

First FANGORIA set report: “FRANKENSTEIN’S ARMY”

Written by Alex Nemecek

Tuesday, 22 January 2013 11:57



In anticipation of its world premiere this Saturday, January 26 at the 2013 International Film Festival Rotterdam, Fango here begins its coverage of Richard Raaphorst’s hotly anticipated fantasy/horror spectacle **FRANKENSTEIN’S ARMY**. The WWII-set feature by first-time director Raaphorst was lensed in the Czech Republic during March 2012, and Fango was there to see it all first-hand.

The ambitious period piece, a co-production of Chicago-based Dark Sky Films, Los Angeles’ XYZ Films and Pellicola of Amsterdam, was shot on the outskirts of Karlovy Vary, an ancient Czech township known for its hot springs and exquisite film festival. The movie’s shockingly detailed set, however, was the furthest thing from luxury one could imagine, with a closed, scrap-strewn mining colony doubling for wartorn Europe, circa 1947. The story sees a battalion of Russian soldiers finding themselves lost in Eastern Europe and stumbling across a small village ravaged by ghoulish automatons, created by a power-mad descendant (played by **HELLBOY**’s Karel Roden) of the historic Dr. Frankenstein. Cut off from the outside world, the young soldiers must take a stand against the monsters—and the Nazi madmen responsible for their creation.



Wandering the enormous locale with a handful of other journalists, this writer is immediately

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overwhelmed by the scope of Raaphorst’s vision for FRANKENSTEIN’S ARMY. Not only has the Dutch director (pictured above) constructed an army of now-heavily-publicized zombots (a playful portmanteau of “zombie” and “robot”) with the help of Rogier Samuels and his crew at Unreal FX, he has created a massive, living, breathing world for them to inhabit.

As Fango hurriedly sits down between takes with bloodied young thesp Luke Newberry, who plays Russian soldier Sasha, he quickly begins to explain what it takes as an actor to go up against such scene-stealers. “Our characters certainly need to have strength and courage,” he tells Fango. “These monsters are overwhelmingly evil, but our determination, as these lost soldiers, to conquer evil—it’s equally overwhelming. As a performer, you cannot just go up against these creatures. The story is very carefully calculated, so that the monsters get their moment to shine, but we—the ones not covered in makeup—also get to carry the film.”

Pausing momentarily, he chuckles as one of the zombots wanders past our conversation, slowing his pace long enough to stare silently at us through eerily hidden eyeholes. The creature, which appears to be stitched from human remains and chunks of a hammerhead shark, sports a number of wild, mechanical appendages. “Don’t worry,” a muffled voice mutters out from under the costume in a thick Czech accent, “I no bite.”

“He...” another extra notes, pointing toward a GWAR-like zombot whose face is 90 percent bloodsoaked bear trap, “he’s the one who bites.”

Stay tuned to Fango, both on-line and on the page, in the coming months for more on-set exclusives, including conversations with the cast, FX team, and acclaimed director Raaphorst himself.