

Written by Tony Timpone
Thursday, 22 July 2010 15:50



Last December the producers of RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE granted FANGORIA exclusive access to the Toronto set of the fourth chapter in their action horror franchise, derived from the best-selling Capcom videogames. For 10 weeks, right up to the AFTERLIFE's September 10 release from Screen Gems, Fangoria.com will be presenting a series of one-on-one interviews with the movie's cast and crew.

Written and directed by film series originator Paul W.S. Anderson, AFTERLIFE once again stars Milla Jovovich as mysterious heroine Alice, who teams with a small group of postapocalyptic survivors in a world overrun with zombies, monsters and agents of the nefarious Umbrella Corporation. For more on the movie, see previous article [here](#) :

Today we talk with long-time RESIDENT EVIL series producers Jeremy Bolt and Robert Kulzer. Partnered with Anderson on Impact Pictures, the British Bolt has also produced the filmmaker's DEATH RACE, SOLDIER and EVENT HORIZON, while Kulzer of Germany's Constantin Film shepherded PANDORUM (with Bolt), WRONG TURN, SKINWALKERS and THE DARK.

FANGORIA: *How have you've upped the ante on this fourth film in the series?*

JEREMY BOLT: Well, we're shooting it in 3-D, introducing some major characters from the video game series. The character of Chairman Wesker [Shawn Roberts] is important in this film, the character of Chris Redfield [Wentworth Miller] is, but the 3-D element is the thing that is most different and really ups the film because 3-D is why the film is costing more. Also, we have Paul Anderson back to direct, and he directed the first one, which really launched the whole franchise. We have the best cast, the best director, so hopefully it will be the best movie.

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FANG: How were you able to get Anderson back to helm? Usually a director doesn't come back so many films later.

ROBERT KULZER: It was a combination of things. I'm sure to a large degree the fact that his wife is starring in the film was very enticing to him, the fact that he was much involved in the finishing of the [other] films anyway—he just felt that with this one, he wanted to give it another try by himself, and the 3-D was also very enticing to him.



FANG: So 3-D did the trick?

KULZER: Absolutely. To use the power of this franchise and the fact that we had Sony involved on such an early level, and their wish to try this film in 3-D was a platform for him and for us to say, “You know what, it's going to happen anyway, sooner or later we'll shoot a film in 3-D, let's try and do it on this one.”

FANG: This is also the first RESIDENT EVIL movie being shot hi-def. What made you embrace that technology?

BOLT: Well that was very much a result of shooting in 3-D, plus the fact that we were aware more and more people were shooting in hi-def and we needed to seriously look at it—particularly because our films are very visual effects heavy, so it made more sense to stay in the digital world than to have to output to film. But we've been very surprised at the quality of hi-def. We're using the Sony F35 cameras, and, frankly, I'm not sure we'll use film again.

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FANG: Do you agree?

KULZER: I absolutely do, 100 percent. Paul, in particular, he likes a very sort of glossy stylized look and to a certain degree, the grain of film was always distracting to him. And now, finally, when he sees the super-glossy digital images where there's no grain, it's just the pristine, perfect white and pristine perfect black, it's just a great medium for him to express his visions.

FANG: Compared to the shootings of the first three films, has the combination of HD and 3-D made this an easier production or a more difficult one?

KULZER: The prep was pretty nightmarish because there's only three or four world class 3-D houses, and you go to them and you look at the budgets of the movies they've worked on, which are multiples of the money we had available, and then they share with you that they are very much in a sort of brainstorming period of 3-D where everything is trial and error, everything is custom made, every piece of equipment only exists once, and if you break it, that's it, your production comes to a halt and you have to wait for this piece to either be recreated or shipped from some other continent. And then once we started the preshooting period where we said we actually have to sit down with our camera crew and our 3-D technicians and make them familiar with the equipment, it was almost like we were preparing a launch to the moon. It was that level of complexity. The amount of operators and technicians you need adjusting the camera and recording...basically in the 3-D world, you don't have your classic lab. Your lab is basically a white tent with a bunch of computers inside that records all this data. When Paul uses the Phantom camera, we have literally terabytes of information streaming into the tent and it takes days to download it and for us to watch it. In that sort of preshooting schedule where we were, I was pretty scared because we had a lot of very good people looking at their equipment and going, “I have no idea I can ever make this work.” But now, after almost 50 days of shooting, it's a pretty well-oiled machine.

FANG: What are your goals on this fourth film? You certainly seem to be spending more.

KULZER: The movies were always very cost efficient. They look very glossy, and through Paul's expertise in visual effects and really interesting trailer moments, they were always made for a relatively reasonable budget. So even on this one when we say we spent more, it's a little bit more; it's not like what major studios normally spend on their films.

“RESIDENT EVIL”: Conversations from the “AFTERLIFE” Part Three: Jeremy Bolt and Robert Kulzer

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BOLT: The other thing is we are very committed to putting as much as possible on the screen, so we explore in great detail the best tax credit, so if we’re shooting in a city, we don’t have to spend a fortune flying crew in. The only people who benefit then are the hotel chains. If we can really shoot on a location, we will to save us the construction cost of building it.



FANG: There was some early talk that AFTERLIFE was being looked at as a reboot of the RE franchise and the first of a new trilogy. Any truth to that?

KULZER: We have many conversations amongst ourselves and also with Sony. Somehow, the Alice character has become the sort of cornerstone of the movies and we always say, “Well wouldn’t it be great to go back and do a movie with a bunch of young kids and they, you know, sort of recreate the first RESIDENT EVIL game, and they break into the mansion and play it very claustrophobic?” But then, sooner or later, we say, “What about Alice?” because Alice comes back and things will get bigger and bigger because she has these extraordinary powers. It’s very hard to imagine a sort of PARANORMAL ACTIVITY version of RESIDENT EVIL, and now that we’ve blown up the world, it’s very hard to put the genie back in the bottle.

FANG: I’m excited to see you embracing whole scenes and characters from the fifth game...

BOLT: Well, it’s a bloody good game, and they really evolved just as we think we evolved the movies a lot from the second and third movies, using Las Vegas and the desert. In the fifth game, they’re in Africa, the undead have evolved, they’re intelligent, their heads plow open, mandibles appear—it was a massive creative injection and very inspiring for us and for Paul. So I like to think that one of the things that led to that was the game company saw how there was this massive audience for the films. The last film I hope inspired them a little bit and injected them with more enthusiasm and they’ve since delivered an awesome game, so there’s a little bit of a symbiotic relationship between us now.

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FANG: It seems like AFTERLIFE has used more from the games than the other three films.

BOLT: Apart from the first one, yes.

KULZER: We always try to recreate specific key moments from the various games, sometimes out of context or in a different context, but we always did that. In this one, Paul just seems very inspired by some of the sequences, some of the characters in the games and the situations. We just did one phenomenal sequence that is almost identical, it's exactly like it's in the game which was very, very challenging because in the game it's all done in the computer where the laws of physics don't really exist. When you have to recreate it with human beings, you have to physically do it—it's a whole other ballgame, but we did a pretty good job with it.

TO BE CONTINUED

Stop back next week for the continuation of our interview with RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE producers Jeremy Bolt and Robert Kulzer. And check out the cover story of FANGORIA #296 (on sale in August), featuring an all-different AFTERLIFE set visit article.

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