Written by Samuel Zimmerman Friday, 28 September 2012 09:35



Each Halloween season, the subways in New York City are adorned with nightmares. They're ever changing, but the residents know what it means: one of the city's most lauded haunts is returning. And this year, with creator Timothy Haskell reluctantly giving in to his audience's blood thirst, it sounds like Nightmare is at its most vicious yet. FANGORIA spoke with Haskell about his already hot button theme of serial killers, as well as the incredible gallery of murder history accompanying the 2012 chapter.

FANGORIA: From what I gather and what we've spoken about in the past, you sort of base each year's themes off of exit polling in the previous haunts. Did this work that way?

TIMOTHY HASKELL: It was exit polling in a different way. My partner tells me never to apologize for anything, but "Fairy Tales," although I personally loved it and I enjoyed working on it, some of our audience thought it was a bit soft. So, they let me know about it. So, my exit polling was that. What's the opposite of soft? A house about serial killers.

I did ask people to tell me about—I didn't use the word favorite as I'll usually ask, "What's your favorite ghost story, What is your favorite vampire?" This one, it's a bit déclassé to say, "What's your favorite serial killer?"

FANG: Although, people have one.

HASKELL: Sadly, people have them. Which I think is an interesting phenomenon and that's a little bit of what our house is about. There is an obsession with serial killers and there's a romanticizing of them, sex-ifying of them, which I don't personally get. If they ever happened to be in the same room as them, they'd kill them. So, I'm not quite sure why... So, I did ask people what serial killers you were most interested in, which were most fascinating. They are truly fascinating. I've read a ton, and I've watched enough DVDs and documentaries and specials to choke a horse. I've learned a lot about these people and although, universally twisted and sick, the thing that's really interesting about them to me, is that I and they are both people. I don't mean that in a way that's trying to humanize them. I mean that in a way that's fascinating in the same way that when I see a hulking, 6'8" muscular person and compare myself. It's amazing to me that as a species, we're both people. It's fascinating with the way

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that they think and what their modi operandis are, that we are both people.

So, I wanted to sort of explore what similarities we shared as people, as well as our vast differences. So, me being a little bit sheepish about the subject at first, I chose it because I thought, "you guys want scary and in your face, I'll do serial killers." It's been the most requested theme in our nine years. I've resisted it and rejected it. I just didn't want to deal with the negative blow back of it. I thought "Why? There's a million haunted house subjects." I thought the time was right to do what is potentially the scariest haunted house that you can do.

FANG: Do you have an attitude of, "You may have regretted asking for this so much." Do you have an aim—

HASKELL: To nail them down? Well, no, because the way that I'm presenting them, I don't want to sound too dark, it's really pitch perfect. I'm really happy with this. I regret—and I discovered this from a recent Huffington Post story that ran on this, not knowing anything about it—people's reactions to it. It was very negative; people calling me all kinds of awful names. I regret people will come to that conclusion without getting to know the thing.

FANG: When anything lives on a fringe like that...

HASKELL: Anything insensitive, people presume that we are going to approach it that way, but not at all. In my original blog post, that I do every year, where I say, "Hey, tell me about..." where it's always a more trivial thing, I gave a bunch of disclaimers; a ton of caveats. Let's keep the child killers to a minimum, let's keep the women killers to a minimum. I figured that's what people would be most sensitive about, and man, did my audience really lambaste me for this. They were like, "if you're gonna do it, do it." That was basically the response. If you're gonna do a house about these people, do it the way you're supposed to do it. If that's what everyone's telling me, then I will. But how I present them, will be my choice.

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