

G4 Celebrates Epictober, Part Two: The Directors

Written by Amanda Dyar

Thursday, 27 October 2011 09:14



Featuring a trio of short films from directors Sam Balcomb, Drew Daywalt and Gregg Bishop, that combine video games and horror to create three highly creative-and frighteningly nerdy-works, Epictober is G4's celebration of the year's spookiest month. Included is THE HUNT (based off the hit NES game DUCK HUNT), KART DRIVER (culled from the MARIO KART franchise) and THE BIRDS OF ANGER (from the highest selling mobile game ever ANGRY BIRDS), all overseen and handpicked by Joe Lynch (WRONG TURN 2, CHILLERAMA). FANGORIA interviewed Lynch (see Part One [here](#)) and the talented filmmakers about the series. Check out our talk with the three men behind the films below...

Sam Balcomb is a multitalented director, well known for being one of the co-founders of Rainfall Films and helming directing the, now notorious, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA trailer for IGN.

FANG: You directed THE HUNT. What was the very first thought that entered your mind when asked to turn a fun-loving game into a horror flick?

SAM BALCOMB: I was asked to pitch several mashups, essentially a combo of game and horror that you wouldn't typically think of; the weirder, the better. We came up with a bunch of really insane ideas, everything from KIRBY to CARMEN SAN DIEGO. DUCK HUNT was my favorite, mainly because I could really see the concept working as wilderness survival flick.

FANG: "The Dog" has been named one of the most annoying video game characters of all time.

BALCOMB: That's a kinder name for him than I usually hear. Gamers often refer to him as "Asshole Dog" for good reason. He was the lynchpin of the concept. I really dug the idea of turning him into a ferocious monster. If you think of the game, it's really not a big stretch to imagine that damn dog just snapping and coming after you, laughing all the while.

FANG: Although everyone loved to hate the Dog character, many have claimed that without

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him, DUCK HUNT wouldn't have become as iconic as it is. Do you believe that to be true?

With this said, did you play the game? If so, how many times did you try to shoot the Dog?

BALCOMB: Sure, without him it would've lacked personality. He's the main reason we remember that game. I grew up in the heyday of the NES, and I vividly remember going to my friend's house to play that and GYROMITE. We just had the basic console at home with SUPER MARIO BROS. I don't think my mom really wanted to buy a game system that came with a gun. If only she knew, twenty some-odd years later, I'd be shooting a horror version of that game involving pressurized blood and intestines.

FANG: Was it challenging to build a game that has no horror elements in it?

BALCOMB: It was more freeing actually. We had breathing room to decide how the horror element should play out using the basic game structure as the backbone. DUCK HUNT was not cinematic, but later games like SILENT HILL or DEAD SPACE are like movies already. They barely need the translation. I think the most fun you can have with an adaptation like this is to make it your own without worrying about destroying what makes the game special. Adding some decapitations doesn't hurt either.



Drew Daywalt is one of the genre's most buzzing directors, helming a host of notable horror shorts such as MOCKINGBIRD and CAMERA OBSCURA, as well as MTV's DEATH VALLEY. Daywalt's KART DRIVER takes MARIO KART to a whole new level of intense.

FANG: How did directing this short film differ from other projects you've done?

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DREW DAYWALT: Actually, we snagged the name kart driver as a play on MARIO KART and the film TAXI DRIVER, but in truth, we're really telling the story behind the original Donkey Kong arcade game. It's differed from other projects in that I teamed up with Joe Lynch, who produced the film, so he infused it with his own brand of gonzo-balls-out gore and energy, which I'm really grateful for. At one point, Joe sat there next to me giggling on set, because he'd gotten me, a staunch creator of dread, to do gore and action. And I love him for it. The whole process was a blast.

FANG: The fan following of MARIO KART has remained so strong. Naturally, hardcore fans of the series may certain elements to be carried over into the short film, so was that something that was taken into consideration when bringing the film to life?

DAYWALT: I think if you love the original arcade game DONKEY KONG, you'll be pleasantly surprised at how closely we tried to stay to the mythology and canon.

FANG: What were your inspirations when giving the classic racing game a deadlier spin in KART DRIVER?

DAYWALT: The inspirations for the film were Gaspar Noe's IRREVERSIBLE, ENTER THE VOID, as well as I STAND ALONE. Additionally, we played quite a bit with Scorsese's 1976 TAXI DRIVER, about a loner crossing over the edge and coming out the other side. The juxtaposition of such dark fare with something as light as Donkey Kong was really fun. Even though we took the tone of a dark drama, every scene was really entertaining if you know the mythology of the games.



Gregg Bishop won all sorts of acclaim with 2008's prom-centric horror/comedy DANCE OF THE DEAD.

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FANG: It seems that you cannot go anywhere nowadays without seeing someone playing Angry Birds on their mobile. What do you think contributes to its widespread popularity?

GREGG BISHOP: I was already addicted, and I was attending ABA (Angry Birds Anonymous) meetings before making the film. I think the reason it's so popular is it has challenging puzzles, but is easy for anyone to pick up and play. The physics are realistic and the gameplay is hilarious. But mostly, I think we all just have a primal urge to destroy things and blow stuff up.

FANG: What was your approach to incorporating both elements of the game, and Hitchcock's THE BIRDS?

BISHOP: I knew it would make a great horror film by playing the story from the point-of-view of the pigs. By making it in the style of Hitchcock's 1963 classic, it allowed us to mix the old and the new in such a unique way that I was surprised it had never been done before. It was a great opportunity to make something scary, fun and entertaining while paying homage to one of my favorite directors.

FANG: The ANGRY BIRDS all have special abilities in the game. Is this something that you thought would be important to involve in the storyline of the film?

BISHOP: Everything is played a little more realistic in THE BIRDS OF ANGER. For example, all of the birds in the film are real, live birds (not puppets).

FANG: The game developer Rovio recently stated that they believe ANGRY BIRDS will be bigger than MARIO in the future. Do you believe this prediction could come to fruition?

BISHOP: I do believe that prediction could come true. People are seriously crazy for their ANGRY BIRDS!

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For more, head over to G4 where you can watch all three shorts now: [THE HUNT](#) , [KART DRIVER](#)
[THE BIRDS OF ANGER](#)

