

“RAMMBOCK”: Germans do it deader

Written by Roberto E. D'Onofrio
Saturday, 04 June 2011 10:01



One of our favorite zombie films in recent years is RAMMBOCK (due June 28 on disc from Vivendi), a “short but sweet” feature film from German director Marvin Kren. RAMMBOCK (see the [mini-review](#)) follows a poor schnook (Michael Fuith) who goes to his ex-girlfriend’s apartment block to make amends and instead get trapped inside by a 28 DAYS LATER-style viral outbreak. Fango spoke with Kren at Spain’s Sitges Film Festival last fall.



FANGORIA: How did the project begin?

MARVIN KREN: After the success of SCHAUTAG, our school project, the film department of [German television] ZDF contacted me and Ben Hessler and asked us if we were interested in submitting a script for them to produce. Ben came up with the basic idea of RAMMBOCK: someone trapped in his apartment while a zombie apocalypse takes place outside, and when he runs out of food he has this idea of building a battering ram with his Ikea furniture, in order to break through the wall of his neighbor. Our producer, Sigrid Hoerner, believed in this project and luckily the people at ZDF liked it very much. Then everything happened very fast. We had a deal in June 2009, with a budget of 200,000 Euros, and we started shooting in October and did the editing in December.

FANG: What were your references while writing the film?

KREN: I have been inspired by the visual style of movies like Alfred Hitchcock’s REAR WINDOW, the British TV series DEAD SET, EX-DRUMMER or THE STRANGERS and also Robert Wise’s THE HAUNTING. I like the way they frighten me. But I’ve also been inspired by the work of Swiss video artist Roman Signer and obviously by Max Brooks’ books: WORLD WAR Z and ZOMBIE SURVIVAL GUIDE. Unfortunately, we did not have a lot of money so we wrote a script that we could make it work with our budget. But first of all we have tried to tell a story that the audience would like; this implied that we focus on the needs and the dramatic

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aspects of our characters—and then use the classic elements of zombie movies. We filmed it in 13 days, using a RED camera, which I recommend to first-time filmmakers, as it's very easy to use and gives you a great quality when shooting at night.

FANG: Why did you decide to set the story in a single building?

KREN: I wanted to show a very realistic world, and at the same time a place where you don't feel comfortable. The horror begins very soon in the story, so I had to build an uneasy and dark atmosphere from the start. The main set of the movie is the courtyard of a Berlin building, which is already something that has a dirty look. Ulrich Frommhold, our set designer, used it as the basic concept for the look of the film. The way it looks after the attack of the zombies had to give you an idea of what the survivors could see in any place of the world, of what is left after this catastrophe. I have also been fascinated by the concept that anything can happen in a single place, and I wanted to exploit the building, with our characters, whom, like children, discover all the corners of the apartment. I believe that the concept of Michael running away from one room to the other to save himself was what worked in the movie.



FANG:: The plot of the film is very simple and similar to other movies like [REC] or THE HORDE. Do you fear the comparison?

KREN: I love [REC], but I have never been afraid by the comparison. We didn't use the same visual concept; that has never been our goal. Our target was to tell a zombie apocalypse in a new way, focusing on our personages and the German set, in order to give the audience a more personal picture.

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FANG: You have many extras. How did you cast them?

KREN: That was very funny; for the scene with the zombie crowd, we published an ad on Facebook and MySpace. People loved that, as the day of the shooting was Halloween, so they could benefit by a free makeup and go to parties dressed like living dead. For the other zombie scenes we utilized dancers and athletes. They're capable of doing more extreme things and movements with their bodies. My zombies are not slow, and in fact they are not really dead, they are full of anger and as a result of that their bodies transmit energy. We had the help of Jean Marc Lebon, a very good choreographer, who worked side by side with us.

FANG: How was working with the actors?

KREN: I knew since the beginning that I didn't have the chance to do many takes, so the choice of the actors was very important: I needed actors able to play with fear and willing to embark in this zombie adventure with me. When you watch a horror movie you know that the personages will have to confront themselves with extreme situations, and you have to identify with them, therefore you don't need to have characters who are also extreme. I believe we have been very lucky with the casting.



FANG: RAMMBOCK seems to focus more on the dramatic aspects of the story than on the horror elements.

KREN: I am more interested by stories with a pessimistic point of view of our society, and

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zombie movies always depict a world that is bad. It's never been our intention to just do a film about the living dead; instead, we were more intrigued by the way people in Germany and Europe would react to that scenario. My generation would never take weapons and react like Americans would do; it's not part of our culture. We would most probably panic at first and then try to find a way to escape alive out of this bad situation.

FANG: What are your next projects?

KREN: We have a bunch of projects that we are cooking away at right now. A script we love very much is about a ghost hunter. Plus, we also have a pilot for a TV series about a fake priest in a mysterious village named Kitzstern. But it's kind of hard to talk about them now, only because they're still stewing, so I don't know which one is going to be the next one.

