LET ME IN, writer/director Matt Reeves' excellent English-language adaptation of LET THE RIGHT ONE IN, hit DVD and Blu-ray this week. Fango had the chance to speak with Reeves about the film's surprising critical reception, personal subtext and stylistic choices. Head below for part two of our chat and see part one here !

FANGORIA: Much of your remake feels decidedly more horrific than LET THE RIGHT ONE IN, especially Abby's transformation. Was that a choice made to differentiate the two films?

MATT REEVES: I wasn't trying to necessarily differentiate our film from their film. I thought the film was beautiful and once I decided I was going to do it, I deliberately tried to put the film out of my mind. I didn't watch it, I asked my crew members not to watch it, Greig Fraser, the director of photography, never saw it, the actors didn't see it, because I knew the only way we had a chance of doing something that was worthwhile was trying to do something that was our own. The novel is very much like a Stephen King novel…it uses horror as a way to describe the pain of adolescence, but it truly is horrific and there are scenes that reminded me, in reading them, I was trying to think, "How do you take this and make it in the vein of the American horror films that I remembered growing up, like THE EXORCIST or THE SHINING, that kind of slow burn sense of horror. When he goes to school everyday, he is filled with dread. The whole thing is about anticipation; what terrible thing is around the corner? In a way, I thought that that emotional state applied very much to these kinds of horror scenes and trying to use it not only when he goes to school, but when she was doing her transformation. All of those sorts of things were seen through that lens, through that filter, which were inspired very much by those '70 and '80s horror films that I found to be so terrifying. To me, it read like the book. The book has these moments that are very, very tender between Oskar and Eli and then has truly horrific stuff. It's much more horrific than what it is in either film.

FANG: Especially with Richard's character, it's insane,

REEVES: Oh, yeah, Hakan. He describes him almost as a zombie that's almost like lumps of flesh at a certain point. It's a truly, truly horrific scene. So I wanted to capture a bit of that because that was part of what the story was doing. So in terms of her transformation, I wanted to explore the idea of the darkness within us all and the idea of this young girl being the host for this darker presence which was her sort of more animalistic side and what does that mean? All of that was meant to find a way to explore. In fact, the secret that we had while we were making

it was her transformation. This story was about the pain of adolescence and growing up. I wanted her transformation to be “adolescence gone wrong,” and her skin sort of becomes quite bad, almost as if she’s got hormones surging in her body and so that her teeth become like a kid who needs braces and her skin becomes covered with acne. So that was how we tried to come up with her transformation.

FANG: One of the most interesting aspects of the film is the way you shot Owen’s mother [Cara Buono]. How did that come about?

REEVES: That was something that actually started in the script. When I was trying to develop her character, I didn’t have the time to follow that strand because if you could really follow her character, she has a very tragic story as well, but I wanted much more to follow the way that it affected Owen and so actually, the movie that it brought to mind immediately when I was thinking about it was IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE, the Wong-Kar Wai film. At the center of the film are these two characters who are married to other people, who live in the apartment complex but you never see their spouses and it creates this sense of isolation. You have a sense of what it feels for them in those marriages, the way that you never quite see her husband, you don’t quite see his wife. You see the back of her head, you see the husband’s leg. So that was a conceit that I put in my script, and so when Greig Fraser and I started talking about how to shoot it, we started talking about limiting the field and also framing things in certain ways. I was also very inspired by Steven Spielberg’s E.T.; Harrison Ford is actually the teacher in the movie, but you don’t actually see Ford’s face. This idea of throwing the mom out of focus and doing all that were all means to try to realize this concept. That’s when Greig and I started trying to figure out, “How can we really do this?” It was actually more complicated than you would think…how to stage a scene so that it doesn’t feel self-conscious when her face isn’t quite in frame, because that’s of course never the mission of what a director and cinematographer do. You’re always trying to show the face. It was an unusual challenge, that’s for sure.

FANG: Do you plan to continue exploring these personal aspects of horror?

REEVES: I'm not sure what's next for me. I'm starting to look right now, but there's no question I will do more genre and that is exactly the thing that draws me to genre. To me, the exciting thing of genre is the way you can sneak in, under the surface, something that's real and personal to you and I tried to do that in both CLOVERFIELD and LET ME IN, the latter to an even greater degree. I absolutely know that I'll do more genre, and I'll know that the secret for me will be that I have to find something that I can connect to, subtextually, because that to me is what makes genre really worth watching, when you see something that resonates in a way very, very personally to you as you're watching it even though it sounds kind of like it's part of the world of the fantastic.

For more on LET ME IN, see our review of the DVD in FANGORIA #301.

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