Horror sometimes makes good bedfellows with other genres, producing strange and exciting genetic mashups. EVIL DEAD II is a horror/comedy with both chainsaw dismemberment and Three Stooges-style slapstick. NEAR DARK is a horror/Western with bloodsucking vampires roving the desert as lawless bandits. PIG HUNT is…well, not that easy to describe. While the straight synopsis would tell you it's about a group of people who go into the forests of Northern California to hunt down an SUV-size boar, that really doesn't do the film justice.

Part monster movie, part DELIVERANCE, part character study and part its own original style, PIG HUNT is a movie that has to be seen to truly be understood—but once you do, you're sure to fall in love with it. PIG HUNT debuted this month as one of the eight FANGORIA FrightFest films (the others being DARK HOUSE, ROAD KILL, THE HAUNTING, FRAGILE, HUNGER, THE TOMB and GRIMM LOVE), which are currently available exclusively through Blockbuster stores and Blockbuster By Mail, as well as digitally via Blockbuster On Demand.

"The script [by Robert Mailer Anderson and Zack Anderson] was actually sent to me, originally, by a friend of mine who wanted some advice on how to make a giant 3,000-pound pig because of my background in special effects," says director Jim Isaac, who had done FX work on the likes of THE FLY and GREMLINS before helming THE HORROR SHOW, JASON X and SKINWALKERS. "He wanted me to hook them up with a crew, or do it myself, I believe. Well, I read it, and I just loved the script—it was not what I expected. It was described to me as a low-budget horror film with a giant pig, but it wasn't that at all—it was about a lot of things. It had tons of action and a lot of creature and horror aspects, but it really was an ensemble piece about an area of the country I'm very familiar with, Northern California.

"What drew me to it was this consistent theme about death," he continues. "Not only what you do if you're facing death yourself, but the decisions we make when we're faced with having to defend ourselves and kill something, or being chased, or hunting animals or people—there's a lot of that. It's about how extreme decisions affect you. Plus, with the odd group of characters, following them on this journey was very interesting. It was just generally very well-written, the dialogue felt real and funny. I knew I had to meet the writers. So I did, and I told them that I didn't really want to do the pig—I don't do that anymore—but I was interested in directing it. Then one thing led to another, and we went off and made the movie."

That explanation sounds simple enough, but Isaac relates that the shoot was anything but. Once he and his crew actually got to their location in the middle of the woods, it slowly dawned on him how difficult this production was going to be. "I've been working on movies for a really long time, from RETURN OF THE JEDI until now, so I feel like I'm experienced, and know all the problems and can fix them," he says. "The biggest challenge we had that I did not anticipate was the amount of resources it would take to move our production army from one area to another. Just getting the actors in makeup from base camp up to where we were shooting. To move all that stuff took forever, and it would eat hours off our shooting time.

"Our budget started to rise because we needed more crew, and then there were the physical aspects of the wear and tear on all of us. We lost a crewmember every day for two weeks because someone would twist their ankle in the mud. People broke fingers, ankles and knees, and then the next day they'd show up in bandages," the director laughs. "In fact, the only people who didn't get hurt were the stuntmen."

That's a surprising statement, considering that PIG HUNT's last act is filled to the brim with raw, gritty action scenes. "I can't pass over the stunts," Isaac says. "I had in mind what I wanted, and I told [stunt coordinator] Justin Sundquist that I had a real issue or prejudice with the way those are handled in films. A lot of the time you can tell it's designed and choreographed—there's a lot of staginess with it sometimes—and I wanted things to be really organic and raw, kind of like in THE ROAD WARRIOR.

"Well," he laughs, "he really took that to heart, and tried to get the crew to outdo themselves. Justin was good friends with the stunt guys, so they rearranged their schedule to shoot stuff for 10 days because they were close to him. I had a couple of conversations on the phone, told him what I was looking for, and then they were off and shooting crazy shit. They shot for a week and gave me a fantastic action sequence. They were wonderful; it was exactly what I was hoping

for. You plan this stuff and you want things to be crazy and really pay off, and sometimes it doesn't happen, but they just came through on every level."

In addition to a great script and stunts, PIG HUNT contains one of the oddest and most original soundtracks of a film in recent memory, with some of it scored by ex-Primus frontman Les Claypool, who also has a cameo as a crazed preacher. "Les was a friend of Mark Anderson, who owned KernerFX at the time. Les saw the creature guys sculpting the giant pig, and he was like, 'What the hell is that?' When the movie was explained to him, he said he wanted to be in it. We had lunch with him, sat down and talked and realized he'd be perfect for the preacher. We kind of reworked the part for him, and then as he got more involved in the movie, we asked if he'd do some music for it too along with our original composer [David E. Russo]. He came up with the theme that worked wonderfully.

"Not only that," Isaac continues, "but a drummer from the jazz collective, Eric Corland, did a lot of awesome beats for us. Then we had another friend who had a project called the Junkestra, where they pulled things out a junkyard and put them together in certain ways to get different sounds. And lastly, the guy who plays the hippie stranger [Bryonn Bain] was a Brooklyn rap poet/performance artist, and he helped with a lot of the spoken-word tracks toward the end of the film when all hell breaks loose."

With such an eclectic mix of genres, characters and music, it's (sadly) unsurprising that PIG HUNT has not had an easy time finding distribution, precisely because it doesn't fit neatly into any single category. "Trying to get an independent movie released in theaters is a very difficult thing to do, even with the good reviews and festival screenings we've gotten," says Isaac. "But now people are thinking outside the box. And with FANGORIA stepping up to distribute the film, I'm so excited I can't even tell you. I feel like I've been through the mud on this thing, and we've tried everything, and part of it is our own stubbornness on not giving away any creative control. But to have FANGORIA involved and Lightning Media, who seem to get the fact that it's not just a movie about a giant pig…I'm really excited."

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