NYC-area fans of actor/director Alex Winter (pictured) got a special treat this past Saturday when Manhattan's 92YTribeca presented his wild monster comedy FREAKED in 35mm (along with the equally nutty DEATH WISH 3, in which Winter co-stars). At the show, Fango was able to pull Winter aside and find out what's up with his remake of the 1987 creature feature THE GATE.

Winter has been developing the 3D project (which he discussed in detail with us here) for a few years now, and still plans to get it going later in 2012. But first, he's wrapping up an ambitious feature documentary called DOWNLOADED for VH1 Rock Docs, which brought us ANVIL! THE STORY OF ANVIL and THE PEOPLE VS. JOHN LENNON. "It's about the rise and fall of Napster, and the downloading revolution," Winter tells us. "I'm about halfway through that right now; it will be a theatrical documentary with a big VH1 window. I'm just immersed in that through the spring. We're gonna do an event at South by Southwest, and hopefully premiere at the Toronto Film Festival or something like that. With THE GATE, Andras [Hamori], my producer, and I were looking to shoot this year, but given DOWNLOADED and everything, I can't even think about it till sometime in the summer, when I'll jump back on it again."

The current 3D trend has gone through some ups and downs in the last year; while some big-ticket dimensional films have scored at the box office, a number of mid-budget genre

offerings using the process have been financial disappointments. But Winter isn't concerned, and still intends to go that route with THE GATE. "It's funny, because this frickin' movie has been around so long in terms of us developing it, I first raised the idea to the producer before 3D took off because it just felt right," he reveals. "In terms of the way I'm approaching it, even though I'm going to take it seriously, I want to retain some of that off-center spirit of the original that I love so much. I didn't come at the 3D for reasons of bankability, and my producers never said, 'We need to do this in 3D because that's what everybody else is doing.' We started talking about it way before that was the case.

"So we've watched it go from just us wanting to do it that way, to everybody suddenly saying we have to do it that way, to everyone suddenly saying, 'Don't do it that way,' " he laughs. "We've gone through this whole cycle in the last two or three years, and my opinion hasn't changed. I can't tell you whether we'll definitively do it until I'm actually in prep, but I can tell you that creatively, I would like to, for the same reason I wanted in the beginning. Which is that I want this to feel like a killer '70s or '80s movie that just happens to have kid protagonists. That's why I like THE GATE. That's the kind of film I want to make, which nobody does anymore."

It could be argued that a similarly themed film has been done recently, and in 3D: Joe Dante's THE HOLE, which also deals with suburban kids discovering weird stuff in a pit on their property, and remains a distribution orphan in the U.S. Winter, however, dismisses any comparisons. "I could hit you with a million reasons why it's not even vaguely the same," he says. "The tone of THE HOLE, the type of movie Dante made, was more like a stark, surreal supernatural thriller. That is not what I'm making. That is not what the original GATE is. I've always maintained that it's like a war movie in a house. My movie's going to be a f**king blitzkrieg, you know what I mean? It's got more in common with the first 25 minutes of SAVING PRIVATE RYAN than it does with THE HOLE. It's an action movie in a house, that's what it is. It's just full-bore insanity; I mean, the minions show up and shit goes crazy [laughs]. That's what I liked about the first one, and that's what we're doing with the second one. It's not a somber movie; it's the opposite of that."

And when he does get his GATE before the cameras, it will be with the same people who have been on the project from the start. "My team is my team; we're all still there," Winter says. "The DP who's shooting my documentary [Anghel Decca] will be shooting THE GATE. We've got our core producers who are the same, the storyboards are the same… You work in stages in preproduction, and we never got past the early stages [on THE GATE], but my gang on that is going to stay the same gang."