

Q&A: Paco Plaza & the Romantic Splatter of "[REC] 3: GENESIS"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Wednesday, 01 August 2012 14:32



This past March, SXSW hosted the U.S. Premiere of Paco Plaza's much anticipated, solo-helmed sequel, [REC] 3. As the credits rolled, I was gleeful, both at what had just transpired on screen, and the general shock making its way through the audience. The film was something entirely unexpected, and that's exactly what Plaza wanted.

On Demand August 2 and in limited theatrical release September 3 (from Magnet Releasing), [REC] 3: GENESIS is, oddly enough, an astonishingly romantic splatter comedy for the ages. Despite his complaint most audiences go into the theater knowing exactly what to expect, Plaza happily spoke with FANGORIA about his massive departure from the series so far.

FANGORIA: You seemed to just have said, "I'm not interested in doing more of the same." When did you decide that, and to take it into the terrain of dark comedy?

PACO PLAZA: I didn't want to make another [REC] film. I don't like films squeezed and stretched for profit. So, like ARMY OF DARKNESS, which for me, is a masterpiece, I felt, "why don't we make a film that's completely different and unexpected, playing in the same universe and continue to build, but play around with the same elements and make a whole different experience?" And it was the image of the bride with a chainsaw, I wanted to shoot it. The whole thing about the wedding is something that came up when editing the first [REC]. It was something we were talking about having lunch one day. "It'd be cool to make a wedding video." And then I had this image of the bride with the chainsaw, the wedding video, and of course what we wanted was to, in the middle of the film, was close the franchise and say, "Ok, we're done with found footage, let's make a movie."

FANG: Do you think you wanted to prove that the universe and stories you've created so far didn't hinge on just that aesthetic?

PLAZA: Yea, it's a mix of things, but more importantly, I think that today, with Twitter, blogs and five minute long trailers, it's very difficult to be surprised by a film. It's like we go with our notebook, checking if everything we knew was going to be in the film, is in the film. "Ok, this is exactly the film I expected." We wanted to challenge ourselves as filmmakers, and as part of the audience, to have a whole different movie; to say, "Why don't we get the feeling I had back

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in the 80s, when I was really young and I went to the theater and had no information on a film?" That was awesome. I think that's something that is increasingly rare today. You even know the twists from the trailer. That's something that, for us, was very important; to make a different film, that takes you by surprise.



FANG: For the departure this film is, the first acts of [REC] and [REC] 3 are actually quite similar, tonally speaking. Is that something to do with Luis Berdejo returning to co-write, at all?

PLAZA: Luis is a brilliant writer, and he's one of my best friends. I love him. I really enjoy working with him. You can also see that in, I made a film for television in Spain, which is not very known, called A CHRISTMAS TALE—

FANG: One of the "Six Films to Keep You Awake"—

PLAZA: Yes, I wrote it with him, as well. One thing Luis does, he really loves the characters. Especially, the second-line characters, which is something I really love in a film; when you feel you know them, even if they are for just a minute, you know who they are.

FANG: And you captured that wedding feel so perfectly

PLAZA: The flirting, the drinking. Thank you so much.

FANG: Well, the film has a legitimately sweet nature. It was romantic. You don't feel the way

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bout a lot of couples in horror films, as you do Clara and Koldo.

PLAZA: It's a real romantic film. It's like TITANIC [laughs]. I'm very happy you perceived that. It's exactly what we wanted to do. It has a mix of romance, albeit dark, but with humor, with action, with adventure. We like to think of it as an adventure film; the bride and groom looking for each other desperately. He is like the knight in shining armor. She's the princess. We have this ROMEO & JULIET moment. It's really romantic, and it's the aspect of the film I love the most.

FANG: Based on how it relates to the creatures and even the subject of marriage, what is the series' relationship with Catholicism?

PLAZA: What I think, is that Catholicism is a very established institution in Spain. Our culture, whether we like it or not, is extremely melted with the history of Catholicism. Our tradition is mainly religious. When we were kids and you went to class, you had a cross and you had to pray at the beginning of the day. But it's only natural. It's something that's in our daily lives. It's funny, because I just came from France and as they are a republic, they are not religious. They find it exotic. It happens in Japan. The religious element makes it a foreign flavor, something exotic that they like. For us, it's very natural. At the same, it's really Spanish, mocking our traditions; not taking them seriously.

FANG: That seems to be a lot of the film's intent. Especially in the first act, when the wedding videographer is going on about cinema verite, it feels like you're saying, "don't take this all so seriously, have a little fun."

PLAZA: Exactly, and he says he's using the steadicam because if everything is handheld, you can't see shit.

FANG: The cast of [REC] 3 is so incredible. Can you talk about achieving that sort of familial interaction? Had you worked with many of them before?

PLAZA: In terms of the lead roles, we wrote the script knowing they were going to portray

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them. With the secondary roles, we had an exhausting casting process. One of the nicest things was having families. We didn't go to an extras agent. We went to amateur theater groups, because we wanted them to be friends, and when they danced, they really danced with their friends. I think, we wanted to capture that atmosphere of family and having fun together.



FANG: How are you reacting to the wide range of surprise from audiences?

PLAZA: The film is not what people expect, and that can be taken positive or negative. There's people who are happy. Some can be disappointed, but I think the film really makes people feel things, and I'm really happy about that.

FANG: There's a clue in the film about its direct relationship to the others, and for all the prequel talk, it actually feels like it's happening concurrently.

PLAZA: Yes, the three films happen the same day, and the fourth will start the same day. That's why the film is called GENESIS. It's like the beginning of the end, something is beginning.

FANG: Is Jaime Balaguero more serious-minded with APOCALYPSE?

PLAZA: Once we split it, it's impossible not to take a film to your own personality. So, it's obvious that if Jaime had been more involved with this film, it'd be different because one of our rules when we made [REC] and [REC] 2 was "We'll never argue. If there's anything you don't like, it's out of the film." One is not going to try to convince the other. That's the way we work.

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FANG: In developing GENESIS, do you think it was hard for him to not add input?

PLAZA: No, I've done maybe seven films and Jaume has done eight and from the first time we directed, we've been very good friends, and we've collaborated. We'll go to the other's production, go to the editing room to give thoughts. We've always been very collaborative. The exception, what was abnormal, was to co-direct. That was really awkward for us. He's been with me the whole process of [REC] 3, as he has been in the past with all my films because he's a very good friend, he's a brilliant guy. I'm always listening to his thoughts.

FANG: And I imagine you're there, much in the same way, for the fourth?

PLAZA: Absolutely.

FANG: I'm sure you're giving thoughts, but is it harder for you to restrain from offering what you think on APOCALYPSE?

PLAZA: I don't think so, when you respect someone, what I want to see is a Jaume film. I don't want to see a Jaume & Paco film. I want him to feel 100% free. I will support him and give my feedback, but it has to be his film. That's why SLEEP TIGHT interested me a lot. I want to see a Jaume Balaguero film.

FANG: Do you think, after the fourth, you're done with [REC]?

PLAZA: Well, the other day I had an idea for a fifth, but I really want to move forward on different stuff.

For more on [REC] 3, see Fango's review right [here](#).