

Sundance 2012: Writer Kevin Lehane on Irish monster movie "GRABBERS"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
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There lies rich tradition of dark tales in Ireland, but this year's midnight lineup in Sundance is aiming to subvert the somber with GRABBERS, an Irish monster movie that's poised to leave audiences buzzed. Fango spoke to screenwriter Kevin Lehane about the film, its roots and the tentacled beasts that attack.

"Something sinister has come to the shores of Erin Island, unbeknownst to the quaint population of this sleepy fishing village resting somewhere off Ireland's coast. First, some fishermen go missing. Then there is the rash of whale carcasses suddenly washing up on the beach. When the murders start, it's up to two mismatched cops—an irresponsible alcoholic and his new partner, a by-the-book woman from the mainland—to protect the townsfolk from the giant, bloodsucking, tentacled aliens that prey upon them. Their only weapon, they discover, is booze. If they want to survive the creatures' onslaught, everyone will have to get very, very drunk!"

FANG: So what exactly is GRABBERS?

LEHANE: Well, I suppose trying to pin it down as a genre is quite hard so we've always just referred to it as a monster movie. I don't like to refer to it as a comedy/horror just because the vast majority of comedy/horrors or horror/comedies are terrible, so it's sort of a little bit like TREMORS, I suppose, or GREMLINS. It's scary, but funny; not really an extreme in either way.

FANG: I'm glad you bring up the difficulty of horror/comedy...

LEHANE: It is for a lot of films, but I find it's just about prioritizing what is supposed to be scary and what's supposed to be funny. As long as your monster is scary and your characters then are just sort of dealing in funny ways, you're usually able to get by quite easily. But the minute you try and turn your monster or villain into a figure of fun, then it never works, really.

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FANG: Does the comedy come via a buddy aspect?

LEHANE: It's quite a big ensemble, really. It's about sort of a siege and a whole load of ragtag characters come together and try and survive the night pretty much. It's the characters that you would never expect to see in this type of film, so they've got very different reactions to what you'd normally expect. It's headed up by sort of a buddy element with the two police characters, but it's an ensemble film.



FANG: When you're writing an ensemble about folks you wouldn't normally see, are any of those based on people you know?

LEHANE: I wanted to do something that was authentically Irish and a really cool Irish film that we'd never seen before. I just wanted to write something that I would actually go and see on a Friday night the first weekend it was out. I never expected it to really happen, because there hasn't been another film like it. It was just, really wanting to put my aunts and uncles and friends into that situation and just imagine what would be the first words out of their mouth if they saw something that you never really see. How would they react? And just to play against a lot of the stereotypes, there's no sort of paddywhackery in it. It's very modern and authentically Irish, and quite accurate I suppose. I just wanted to make the characters clever as well, so the solution that they come to is the smartest option.

FANG: While you were writing, how much were you visualizing the monsters as well?

LEHANE: I'm quite a visual writer, so for the most part, they turned out exactly like how I had

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imagined. There's a whole ecology to the creatures that I suppose you see in the film, and the first phase of their evolution is slightly different to what I imagined, but it's cool the way you can deftly plot their progression. Once I met up with Jon [Wright, director] and decided I was going to hand the script over to him, we had loads of conversations and built a core unit between myself, Paddy [Eason, FX supervisor] and Jon and the producers, and just had a lot of fun just bringing the world to life. When I was writing it, I wanted the creatures to be sort of unique; the easy option would be to do vampires or something like that. I wanted to create a new movie monster, pretty much.

FANG: When you say you wanted to make the film authentically Irish, monster movies have a history of directly addressing national issues. Do you think you tied their creation and what they look like to an Irish/cultural sensibility?

LEHANE: No, they're quite symbolic I suppose. The main character is dealing with his own demons and it's quite literal that he's having to overcome monsters in order to put his own demons to rest. But no, they're aliens and nothing like you'd expect to see, and completely beyond the pale, I suppose. The way we sort of summed it up was like, the clash of the obscene with the serene.

FANG: When something is quite specific in its aim, and locale and characters, it almost becomes even more universal. Do you think GRABBERS will be relatable in its mission to specifically Irish?

LEHANE: I totally agree. I think that we watch movies to be transported to things that we'd never normally see in our own daily life, so I wanted it to just be really accurate and not to make any compromises for an international audience or anything. The characters talk the way they would talk if you met them in the street walking around Ireland and I don't think there's anything that's going to bump you, apart from possibly the word "crack" which, in Ireland, basically means fun banter. Of course, ATTACK THE BLOCK last year was full of its own sort of lingo; as long as you can understand the intent. We just have a way with words, quite sort of lyrical I suppose.

For more on GRABBERS, head right [here](#) .