

Terror Tidbits (Fango #301)—“RED RIDING HOOD” Grows Up

Written by Michael Gingold
Thursday, 03 March 2011 12:08



You hear that RED RIDING HOOD (opening March 11 from Warner Bros.) updates the classic fairy tale in part by making its heroine a beautiful young woman involved in a love triangle with a couple of hunky suitors. You also hear it's from the director of TWILIGHT, and visions of sparkly werewolves and romance taming the beast start dancing in your head.

Then you talk to said director, Catherine Hardwicke, and you quickly realize the project is in the right hands.

“The wolf does some pretty nasty shit,” she says of RED RIDING HOOD’s lupine villain. “We had the Rhythm & Hues visual FX company doing the wolf, and for half that time they were doing YOGI BEAR, so I guess they needed an antidote to that. [*Laughs*] They made the wolf more vicious and just super-bad-ass. He has some pretty good attack scenes, and they even had him kill something we didn’t expect him to kill in one scene, so I was excited about that. He got a mind of his own!”

To be sure, the lycanthrope’s violent activities had to be kept within the boundaries of a young-audience-friendly rating, but Hardwicke made sure to stretch that leash at every possibility. “Yeah, it had to be PG-13 from the beginning,” she says. “But you know, THE DARK KNIGHT was PG-13, and Warner Bros. likes to make it a hard PG-13, and just push things to the limit. And I tried to do that, like, ‘Give me more money! I’ll push it harder!’ ”



The director adds that it’s a complete coincidence that she’s following up the vampires of TWILIGHT with a werewolfilm: “I don’t know how that happened!” she laughs. “I was a little

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worried about that, just because of course there are werewolves in the TWILIGHT series—I didn't have them in mine, but they are in the rest—but we didn't want to duplicate that, and our wolf is different. You'll see him, he's got a different quality. He only comes out at night, so you don't see him in the day, and he's ferocious; he's not like the good guy you can go up and pet. Those wolves are out in the daytime and they're nice and they protect their friends. Ours is not friendly—not at all!”

In fact, RED RIDING HOOD's wolf kicks off the story, set in a bygone age, by killing the sister of heroine Valerie (Amanda Seyfried), who lives in a small village surrounded by dark forests. Its residents have previously appeased the beast via animal sacrifices, but its claiming of a human life throws them into a panic. They turn to a well-known werewolf hunter, Father Solomon (Gary Oldman), for help, but his arrival only leads to greater turmoil—and a touch of political subtext, as Hardwicke explains.

“Father Solomon pits everybody against each other, kind of like Homeland Security coming to town,” she says. “You know, ‘Turn in your neighbors!’ ‘Suspect everyone!’ So you're looking at everything from the point of view of every person, through new eyes, imagining, ‘Could he be the killer?’ And every word they say, you hear echoes of them later on in what the wolf says.”

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