

## “[REC] 2”: Shocking Plaza

Written by Jay Slater

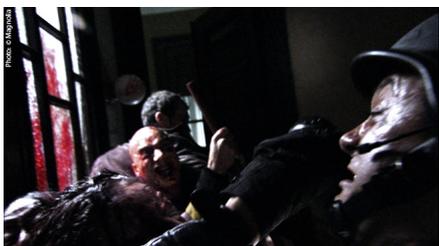
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[REC] 2 is ferocious. Like the bloodthirsty killers it chronicles, Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza's sequel to their 2007 hit is rabid in the extreme. A bloody powerhouse of a horror movie without a pinch of fat on its bones, [REC] 2 (currently available via VOD, and beginning its U.S. theatrical run tomorrow, July 9 from Magnolia Pictures' Magnet Releasing arm; go [here](#) for playdates) is relentless, sharp, and angry. Not only does it stomp in the footsteps of its predecessor with unrivaled confidence, it's a shocking rollercoaster ride all its own and serves notice once again that Spanish horror is back and here to stay.

And no one is as surprised about that as the [REC] films' creators. "We were amazed by the success of [REC] and never expected it," Plaza (pictured above) says in a crowded Barcelona bar for this exclusive Fango interview. Smiling as he raises a glass of smoky Rioja, Plaza is eternally grateful to the international horror community that has supported him and Balagueró. "Our only goal was to make a very scary film that could be shot on a very short schedule with a low budget, and to have a lot of fun. This tiny film gave us so much back that it was impossible for us to say no to the sequel. [REC] 2 has been a great experience for us as filmmakers, and has allowed us to share our work with people all over the world. We can only be thankful for it."



Before the widespread and deserved success of [REC], Plaza had already cut his teeth in the horror genre. Hitting the ground running with EL SEGUNDO NOMBRE (SECOND NAME, 2002), an effective work based on a Ramsey Campbell novel, and following up with 2004's

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lycanthropicture ROMASANTA (a.k.a. WEREWOLF HUNTER), Plaza enjoyed critical praise with his THE CHRISTMAS TALE entry in the 2005 TV series 6 FILMS TO KEEP YOU AWAKE, where the young Spaniard rubbed shoulders with DAY OF THE BEAST's Alex de la Iglesia and WHO COULD KILL A CHILD?'s Narciso Ibáñez Serrador. And after [REC] 2 was as warmly received in Europe as the first film, further movies in the series were inevitable: Plaza is to direct [REC]: GENESIS for a 2011 release, to be followed a year later by Balagueró's [REC]: APOCALYPSE.

Though often described as zombie movies, the [REC] duo do not follow the subgenre's standard conventions: flesh is not devoured, and the “zombies” are actually crazed humans infected by a contamination—at first presumed biological, but increasingly revealed in the sequel to be supernatural in origin—that drives them to kill. As more and more of the wounded succumb, the attackers' numbers increase in strength and intensity; the fellow tenants, firefighters and TV news team victimized in the first film are replaced by a SWAT team lead by a government medical official in [REC] 2. Both movies are set in a closed environment—a secure apartment building with no escape—and thus owe more to Lamberto Bava's DEMONS, where the ghouls wreak bloody havoc in a sealed West Berlin cinema, than to George A. Romero and Lucio Fulci's walking-dead flicks. And Plaza dismisses the idea that he and Balagueró tried to blaze new trails with the [REC] movies.

“We walked a path that had been opened by masters such as Ruggero Deodato with CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST, and THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT and many other films,” he notes. “We added the concept of live television to increase the experience instead of [presenting the story as] found footage, and did our best to make it relentless, fast and hard.” Plaza beams in remembrance as another Rioja is poured. “For us, it is a punk rock film in the way that the Ramones did their music: ‘One, two, three, four!’”

[REC] 2 is bold in its increased emphasis on the demonic possession behind the expected grisly carnage, perhaps fueled by its home nation's rich heritage of Catholicism. The movie culminates with a sequence of stark terror and a religious-victimization coda implying very serious consequences when the story is followed up. “This is something you could track in the original,” Plaza explains, “in the papers you see in the penthouse. When we wrote [REC], we tried to create a cosmology, a background for the whole scenario that could be spied in the old newspaper cuttings. And the story of possession is there, among many others that might develop in [REC]: GENESIS and [REC]: APOCALYPSE.”

Plaza is delighted over the splatter quotient he and Balagueró were able to achieve in [REC] 2, which is awash in buckets of blood, chewed body parts and many, many squibs—it's THE WILD

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BUNCH of modern horror films. Extreme hardcore violence is something the two filmmakers do not shy away from—in fact, they revel in it. “We wanted to take a step forward,” Plaza notes. “There is a particular shot—I won’t spoil it!—that we joked about a lot because we believe something like it has never been seen in a mainstream film. Because [REC] was such a low-budget feature, we could not do a lot concerning special effects. So for [REC] 2, one of our priorities was to go further in that sense, and we’re very satisfied with the result.”

The UK theatrical release of [REC] 2 a little over a month ago may have been a fly-by-night affair in terms of marketing, but it was hungrily received by fans of the original, and Plaza says he was curious to see if the film would do well outside its home territory. The director is proud to state that he and Balagueró did not want to disappoint their devotees, as that’s who the pair make movies for. In short, Plaza notes, “[REC] is no longer our film, but theirs’, the fans. So we had to be careful with the sequel. However, their response couldn’t be better.”

A genuinely charismatic and kind-hearted soul, Plaza doesn’t have a bad word for anyone in the dog-eat-dog world of filmmaking and is enthusiastic about his working relationship with his co-director. “Balagueró is one of the greatest filmmakers in the genre,” he raves. “We’ve had a lot of fun together and I believe we balance quite well, being so different in our approaches. I have to say that it has been a very positive and enriching experience.” The duo will both act as creative producers on the pair of impending follow-up features; Luis Berdejo, who collaborated with them on the original’s screenplay but wasn’t available for [REC] 2 (on which Manu Díez took over), is back co-writing the GENESIS script, but Plaza refuses to spill the beans on its story specifics.

As [REC] 2 continues to invade territories across the globe, Plaza is sincere as he addresses Fango readers keen to see the sequel: “I hope that you all really enjoy it. We tried our very best to make a film that is better than the first one.”

*See our [REC] 2 review [here](#) and read Balagueró’s comments on the movie in Fango #295, on sale now.*

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