Don Coscarelli has returned, and he wants you to keep up. Inspired by David Wong's nonstop chronicle of other dimension adventures and identity shifting, the PHANTASM director has created a madhouse movie experience; one to kinetically entertain your senses, while it attempts to feed your head. Fango spoke with the legendary director about how he continues to feed his with current cinema and the questions he continues to explore in JOHN DIES AT THE END.

In JOHN DIES AT THE END (available now on VOD from Magnet Releasing), "it's all about the Soy Sauce, a drug that promises an out-of-body experience with each hit. Users drift across time and dimensions. But some who come back are no longer human. Suddenly a silent otherworldly invasion is underway, and mankind needs a hero. What it gets instead is John (Rob Mayes) and David (Chase Williamson), a pair of college dropouts who can barely hold down jobs. Can these two stop the oncoming horror in time to save humanity? No. No, they can't."

FANGORIA: From what I understand, the book is even denser. How do you break that down?

DON COSCARELLI: First off, I had to be practical about what we were going to take. We're not with unlimited funds. And then, it's also a function of the scenes I thought really were great, and worked in a coherent world. When you break the book down, you'll find I pretty much used the front half of it and then the end half, and dropped the section in the middle. It was a good way of getting the whole thing to pull together. But I'll tell ya, trying to decide what to exclude was really hard because there's a lot of balance. There were these monologues. David Wong wrote some magnificent monologues. I actually shot some of them. I just had this attitude, "I'm going to really try to preserve the integrity of this piece." Yet, when I put the whole thing together, they really are different mediums. You can sit with a book and read a couple of passages. With a movie—I always go back to this thing, the ass factor. The human ass has a shelf life. It can only sit in a movie theater for so long. You can't get up and walk around like you can with a book. It's like a clock starts ticking—I know this sounds ridiculous—the minute they sit down. Halfway into the movie, they're just not going to tolerate taking a detour into a character going into a wonderful monologue that just goes into amazing places. As you can see, there still are monologues in the movie that I preserved; the detective has a couple of

great ones that I just couldn't ever bring myself to tighten. It was a thing of facing the harsh reality of the differences of the two mediums, which I didn't face so much in BUBBA HO-TEP, because it was a really trim 40-page novella. In there, I actually expanded. I actually think if I ever was to adapt something like that again, I would probably shy away from a big novel and try to work more in long short stories.

FANG: The novella and the short story always feel much more tailored to adaptation then something incredibly long.

COSCARELLI: Yes. Although, I don't see people in Hollywood out pursuing the novellas. When you look back on it, you look at DIFFERENT SEASONS, these are long short stories, just right for movies. So, that's my tip to aspiring screenwriters out there [*laughs*], stay away from epic novels.

FANG: You've always concerned yourself with headier ideas—

COSCARELLI: Maybe a little more than I should.

FANG: But it's great, aiming for something more, and you seem particularly suited to achieving a bigger scale on lower budgets. Do you think you've mastered that? What have you learned from consistently trying to achieve it?

COSCARELLI: I wouldn't say I've mastered anything, I think I'm getting a little better at it, maybe. Sometimes, I get a little too ambitious. At times, I felt JOHN DIES was getting really weird, would get a little too big, but at the end of the day, we were able to rein in enough where we could get it actually get it on film with no money. Just looking at some of the things that seemingly would be simple, like how do you shoot 25 naked people? Where do you shoot that without getting arrested, on a budget? How are we going to this other dimension? It's really trying to break it down. What are the most critical elements and focusing your money on those elements, and hoping that the rest sort of takes care of itself.

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