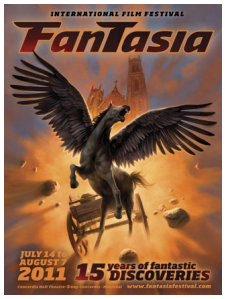
We can't wait for the 15th edition of Montreal's Fantasia film festival, which runs July 14-August 7. Word has just come down about a bunch of the movies and filmmakers that will be part of the event, so read on for the news, with trailers for some of the flicks.



Opening the fest on the 14th will be the Canadian premiere of RED STATE, Kevin Smith's controversial venture into the horror genre, in which teens are persecuted by rural religious fanatics. Another comedy director who's dabbled in fright fare, John Landis, will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award at a ceremony followed by the Canadian premiere of his grisly period farce BURKE AND HARE, starring Simon Pegg and Andy Serkis. Veteran filmmaker Robin Hardy will be on hand for the world premiere of THE WICKER TREE (pictured above), his four-decades-later follow-up to the classic THE WICKER MAN, along with producer Peter Snell; this event will also include a book launch for Hardy's WICKER TREE novel. Hardy will also take part in a discussion event with fellow Brit Richard Stanley, who'll be on hand for the premiere of the anthology THE THEATRE BIZARRE (see details here ; actors Udo Kier and Lynn Lowry have been added to the lineup attending that one).

In the spirit of last year's successful screening of METROPOLIS, Fantasia and the Cinémathèque québécoise will present a rare and pristine 35mm print of the 1925 classic silent version of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA at Montreal's Place des Arts, where Gabriel

Thibaudeau will conduct an original score performed by a 30-person orchestra. And Korean filmmaker Ryoo Seung-wan, whose credits include CRYING FIST, CITY OF VIOLENCE and ARAHAN, will be on hand for the Canadian premiere of his new thriller THE UNJUST and to host a master class on action-film staging and choreography.

From the official announcement, also part of the Fantasia lineup are:

ATTACK THE BLOCK (UK, Dir. Joe Cornish): This insane laughfest depicting a British teen street gang defending their block against an alien invasion became an overnight sensation after its launch at SXSW in April. Co-produced by Edgar Wright, starring Nick Frost and featuring some of the funniest moments you'll encounter anywhere this year—on or off this planet. Quebec premiere.

{youtube}cD0gm7dHKKc{/youtube}

BRAWLER (U.S., Dir. Chris Sivertson): Fantasia veteran Sivertson (THE LOST, I KNOW WHO KILLED ME) will be returning to Montreal for the world premiere of his latest knockout, BRAWLER, set in the world of extreme fighting, starring and co-produced by Marc Senter (RED WHITE & BLUE, THE LOST). Hosted by director Sivertson and actors/co-producers Senter and Nathan Grubbs.

DEADBALL (Japan, Dir. Yudai Yamaguchi): From the cult director of such bizarre greats as MEATBALL MACHINE and BATTLEFIELD BASEBALL comes…something best experienced without spoilers! World premiere hosted by director Yamaguchi, producer Yoshinori Chiba and actor Tak Sakaguchi.

THE DEVIL'S ROCK (New Zealand, Dir. Paul Campion): The feature directorial debut of gifted New Zealand visual FX artist Campion (the LORD OF THE RINGS and NARNIA films, CLASH OF THE TITANS remake) is an intense occult thriller taking place during WWII on the eve of D-Day, with a single soldier uncovering a Nazi plot to conjure supernatural forces with which to win the war. A satanic Nazi chamber piece featuring three characters and bottomless tension. North American premiere hosted by director/screewriter/executive producer Paul Campion and actors Matt Sunderland and Karlos Drinkwater.

{youtube}7tc4HGUeSHI{/youtube}

DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART (Hong Kong, Dir: Johnnie To): The working relationship of longtime collaborators To and Wai Ka-Fai is best known internationally for their gonzo action thrillers (RUNNING ON KARMA) and more taut, character-based work (MAD DETECTIVE), but this time out, they tackle the romantic comedy, with surprising results. Opening film of the 2011 Hong Kong International Film Festival. North American premiere.

EXIT (Australia, Dir. Marek Polgar): Taking place in a labyrinthine city where many individuals are looking for a mystical door that could lead them to a better world, this promising genre film from a visionary director explores the theme of urban alienation while remaining a poignant piece of cinema that will audiences breathless. Splendid and cerebral, EXIT opens the door for a distinctive new voice in fantastic cinema. World premiere hosted by director Polgar and screenwriter Martyn Pedler.

A LONELY PLACE TO DIE (UK, Dir. Julian Gilbey): This film hits levels of intensity that are absolutely exhilarating. Think CLIFFHANGER with characters you actually care about, fuelled with the adrenaline and panic of THE DESCENT. BAFTA-nominated director Gilbey (RISE OF THE FOOTSOLDIER) trained himself in rock climbing in preparation to shoot this film the right way, and does it ever show. The imagery, stunts and staging he manages here will suck the breath clean out of your lungs. Winner of Jury Awards for Best Feature and Best Director when it launched at ActionFest earlier this year, it stars Melissa George. Canadian premiere hosted by director/screenwriter/editor Gilbey.

