Written by Brian Kirst
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Beloved by fans for her skilled and energetic performance as the title character in FRANKENHOOKER, director Frank Henenlotter’s 1990 reimagining of the Frankenstein myth, model/actress Patty Mullen is as beautiful and vibrant as ever. To celebrate her appearance at the screening of FRANKENHOOKER at Chicago’s Terror in the Aisles 12 (details below) this Friday, September 14, Mullen shares her memories of making the film in this exclusive FANGORIA interview.

FANGORIA: As a young girl, did you imagine yourself as an actress? If so, was it a surprise to wind up in the title role in FRANKENHOOKER?

PATTY MULLEN: It really wasn’t. I started modeling young. The whole *Penthouse* thing was kind of a surprise—you know, becoming Pet of the Year and all the prizes.

FANG: Was there any backlash from that experience, professionally?

MULLEN: There was not too much. My family wasn’t too crazy about it. My sister was great. She defended me: “She’s a big girl. She can do whatever she wants now.” I was 18, about to turn 19. She stuck up for me to my father and mother. And once a little time passed, they got over it.

FANG: Thankfully, fans still haven’t gotten over your enjoyable turn in FRANKENHOOKER. How did you get the role?

MULLEN: Frank was looking for someone for a while. He was down to the wire. He kind of had to find somebody, I think. I went in and met with him, and that was it.

FANG: There was no second audition, then?

MULLEN: No. It was just one meeting. I read for him a little bit and I talked with him for a while [*laughs*]. He had me make a couple of faces.

FANG: You essentially play two roles in the movie: Elizabeth Shelley and the monster. Was that difficult for you?

MULLEN: In the beginning, in the fat suit, it’s only like three minutes. Five minutes at the most, right? So it really was no big deal. It was just fun to do something different than just being Frankenhooker. [Co-star] James Lorinz was just dynamite in that. He was so cool and easy to work with.

FANG: Is there anything in particular that stands out from your experience on the set?

MULLEN: The whole thing was a trip. On location, there were always a lot of people around, so it was always fun.

FANG: Your makeup process must have been a bit time-consuming.

MULLEN: Yes, it took a little while. Everything was already prepoured and premade. So when [makeup FX artist] Gabe [Bartalos] came in, we just had to put the stitches on. You know, apply latex on certain spots. And then the face makeup went on. So it took a couple of hours, maybe.

FANG: Was that the most difficult part of the process for you?

MULLEN: No, that was the most fun. I loved sitting in the chair with Gabe and all his brushes. It was cool to see the transformation.

FANG: Were there long nights on the set?

MULLEN: Yeah. Real long nights! So many that I didn’t even want to take the makeup off when I left, sometimes. I just went home like that. They would give me a bottle of glue remover, and Gabe showed me how to take the makeup off at home.

FANG: I’ll bet you had some surprised reactions from fellow travelers on those nights.

MULLEN: Yeah, a couple of times. Especially if I stopped off and went to the store or something.

FANG: Is there a scene that stands out the most for you in FRANKENHOOKER?

MULLEN: Yeah—the one where my head falls off! I would have to duck down and crawl away.

Duck down and crawl away, duck down and crawl away! It seemed like we did it 100 times. Finally, I ducked down and crawled away and just kept going. See ya! And they were like, “Get back here!” They finally got it, you know. But I didn’t like that one. Otherwise, everything else was a lot of fun.

FANG: Do you recall the reaction to FRANKENHOOKER when it was first released?

MULLEN: Everybody laughed and everybody loved it. Time went on, and to tell you the truth, I’m shocked that so many people love it. Now, after these past couple of years of horror conventions, the tattoos of Frankenhooker I’ve seen on people! People tell me how great they think the movie is. Let me tell you, it blows my mind. It’s just wonderful.

FANG: So what stands out the most for you on FRANKENHOOKER, overall? Is it the fan love or the fact that she will live forever? A hundred years after you’re gone, people will still be watching the film and loving you as Frankenhooker. You’ve left this cinematic legacy.

MULLEN: God, I never even thought of it that way. I guess I will be. There is not one thing that stands out in my head—just the whole movie and its great following. And who knows? Maybe Frank will do another one [*laughs*]. Yell at him!

FRANKENHOOKER shows at midnight during Terror in the Aisles 12 at the Chicago’s Portage Theater (4050 N. Milwaukee) on Friday, September 14. The festival will also host the Midwest premiere of IRON SKY at 8 p.m. and a screening of Larry Cohen’s THE STUFF at 10 p.m. Both Mullen and Cohen will be in attendance, signing and posing for photos for free. The show also includes vintage trailers, vender tables, a live charity auction for Vital Bridges and much more. Free parking is available at the Sears parking lot around the corner. Films, times and guests are subject to change; for more info, see the event’s
Facebook page
.