

“THE COLLECTION” Plate

Written by Abbie Bernstein
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Opening today nationwide, *THE COLLECTION* is Marcus Dunstan and Patrick Melton's bigger-budget sequel to *THE COLLECTOR*, in which original hero Arkin joins a group of mercenaries attempting to rescue a kidnapped girl from the mysterious killer's lair. At the recent *Screamfest LA*, where the film had its premiere on opening night, Fango spoke to the *COLLECTION* collective, including its stars and creators—and got a few hints about a third film in the series.

Star Josh Stewart, back from the first film as the beleaguered burglar Arkin, reveals that he felt it was likely there would be a sequel while making the first film. “With these guys,” he says, indicating writer/director Dunstan and co-scripter Melton, “you always think it's pretty certain it's gonna happen.”

Everyone involved in both *THE COLLECTOR* and *THE COLLECTION* agrees that the new film is more intense on every level. “We definitely had a good time the first time around,” Stewart says, “and we knew [making the sequel] was going to be fun, but we also knew we were going to get the living crap beat out of us the second time around. So it was a little bittersweet, but it was well worth it, for sure. I get to inflict a little bit of pain myself, as opposed to being on the receiving end of it as much as I was in the first one,” he laughs.



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Stewart has been busy lately, what with his recent appearance in an episode of GRIMM as a mythical creature with a homicidal daughter. On the feature front, he adds, “I’ve got a movie called EVENT 15 that should be coming out fairly soon. I’m pretty excited about that; it’s a PTSD movie, an experimental-drug type of thing with some soldiers.”

Emma Fitzpatrick, who plays the central role of abducted but not helpless Elena, agrees with Stewart about THE COLLECTION. “This movie is really fun,” she says. “It’s terrifying and it will shock you, and there’s a lot of action, so I just hope everybody has a good time. Because of what Elena goes through in the movie, Fitzpatrick says she had to psych herself up to play the character, though her surroundings helped. “For the six-to-eight-week shoot, whatever we did, I was in a pretty weird space,” she recalls. “It wasn’t hard to get there, because the set was so good and we were in places that lent themselves to that terrorizing feeling, and once I got there, it was easy to get back the next day. It took me a while to get out of it once I got home.”

Christopher McDonald, veteran of REQUIEM FOR A DREAM, THE FACULTY and many other features, plays Elena’s wealthy father in the film, something that delights Fitzpatrick. “It was an honor to get to work with him,” she says. “He’s obviously amazing at what he does and has made a great name for himself in the industry, so it was really cool to get to do a couple of scenes with him.”

Michael Nardelli, who currently has a recurring role on the ABC series REVENGE, plays Josh, who accompanies Elena on her fateful trip to a hidden nightclub. “I’m friends with Elena and I’m a lovesick teenager, and I wind up in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Nardelli laughs. THE COLLECTION isn’t Nardelli’s first foray into horror: “I did a movie called HYENAS, which was very different from this. They had real hyenas, they had CGI, they had puppet hyenas—they had it all. But [THE COLLECTION] is a much bigger movie, so it was really exciting to be a part of it. This film is much gorier and has a little more action than HYENAS; it’s really fun when the villain is collecting things and setting traps, and since he’s human and very intelligent, it keeps you more on your toes than rabid animals.”

Brandon Molale, who had a recurring role on TRUE BLOOD as Officer Bucky Featherstone, plays Lin, who goes up against the Collector. As with most people in this situation, Lin gets more than a little messed up. This required Molale to don heavy special makeup, which he says didn’t faze him at all. “I’ve done lots of prosthetics in my career, so I actually enjoyed it,” he says. “This is what I look like on a normal day, so whenever you put [prosthetics] on me, not to give it all away—I’ll definitely take advantage of it.” Upcoming, Molale adds, “You’re

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going to see me next year in GANGSTER SQUAD with Sean Penn and Josh Brolin, and I'm shooting a new TV series called GRANITE FLATS, so this is a good stepping stone in the horror genre.”

Director/co-writer Dunstan is ecstatic that THE COLLECTION opened this year's Screamfest. “It's an honor. You bust your ass on these things at night, in the day, whenever you can, and you hope that the timing on everything lines up. This is the month of candy, fright and shadow, and we're bringing every nightmare we've ever had to the screen. It's such a great audience.”

THE COLLECTION production designer Graham “Grace” Walker, no stranger to horror with a résumé including DEAD CALM, PITCH BLACK, HOUSE OF WAX and TV's THE WALKING DEAD, deserves a lot of credit for the movie's creep-out factor, Dunstan notes. “With Graham, what was so wonderful was, time and time again, the world of the horror movie allows the artist to be everywhere in the scene. In some cases you have to fight tooth and nail just to get a unique outfit on a character. In this case, no. The environment is the character. The main villain is completely shadow-built, so his environment has to tell us everything. Maybe it's steampunk in this room, and maybe it's about surgery in that room. Everything is beautiful through his eye, which means it can be terrifying to us. With every room, Graham embraced the idea of something in abundance, with the bug zappers, with razor blades, with paintings, with light. Everything had a certain overwhelming attitude, so he would be in comfort, this madman. And I loved that.”

He also reveals that he and Melton are already at work on the third film in the series, which they want to call “THE COLLECTED, [referring to] those who have been taken—how are they left in the wake of this incident? Someone suggested THE COLLECTIVE, which hints at, what if there was more bleeding out, what if there was more of a dynamic happening behind the scenes? I thought that was interesting too.

“But I'm pretty pumped to tell you, I'm already more than halfway through” THE COLLECTED, which should be ready for shooting soon. “If we have earned and are granted the opportunity to do that, then yes. The best part of the development process on [THE COLLECTION] was, it would have been easy to do THE COLLECTOR 2—it's an apartment building this time, and it would have been the same movie but over three floors and that's that, but no. There was an inherent desire to defy that, to bring in the alchemy of the action movie, to do it on a bigger scale. To get five times the budget—that never happens for a horror sequel. Usually, [the budgets are] cut in half until they become nothing. In this case, we were given more toys to play with, and the discipline wasn't about begging to use them for a shot or two; the discipline was about putting them down.

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“That created a wonderful alchemy on set, and we’ve just delivered the wolf. We want to deliver the entire pack now. The first one was the puppy. This is the wolf. Let’s see where we can go from here.”

Beyond that, Dunstan says, “Right now, we’re working on THE GOD OF WAR, an adaptation of the game, with Kratos for Universal. We just turned in a draft of a script called RISE to Warner Bros.; that’s a wonderful sci-fi story for a really great director named David Karlak.”

After THE COLLECTION’s screening, Dunstan seems elated by the audience reaction. “Oh my gosh. When they hoot and holler and cheer and laugh and gasp, that’s it. We just hope to be pulling such strings as we’re making it. So this is a dream come true.”