Back when Joe Dante first rolled cameras on THE HOLE in late 2008, it was at the forefront of a new wave of 3D production that would soon become a staple of fantasy/horror filmmaking. Unfortunately, bad luck consigned the film to unseen status in the U.S. (though it did open overseas) until now, and Dante spoke to Fango on the eve of its theatrical and disc release.

Opening tomorrow, September 28 at theaters in the Atlanta, GA area and Los Angeles’ Downtown Independent Theater, followed by DVD, Blu-ray and VOD release (none in 3D, sadly) October 2 from Big Air Studios, THE HOLE, scripted by VACANCY’s Mark L. Smith, begins with divorced mom Susan (Teri Polo) moving into a new suburban house with her sons, teenaged Dane (Chris Massoglia) and younger Lucas (Nathan Gamble). The boys soon discover a mysterious covered pit in the basement, and when they open it up, they unleash forces that bring their deepest fears to life, and that they and neighbor Julie (Haley Bennett) have to stop. Read on as Dante looks back on THE HOLE story…

FANGORIA: It must be a relief that THE HOLE is finally getting out there.

JOE DANTE: I’d say that’s a good word, yeah. It is a relief.

FANG: So what exactly took so long?

DANTE: Well, I'm in good company. THE CABIN IN THE WOODS and RED DAWN are two movies shot around the same time as mine that never came out until now. Our problem was that when I talked [the producers] into shooting THE HOLE in 3D, which I thought was a good idea at the time, I didn't reckon on the fact that there was going to be a whole flood of "fake" 3D movies—pictures that were shot flat and then converted—about to enter the marketplace at that point. Back then, there were not that many 3D theaters, so we essentially got frozen out and couldn't get booked. Then there was the attempt to find a distributor, and somebody who was supposed to have some money didn't have some money, and all of the sudden it was like, "Oh, look! This is an old movie!" It was very frustrating, but finally they've got a good trailer on it now, and hopefully this attempt will work.

FANG: As you mentioned, you were among the first to embrace the new 3D. What made you decide to do this particular film in the process?

DANTE: When I read the script—and I read a lot of horror scripts that frankly aren't so hot; it's pretty difficult to find something different in this genre right now, since there's so much repetitive material—I sparked to the fact that I liked the characters. The story was not dissimilar from other movies, but it didn't go where I thought it was gonna go, and I thought that was great. So when I signed on, I said, "You know, this is a pretty small movie. It's got six or seven characters and five locations, one of which is the basement where we spend a lot of time. This would be really improved if we shot it in 3D, and I don't mean the kind where we throw things all the time. I mean the 3D that immerses you and brings you into the world, and makes you feel like you're part of the story and in the basement with these kids." And they bought it. They thought it was a great idea. It's just that in the end, that's what actually kept the picture off the screen.

FANG: At the time, there not many films were being shot in 3D. How much research did you have to do to settle on the right process, and get the 3D looking as good as possible?

DANTE: We looked at all the purveyors of 3D, and there were some very fancy guys who threw used-car-salesman pitches at us, but we picked a place called Paradise FX, run by older guys out of a warehouse who loved 3D and took all their money and put it back into R&D for the process. They do it because they love it, and they seemed to be a better fit for me than some of those slick guys. So that's who we chose, and we won the first Venice Film Festival award for best 3D movie, because the 3D was really good.

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