

Terror Tidbits (Fango #293)—Raising “THE NEW DAUGHTER”

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
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“Since I made my first short film, I thought that I could make my first feature. So as soon as they called me to direct THE NEW DAUGHTER, I felt I was ready,” says Luis Berdejo, who did indeed make his debut foray into full-length filmmaking with the Kevin Costner-starrer. Known mostly for his screenwriting work in Spain, including the now-modern-classic [REC] and one of the 6 FILMS TO KEEP YOU AWAKE (A CHRISTMAS TALE), Berdejo hopped a States-bound plane in 2008 to helm this spooky family drama in South Carolina.

The film, hitting DVD from Anchor Bay May 18 following very limited theatrical release last year, also stars Ivana (PAN’S LABYRINTH) Baquero as Louisa James, who moves with her father John (Costner) and her brother Sam (Gattlin Griffith) as they start a new life in the rural South following John’s divorce. Soon enough, their country estate begins exhibiting strange behavior, and so does Louisa. Doubting his abilities as a father, John must decide whether he’s losing his grip or the shadows in the corner of his eye are actually creatures coming for his family.



THE NEW DAUGHTER was a new venture for Berdejo: Since his acclaim has come from his scriptwriting work, he decided to take on a project he didn’t organically create for his first time at the helm of a feature. But that doesn’t mean he didn’t inject his own passions and ideas into the script by John Travis (based on a short story by John Connolly). “What they did was send the script to several directors, and I read it, gave them my notes and told them I wanted to make the movie,” he recalls. “They gave me the film because they liked my comments and what I wanted to bring to the story. They allowed me to change several things, since I’m a writer and so used to revising stuff. I liked the script, but I wanted to rework it to make the film more personal, to feel ‘mine.’ So it’s not that I changed it a lot, but I added some points to make it feel closer to my

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universe.

“I like kids’ stories and nature stories, so what I did, in the way I presented the movie and the changes I made, was make it more of a family drama and not only about John James; it’s not just Kevin’s movie, but the children’s as well. In the way I shot and cut it, I also tried to present a natural environment, the saga of this property, instead of simply these three characters. I tried to make nature as important as their lives, and that’s pretty much what I’ve always done in my short films: talking about nature and animals and treating people as if they’re a part of something that’s all around them. Saying that I added this scene or moved that one, those are little specific things.”

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