, but my favorite appearance by the CABIN FEVER/HOSTEL creator was at last January's Screen Actors Guild Awards, where he name-checked FANGORIA when the BASTERDS cast won Best Ensemble.

Another 3-D horror flick (yes, 3-D is here to stay) closes out the warm-weather months, when RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE attempts to prove that there's more to the story after EXTINCTION. Film series originator (and scripter of all four films) Paul W.S. Anderson returns to the director's chair to tell a globe-tripping tale chock full of Alice clones, scores of zombies (including startling additions to the undead ranks), drooling Dobermans and corporate supervillain Wesker. Best part: I got to go to the set, interview star Milla Jovovich (in her trailer, wearing only a robe...) and get tons of Fango scoops that you will be reading all about right here and in the cover story of Fango #296.

If this scream fare still isn't enough to get you excited this summer, check out the various art houses, repertory theaters and film festivals in your city for more independent choices. The New York Asian Film Festival just opened in the Big Apple and runs through July 8 (go [here](#) for details and watch for coverage on this site in the days ahead). San Francisco's greatly expanded

[Another Hole in the Head](#)

## Tony Timpone's Elegies: In the Good Old Summertime

Written by Tony Timpone  
Sunday, 27 June 2010 09:44

---

blasts away July 8-29. And Montreal's

[Fantasia](#)

(where I am a programmer) dwarfs them all July 8-28 (see our news section Tuesday a.m. for the schedule scoop). Grassroots indies to keep an eye on are the twisted but affectionate grindhouse throwback

[ALL ABOUT EVIL](#)

and the hilarious documentary

[BEST WORST MOVIE](#)

.

Couch potatoes, meanwhile, can sample VOD and other digital-download premieres from genre-savvy indie companies [Magnolia/Magnet Releasing](#) and [IFC Midnight](#). Magnet's superior sequel [REC] 2 is available now before its July 9 hardtop playdates, while the same company's rousing adventure CENTURION (from THE DESCENT's Neil Marshall) hits VOD July 23 and theaters August 27. Meanwhile, deadheads will find themselves in zombie heaven at IFC Midnight, now showing LA HORDE and Jake (EVIL ALIENS) West's DOGHOUSE (more IFC VOD releases

[here](#)

). IFC also has ambitious acquisition plans to keep the blood flowing well into 2011. Magnolia, watch your back.

And, I'm sure you haven't forgotten, but the eight-film FANGORIA FrightFest arrives across various Blockbuster delivery outlets on August 6 (see [FrightFest's official site](#) and [Blockbuster](#) for more details).

And so, brothers in blood, even though most forthcoming horror pictures won't be competing with the likes of TOY STORY 3 at 4,000 theaters, quality genre movies are just a download, train ride or road trip away. It can still be a scary summer.

{jcomments on}