

## “THE THING” that saved Universal?; producer comments

Written by Michael Gingold  
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Universal has had a disappointing time at the box office over the past year, with the well-reviewed but commercially underwhelming GREEN ZONE just the latest in a series of underperformers. A recent *Los Angeles Times* blog posited that the studio's upcoming revisiting of THE THING could help turn its fortunes around, and got some comments from the producers.

The new THING, which begins its British Columbia (locations) and Toronto (studio) shoot this week on a \$38-million budget for 2011 release, is described as a companion piece to John Carpenter's 1982 classic, revealing what happened at the Norwegian camp in the Antarctic that's visited by Kurt Russell and co. in Carpenter's film. "We go back to that...camp and try to figure out what happened," producer Marc Abraham tells *Times* writer Patrick Goldstein. "It's like a crime scene, with an ax in the door, and the audience gets to be the detective, trying to piece together what horrible things have occurred."



Abraham and Eric Newman are producing THE THING via their Strike Entertainment company, which previously did the hit DAWN OF THE DEAD remake for Universal. After that success, Newman tells Goldstein, "Universal basically came to us and said, 'Everyone is remaking everything, what do we have that might be good?' The great thing is that Universal has all sorts of good titles. After all, they're the studio that essentially created the monster movie genre."

THE THING stars Joel Edgerton and Mary Elizabeth Winstead, and the blog reveals that their co-stars will hail from all over the world, with many of the Norwegian scientists played by actors from that country, speaking in their native tongue with subtitles. The creature FX are being created by Alec Gillis and Tom Woodruff Jr. of Amalgamated Dynamics, and helming Eric Heisserer and Ronald D. Moore's script is Matthijs Van Heijningen Jr. (pictured), a Dutch director making his feature debut after a series of visually striking commercials. "That's exactly

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why we hired Matthijs,” Newman says. “Commercial directors make good film directors not just because they’ve shot millions of feet of film, but because they know how to convey emotion in 30 seconds. Whether it’s Ridley Scott or David Fincher or Spike Jonze, these guys are trained to tell stories without words, which is great training for a genre film. It’s like they all came out of silent movies.”

Abraham cites Scott’s ALIEN as their creative model for THE THING, and the producers reveal that Carpenter has given the project his blessing. Newman reveals that he shares many fans’ misgivings about revisiting horror classics, but says of THE THING, “Once we realized there was a new story to tell, with the same characters and the same world, but from a very different point of view, we took it as a challenge. It’s the story about the guys who are just ghosts in Carpenter’s movie—they’re already dead. But having Universal give us a chance to tell their story was irresistible.” You can read the complete blog with more comments [here](#) .

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