

“SLEEPAWAY CAMP IV” completed at last; exclusive poster

Written by Michael Gingold

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There hasn't been a lot to see or hear about SLEEPAWAY CAMP IV: THE SURVIVOR since footage from the once-aborted sequel appeared on a limited bonus disc in Anchor Bay's DVD boxed set of the first three films nearly a decade ago. But now the completed feature is finally ready to see the light of day, and producer John Klyza sent along the details and the first look at a new poster by Stephen Romano.

Klyza, who runs www.sleepawaycampfilms.com, explains that the fourth CAMP “was directed by Jim Markovic, an editor who comes from the grindhouse days—in the '70s, he practically invented Brucesploitation with THE REAL BRUCE LEE and BRUCE LEE FIGHTS BACK FROM THE GRAVE. In the '80s, he worked for places like Aquarius Releasing; when they got a foreign import, they would have him recut it to give it the sort of pace and content they felt 42nd Street audiences could easily digest, like THE BEYOND, released as 7 DOORS OF DEATH, and ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST, which became DR. BUTCHER M.D. He also did uncredited edits on lurid faves of mine like LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET and Romano Scavolini's NIGHTMARE. He's a real modest guy for a living legend, and his IMDb profile is woefully incomplete.”



SLEEPAWAY CAMP IV: THE SURVIVOR was a direct-to-video project done without the involvement of Robert Hiltzik, who wrote and directed the original, or Michael A. Simpson, who helmed the first and second sequels. “Only a small number of scenes were shot in 1992, [with

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the intent] to go back in '93 with more money [to finish filming], but numerous issues meant it was never carried through and completed. I contributed special features to Anchor Bay's SLEEPAWAY CAMP Survival Kit in 2002, and that's when the raw footage was unearthed.

“But after getting in contact with Jim a few years ago,” he continues, “I discovered that although the movie went unfinished, he had actually culled a presentation feature from the previous movies, using the '92 scenes as a wraparound to tell the story of Allison, a girl who suffers from memories of franchise killer Angela and returns to the scene of the crimes to work through her demons. There, she interacts with a predatory ranger and a kindly hunter. But that's all that was shot from a much more complex script by writer Tommy Clohessy. They had Playboy playmate Carrie Chambers, John Lodico and Victor Campos in the cast.

“This edit had been sitting on the shelf for years and no one was in a position to reshoot the thing, so two years ago I was on the phone with Jim, discussing getting it out there and giving closure to both the fans and the people who worked on it. Let's face it—an unfinished sequel is a black smudge on any franchise or résumé. So we went to work on it. Most of the structure was already present, but we developed it further; Jim came up with some expository narration for the main character and had that recorded, as well as some low-level CGI to remedy one major issue: They had never gotten to the stage of shooting death scenes, and fans do expect death scenes in a SLEEPAWAY CAMP flick. So he was able to engineer a aftermath shot that became our final twist, and subsequently informed the addition of a whole underlying story thread that was fleshed out through several cuts. I had hired editor Dustin Ferguson to help put some special features together, but when I saw the great work he was doing, I brought him onto the movie for the revisions.”

The team managed to make the most of the limited existing footage. “It was a case of bleeding the dallies for every last drop of material,” Klyza says. “I would write new scenes based around existing footage and sound effects, then Dustin would always find a way to make them work. We also recontextualized many of the flashbacks so they don't play as retreads of the previous movies, but are all there for a story reason. Angela's psychomania is explored and several hanging threads from the series are tied up.”

With the movie assembled, all that was left was a striking promotional image to help let the world know it's coming, and Klyza turned to Romano, the writer/artist behind SHOCK FESTIVAL who has done numerous one-sheet designs for indie horror flicks over the past couple of years. “Stephen is the best movie-poster artist working today,” Klyza says, “and the exploitation roots of the project made his visualizations perfect to be part of this.

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“The project was a great experience between several people who never met each other—Jim was in New York, Dustin was in Nebraska and I was all the way down in Australia,” Klyza reveals. “Everyone who was part of filming it back in '92 has been incredibly supportive of having a releasable version come out of this—and I've also received encouraging words from series veterans like Michael A. Simpson. Now Jim and I are just figuring out the best way to get it out to the fans. Eighteen years is a long time for a project to come to fruition, so we want to do it right!” We'll keep you posted, and you can also keep an eye on Klyza's site linked above.

{comments on}