{youtube}gLfjAPdtt88{/youtube}

LOVE (U.S., Dir. William Eubank): Opening this year's edition of Fantasia's Camera Lucida section, LOVE is a marvel. Rebuking the current conventions of science-fiction cinema coming from Hollywood with a cerebral approach to the genre closer to Kubrick's 2001, it questions Man's place in the universe through a fascinating tale that alternates between two distinct epochs, a violent past and an uncertain future. Produced by Angels & Airwaves (the alt-rock effort led by Blink-182's Tom DeLonge), LOVE conjures pictorial perfection, promising to be an unforgettable experience. International premiere hosted by writer/director/cinematographer/production designer Eubank, actor Gunner Wright and

executive producer Mark Eaton.

MARIANNE (Sweden, Dir. Filip Tegstedt): In recent years, Sweden has begun emerging as a country to watch when it comes to hypnotic, adult genre filmmaking, and MARIANNE continues this pathway. A guilt-ridden father, grieving over the death of a wife he had been cheating on, finds himself haunted by more than his conscience in this eerie, character-driven supernatural horror film. World premiere hosted by writer/director/producer Tegstedt.

{youtube}ZNjVTV3aPko{/youtube}

MONSTER BRAWL (Canada, Dir. Jesse T. Cook): Those of you with equal love for monsters and wrestling are about to be slammed through the mat by this outlandish creation that combines the two with glee. That's right, your favorite monsters bashing the unlife out of each other within a setup designed to feel like a pay-per-view sporting event. Features Dave Foley, Jimmy Hart, Art Hindle, Kevin Nash and…monsters! World premiere hosted by writer/director/producer Cook, producers John Geddes and Matt Wiele, actors R.J. City, Art Hindle, Robert Maillet and Rico Montana and many more members of the cast and crew.

NINJA KIDS!!! (Japan, Dir. Takashi Miike): Japan's maniacal master of movie magic Miike has banged out about three films a year over the last two decades, from ultraviolent yakuza pictures through off-kilter genre pastiches to, well, possibly his most brutal, bash-'em-up work yet. That's right, maestro of mayhem Miike's gone and made a kiddie flick again! It merits its three exclamation points and rates five razor-sharp ninja stars out of five! Canadian premiere hosted by distributor Shochiku.

{youtube}XSJxRbrvmUM{/youtube}

RABIES (Israel, Dirs. Navot Papushado and Aharon Keshales): Israel's first horror feature is all about subverting expectations as a bloodsoaked black comedy/horror/thriller that understands genre conventions and uses them as sleight-of-hand to deliver one surprise after another like a twist-ripped celluloid corkscrew ground into your skull. A major hit at the Tribeca Film Festival, RABIES is heaps of misanthropic fun, with spikes of social commentary and a surprisingly affecting sense of tragedy stabbed into the mix for maximum potency. Canadian premiere hosted by writer/directors Papushado and Aharon Keshales.

RETREAT (UK, Dir. Carl Tibbets): Cillian Murphy and Thandie Newton star as a couple who journey to an island retreat in order to heal recently opened wounds. They are completely isolated from the world. Alone. That is, until a blood-spattered man (Jamie Bell) washes ashore with terrible news of an airborne plague sweeping across Europe. A brilliantly staged slow-burn thriller that builds to absolutely ferocious horror, RETREAT is one of this year's strongest discoveries. World premiere hosted by director Tibbetts.

{youtube}KBQa2STOvpo{/youtube}

SAINT (Netherlands, Dir. Dick Maas): Santa Claus is coming to town, and that's bad news for everyone in this stylish Dutch oddity from the maker of THE LIFT. SAINT is a very Dutch horror film, packed with many Christmas stockings full of local flavor and bizarre terror sequences. Meanwhile, the moments with SAINT's teen protagonists have the feel of an '80s Wes Craven film, making for a very fun death dance in horror's global melting pot! Canadian premiere.

UNDERWATER LOVE (Japan, Dir. Shinji Imaoka): An inspired hybrid of musical comedy, classical fairy tale and pinku eiga (Japanese softcore sex film), UNDERWATER LOVE may well be the most oddball entry in Fantasia's schedule this year (and that's saying something!). Features gorgeous cinematography by Wong Kar-Wai's regular director of photography Christopher Doyle. Sweet, kooky, sexy and completely feel-good, this UFO of a film is truly something to be cherished. Canadian premiere.

URBAN EXPLORER (Germany, Dir. Andy Fetscher): Beneath the city of Berlin is an extraordinary network of abandoned bunkers and tunnels, shadowy remnants of the Nazi era. This film—one of the most unsettling that you will find in our 2011 lineup—opens with four young urban explorers from different countries meeting up at a Berlin nightclub, beneath which is rumored to be a pathway of catacombs that lead to a legendary Third Reich bunker. They descend into the tunnels and…we won't reveal another beat! North American premiere.

{youtube}h7qUeZLv4d0{/youtube}

VAMPIRE (Canada/USA, Dir. Shunji Iwai): The English-language debut of the acclaimed

director of SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY and ALL ABOUT LILU CHOU-CHOU is a haunting existential horror/drama. It will be making its Canadian premiere at Fantasia after bowling audiences over at Sundance, Berlin and the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS (U.S., Dir. Sean Branney): You are about to encounter what very well may be the single most successful H.P. Lovecraft adaptation ever to lick fear across a screen. Shot with an aesthetic, production design and performance style angled to emulate the feel of a '30s/'40s Universal horror film—without falling into camp—WHISPERER arrives like shadows out of time, a discovered relic from another dimension. A genuinely scary film and a hellishly great time. Canadian premiere.

{youtube}A_ee9K9hXtw{/youtube}

Keep your eyes on this site for the complete schedule, and we'll see you in Montreal!