

Writing “REPO MEN”: Part Two

Written by Allan Dart
Friday, 12 March 2010 16:17



In the first part of this interview (see it [here](#)), author Eric Garcia recalled how his short story “The Telltale Pancreas” evolved into both a full-length novel and his own screenplay. Universal releases that film, REPO MEN, March 19, and in this concluding portion of our chat with Garcia, the scribe discusses the differences between the book and the script, and weighs in on the REPO! THE GENETIC OPERA controversy.

In the near-future-set picture, Jude Law essays a heartless organ Repo Man named Remy who ironically winds up with an artificial heart that he can no longer pay for—and that the Credit Union wants back. “In the book, the main character is a little bit more of a bastard,” Garcia says. “Not even on purpose. That’s just who he is, and he isn’t even apologetic about it. He doesn’t even see that it’s a problem. He’s a guy who goes out and does his job, which becomes a mantra in the movie. He says, ‘A job’s a job.’ What the Repo Men do seems reprehensible, but you’ve got to do what you’ve got to do to pay the bills and live your life.



“Also, in the book, he has five wives,” the writer continues. “He can’t make any relationship work because he has a major problem seeing the big picture. Everything he does is sort of in the moment, and broken down into these small parts. He keeps finding these women, falling in love with them on a temporary basis and liking some individual thing about them. In the novel, he marries one woman who’s a Union groupie and loves Repo Men. So he marries her because she really loves his job and the wife before hated it. And when that goes sour, he cuts the relationship off and moves on.

“However, those wives started dropping with each successive draft of the script. We had five

Writing “REPO MEN”: Part Two

Written by Allan Dart
Friday, 12 March 2010 16:17

wives in the first one, then four, then three... In the movie, he has a wife he's on the skids with, and then he meets Beth [another fugitive from the Credit Union, played by Alice Braga] halfway through the story. That was another big change in the script. All the way through production, there was a love story that had to do with him meeting his wife. Initially, she was a prostitute and he was a guy going off to war at the age of 19. They met and decided to get married on a whim. They had three magical days together, and then never saw each other again until many, many years later when he was injured and back in the States. He finds her, and she's sort of his ticket back to salvation.

“At the end of the day, though, things changed—things changed in the editing, things changed all over the place, and the story now has to do with him finding this woman [Beth] who still represents his salvation, but he discovers her halfway through and they've never met before. That was a lesson in what postproduction can do, and how it's sort of its own writing process. In the book, he has the five wives and then meets Bonnie, whose another person hiding out from the Credit Union, just like he is. In the movie, he has the one wife and then he meets Beth, who is the Bonnie character, more or less.”



Both the movie and the book start with the Repo Man hiding out. (By the way, the character is never named in the novel, which is told in the first person. However, for the sake of clarification, Garcia and co-scripter Garrett Lerner christened him Remy in their screenplay.) “You know right from the beginning: He's hiding out in this ratty hotel, typing on a manual typewriter that he's found and telling his story,” Garcia explains. “That's the conceit of the book and the movie. Some of the other changes were simply tonal. To me, the book is straight-up black comedy. That's what I dig most, and that's what I like to read and write. The movie has a good deal of that humor, which I'm glad we were able to keep in there. It's also an action film as well. There's plenty of good blood and guts. It's funny: When I was writing the script, I was thinking, ‘This isn't too gory.’ And then I saw some footage and was like, ‘Wow! There's a ton of blood on the screen!’ The red-band trailer is really splattery. They didn't skimp on the practical effects. Blood is flying all over the place. It's pretty wild.”

Writing “REPO MEN”: Part Two

Written by Allan Dart
Friday, 12 March 2010 16:17

In almost all forms of Western entertainment, the main character goes through their journey, their arc, and the same is true of Remy. As the book’s tagline reads: “The story of a Repo Man who has to lose his heart to find his soul.” “It’s simply a question of the different obstacles he has to overcome,” Garcia says. “Remy has been stuck in this rut of a job that we would think of as horrifying, strangely exciting and bizarre, but to him, it’s just this thing that he does. We all get stuck in things—we do our job, watch TV and go to bed. Remy’s doing this job for a corporation that doesn’t necessarily have people’s best interests in mind. In both the book and movie, he kind of becomes the guy on the other side, and so has to play the role of victim whether he likes it or not. He also finally finds someone he can truly relate to who is also in that position, and now he has to protect and defend someone besides himself.”

In FANGORIA #292, both Garcia and director Miguel Sapochnik chimed in on the whole REPO MEN/REPO! THE GENETIC OPERA feud. While both films deal with organ repossession, Garcia believes that’s where the similarities end. As Sapochnik put it, “We’re talking about the difference between the ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW version and the PULP FICTION version.” However, certain hardcore fans of Darren Lynn Bousman’s cult film disagree—and have aired their dissent on-line.



“My mantra over the last five years or so has become, ‘The great thing about the Internet is that it gives people a voice. The terrible thing about the Internet is that it gives people a voice,’ ” Garcia laughs. “At the end of the day, it makes all voices equal, and in some ways that’s awesome. In my relatively liberal, First Amendment-toting way, I’m like, ‘That’s great. Everyone can talk.’ But then I’m like, ‘Wow! A lot of people really just talk out of their ass and have no regard for facts.’ You take the good with the bad. We have free expression, and that can be wrong and right. You just have to try and point it out [when it’s wrong].”

With REPO MEN, he continues, “because there was another movie being made that was similar to ours, the [REPO! people] were the villain for us—and we were the villain for them. But I think we’re past that. I hope we’re past that. We’ll find out.”

Writing “REPO MEN”: Part Two

Written by Allan Dart
Friday, 12 March 2010 16:17

In addition to REPO MEN, Garcia is busy toiling on a couple of projects, including the film version of John Searles’ STRANGE BUT TRUE and a possible adaptation of his own book CASSANDRA FRENCH’S FINISHING SCHOOL FOR BOYS. “John Searles is an amazing writer. I love that book,” Garcia says. “I did an adaptation, and they’re casting that right now. The directors are the guys who did CARRIERS [Alex and David Pastor]. Not many people saw that movie, because it didn’t come out in a ton of theaters. Paramount Vantage was waiting for Chris Pine to break out, and then he did [with STAR TREK] and they put CARRIERS out. But Vantage basically collapsed while it was waiting, so there wasn’t a studio to push it. Still, it’s a great film and I love the Pastor brothers. They made a zombie movie without zombies, which I think was Paramount’s problem. Paramount was probably like, ‘Hey, we’ve got this zombie movie!’ Then they saw it and said, ‘Where the hell are the zombies? Why aren’t there any zombies?!’ But it’s really smart, and I’m excited about that film.

“CASSANDRA is the only book of mine that hasn’t been set up as a film or a TV show. I keep jumping back and forth between doing it as a movie or TV, and I’ve been working with different people to figure out how to do it. There has been lots of interest, but for some reason I’ve been reluctant to go with anybody specific. I guess I’ll know when it’s the right person.

“Also, I’m writing a new book,” Garcia reveals. “I’m *always* working on another book!”

To read more about Eric Garcia, Miguel Sapochnik and REPO MEN, check out FANGORIA #292.