As a writer for FANGORIA, I often stumble upon rare gems while researching or watching films for interviews and feature articles. Writing about one movie usually points me in the direction of several others I desperately need to see; as The Fixx once sang, “One thing leads to another.” Nick Simon’s REMOVAL was recently added to my must-see-movie list while I was finishing up an article for an upcoming issue of Fango.

It happened like this: I was interviewing Oz (Osgood) Perkins about his brilliant father Anthony Perkins (you may remember him from a little film called PSYCHO), and I discovered that young Perkins is a talented writer and actor in his own right. He gave me a short plot summary of a movie he co-scripted with Nick Simon and Daniel Meersand and co-stars in called REMOVAL, and I immediately e-mailed my editor to get my hands on a copy. And just as I suspected, REMOVAL is one of those rare gems, discovered almost by accident.

REMOVAL, released earlier this month on DVD by Lionsgate, isn’t exactly a horror film; it’s

more of a psychological thriller. However, since the genre is coupled so closely with the final plot twist (one of several REMOVAL employs), it could be considered as such. Also directed by Simon, the film has many deep, dark secrets hidden beneath its carpets and under the furniture. It centers on Cole Hindin (Mark Kelly), a troubled professional carpet cleaner who witnesses the suicide of his best friend (DRIVE ANGRY’s Billy Burke) and spends several years cleaning up his psyche in a rehabilitation center. His girlfriend, (BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER’s Emma Caulfield) doesn’t think he’s ready to live without therapy, but Cole disagrees. He ends up lonely and alone, slaving over dirty floors and hallucinating about his dead pal.

Just when we think it can’t get any worse for our poor protagonist, Cole is called out to an isolated mansion to meet Henry Sharpe (Perkins), a calm, collected and egotistical millionaire who offers him $5,000 to spend the night cleaning his entire house, top to bottom. One room in the mansion is a complete disaster: red stains on the carpet, bedsheets tossed and tousled on the floor, lampshades crooked and turned. Henry even asks Cole to help him carry and lift two large trunks into the back of his car. Having witnessed a brutal death before, Cole’s mind runs wild with ideas about how Henry has killed his wife—and his hallucinations worsen with every inch of the mansion that he cleans. What’s in the heavy, black trunks? Is Henry really the awful murderer Cole thinks he is? Are Cole’s hallucinations getting the best of him?

Of course, you’ll have to see the film to find out. Although made on a fairly low budget, REMOVAL is beautifully shot, with an art-house sensibility and attention to small detail, and each actor does an excellent job. Perkins’ acting style and portrayal of Henry Sharpe is reminiscent of his father; he’s boyishly handsome and intellectually comedic, yet hard to read; you’re not quite sure if you can trust Henry at any point in the film. Kelly also does a brilliant job keeping the audience guessing. Simon demonstrates real potential as a director; REMOVAL is his first feature (he helmed two shorts in 2008), but you would never know it.

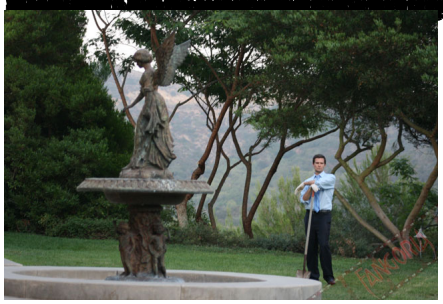
I caught up with both Simon and Perkins to let them know how much I enjoyed the film, and ask a few questions…

FANGORIA: REMOVAL is one part horror, one part psychological thriller, mixed with a little bit of black comedy—would you agree?

PERKINS: I always saw it as a thriller, and with that you have to be careful, because almost everything has been done 1,000 times before and so it becomes really hard to stay, you know, "thrilling." I felt like it was important to also have comedy in there, just to keep the texture rich and surprising. Not that it goes for laughs *per se*, but rather a sense of humor that kind of lingers in the world and knows that it's there and that it is woven into the environment. For example, Cole gets up in the morning and he's talking to his wife about what a beautiful day it is, and we cut to his point of view, and he's looking out at the most depressing suburban tableau imaginable. Yet he thinks it's beautiful, because he is in such a deep state of denial.

FANG: It took a while for the film to be picked up for distribution, but you've gotten very positive reviews. Are you happy with how the film turned out and all the feedback you've received?

SIMON: It's been a really long and hard uphill battle getting the film released, so it feels really great to get the positive response. We made this movie for a very small amount of money. And when making an independent film, you never think about how long it might take to get distribution. Or even if you will get it, for that matter. I'm just so happy that people can finally see it.

FANG: Oz, what's it like writing with and taking direction from Nick?

PERKINS: It was great, because we more or less met and worked for the first time together on a short film [2007's SHADOW PLAY], so we had a good sense of things going into the feature. I think we always just wanted to do a better version of that short, so we had a basis from which to build it. We very much co-authored the movie in that way, almost like we were curating it, taking care of it and making sure it was being well-represented as it evolved into a feature. We wanted to honor the short, which was why were all there in the first place.