

## Exclusive Interview: "DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK" director Troy Nixey

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
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One of the best moments of this year's Comic-Con came as a packed Hall H sat together and collectively experienced genuine fright as the teaser trailer for the Guillermo del Toro produced, Troy Nixey directed DON'T BE ARAID OF THE DARK premiered (see my report on the panel [here](#)). A few hours later, Nixey sat down with Fango to discuss the upcoming film and what Fango fans can expect; read on for the chat!

Releasing January 21, 2011 the film stars Guy Pearce as the father of a young girl (Bailee Madison) sent to live with him and his girlfriend (Katie Holmes) in the mansion they're renovating. This old mansion, unfortunately houses a bundle of evil creatures bent on their doom.

FANGORIA: It's not a haunted house film, but it's a film where the house is haunted in some way- it's accursed. And with you coming from such a visual, comics based background, I imagine the house had to be its own character, how'd you approach that?

Troy Nixey: Absolutely. From the very beginning we thought, 'The house is its own entity.' We don't touch much on it in the movie but we created the back-story for the house. It's that it was this piece of land essentially inhabited by these horrible, little ancient things. And that compels Blackwood to build the house on top of it. That's why the fireplace when you see the movie looks much older than the rest of the house. But from the very beginning we needed it to be its own character, to have its own sense of self in the movie and work with the three characters. I was very conscious about creating large spaces so that Bailee looked even smaller in them. Being able to light it during the days so it looks gorgeous, lots of wood and bright colors but then at night, they have sharp shadows. And because of that, in creating that, it does really become its own unique character in the movie.

Fango: Fear and the act of growing up are such personal things that work so beautifully together. Can you talk about having a child as the central figure in a horror film?

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Nixey: I feel like you've already seen the movie. It's so true, with Sally being torn between these negligent parents- Her mom's sort of flighty and so she just ships her off to her father and he's very driven and focused on his thing. She's never really had a true parent in her life and so she's lost and that's why we made the conscious decision too in making the house so big, to visualize her loneliness in the world. And she's a little bit of trouble at the beginning. She's a quirky little character. But

absolutely, to be able to parallel her uneasiness in real life and her situation with her parents and this new place and then parallel that with the horror of her unleashing these monsters. There's no one for her to go to in her mind. It takes a lot before she can finally turn that corner, but she feels uncomfortable with who she is and horror is fantastic for that. It's a great way to visualize aloneness- these things attacking her, no one around so you feel her loneliness in real life and elevate that in the horrors of these creatures attacking her.



Fango: How long did it take to design the creatures?

Nixey: It actually came together really quickly. We were at Guillermo's place. It was myself and Keith Thompson. We sat there and it was about a week. Guillermo was doing work and he'd come in and see what we were doing and we just narrowed in very quickly a rough version of what these things needed to be and there's a nice respect and homage to the original creatures in them but these things are nasty, nasty, ugly, ugly things. We zeroed in really quickly and it just took a couple days to really finalize it, but in five days we had these things really dialed in.

Fango: Did you subscribe to the 'less is more' with the creatures or are they on full display?

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Nixey: You full-on see them. We roll it out. You don't see them right away, but as we build and build and build, you get to see these things running around and being really horrible and awful.

Fango: During the panel, Guillermo discussed honoring the original and this golden age of made for television horror films, was there ever talk of wanting this to reignite TV horror, or was it always theatrical?

Nixey: It was always theatrical, with a major studio putting that kind of money in, it was never going to be for TV, but it's great that if that were to happen, if it were to inspire that- I was talking earlier about how the nature of television has changed so dramatically and I really hope something like THE WALKING DEAD can reinvigorate and I think it will. If the TV show is as good as I think it's going to be, and I think it's going to be good, that's just going to fling the doors wide open and you're going to start seeing stuff and hopefully, I know it's hard to do horror TV, but I can definitely see it happening.

Fango: How long was the production?

Nixey: We shot for 48 days and I was in Australia for six months.

Fango: You found the house in Australia?

Nixey: We did, we built a façade on top of the house, but they were great grounds. Everything that happens outside of the house is right there. We didn't have to go anywhere else, which was really nice to have all that. What's so great is, I think there's a really strong geography to the house and the ground because of that. You know where you are- unless we don't want you to know where you are (smirks). You know where the rooms are in relation to the other rooms, you know where the back of the house is in relation to the grounds and what's around it and so that helps too because there's nothing worse than sort of confusing an audience because they don't know or they're trying to figure out what's going on instead of paying attention to the film. It was a fantastic house up on Mount Macedon outside of Melbourne.

Fango: With Guillermo as producer and guiding force, was that comforting having the influence

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he does?

Nixey: Absolutely, just knowing him and Mark Johnson, our other producer were insanely smart and having those guys behind me to be able to go, 'Okay, I do need to ask a question here.' But just even having that confidence in me, and those two guys. Being able to pick Guillermo's brain was amazing, and he's so giving and generous and we both knew at the end of the day, the most important thing was the movie and so there was- he thought, 'I would do it differently but if that's how you want to do it, that's the way you're going to do it.' And I think that the movie really benefited from that because he was so open and giving.

Fango: Were you surprised by Katie Holmes giving herself over and being open to something like this?

Nixey: Yea, she's a slam dunk in this for me. I think it was a risk for her to take this kind of movie and she really put herself out there. She went to places and just kept giving and giving and giving. It's a really strong, strong performance from her and I loved it, I loved working with her and where she went to bring to that role. It's just incredible.

Keep checking Fango for more on DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK as it comes in, and look for a video interview with producer Guillermo del Toro on the site soon.

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