Victor Crowley is returning. The harbinger of “Old School American Horror,” as he was touted in 2006, has taken up residence in the southern swamps yet again, alongside creator Adam Green, and stars Kane Hodder and Danielle Harris. This go ‘round however, camera operator BJ McDonnell has taken the directorial reins for what him and Green are calling Crowley’s biggest romp yet. Fango sat down with the director and writer/producer and discussed expectation vs. reaction, and outlined what fans can expect from the gory, sweaty and apparently action-packed HATCHET III.

FANGORIA: With HATCHET III, Adam is producing and scripting. So BJ, where does your stamp lie, is it on a purely visual level?

BJ MCDONNELL: Basically, Adam told me about the project and said he wanted me to do it, which I was totally excited about. We collaborated together on what he wanted to do with the story and what I wanted to do with the story, so during the whole script-writing process, we went together and I brought a little more of my visual style—not that we didn’t do that before, because I was the camera operator on the other two—but I wanted to take a little more time with certain things that were different on this one. It’s visual style, but we also did work together on the script to make it both ours.

ADAM GREEN: Yep. Basically, I told him this is what the storyline is, these are most of the kills, and then we just discussed and through conversations would build upon them or change things. It wasn’t like bringing in some new person from outside. It was very much in sync. Even the first day on set, in terms of passing the baton, the crew already knows him and the cast know him. It was very seamless. It couldn’t have worked out better, I think.

FANG: Obviously, you recasted Marybeth for HATCHET II and brought in Danielle. Now, doing

a second sequel with her, do you feel like you're achieving where you wanted that character to be as an iconic leading lady/final girl?

GREEN: For sure, with HATCHET II, it was really hard because normally in a horror movie, when you're the lead actress, you get at least 30-40 pages of cute, happy stuff, and then shit hits the fan. She is starting the movie with his arm around her throat, her family's dead, everybody's dead. So, she just had to be in absolute misery through the whole thing. By the time, this one takes place—which, again it starts the moment the other one ended—she's much more shut down and numb. She's a little bit more of a Ripley in this one, to some extent. Without spoiling too much about it, she doesn't want to go back to the swamp. She's not like, "let me back at 'em." That's now how this one goes down. But, it is great now that there's been two HATCHETs with Danielle so she sort of solidifies herself, because there were some people who were attached to the other girl. The way I think with Danielle is, she's Danielle Harris. When it became evident that we were going to have to make change, to sort of level up, and get somebody who the fans know and love, and who's an icon, that really helped. In this movie, as much as she's more shut down emotionally, she gets more to do instead of just being crying, crying, sad, screaming.

Like, sometimes someone would be like, "Does she have to be crying through the whole movie?" I'm like, "What would you do?"

MCDONNELL: Yea, your family was just cut up in a shed, and you just watched everyone you were with die twice.

GREEN: They were like, "I'd just kill myself." Oh, that'd be a great movie.

FANG: The best short film! The HATCHET films are peppered with beloved genre actors. Are there surprises yet, in store?

GREEN: There is cast that hasn't been announced yet, so that's really exciting. How we've been able to keep it quiet this long, I'm really excited about. So, there will be some surprises there for people showing up. This time around, when you think about it as one big movie, where HATCHET is a fun first act, HATCHET II is sort of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK in the way that it was much darker and a little more serious; it was a lot of story, which earned us the

right to do what we did with three, which is the action climax. So, this time around we didn't need to explain everything about Victor Crowley. We did that already. In the first one, we glanced over it. The second one was all about the Voodoo curse, what Mr. Crowley did, what exactly he is, a repeating ghost. That's all out there now, so this time, we were able to just not have to slow down the movie to stop and do that stuff again. As funny as it sounds, a lot of people, whether it's a fan or a critic, they think that their opinion is the only one, of course. At FrightFest in London, where we premiered HATCHET II—HATCHET II is my baby, I love that movie—one of the critics was like, "my god, did you have to explain three fucking times that he's a repeating ghost and he comes back; we fucking get it." And this fan's waiting and he's like, "Actually, yea I wanted to ask you, so he's a ghost?" And I go [makes "see?" gesture].

MCDONNELL: It's amazing, even nowadays, people are like, "he's got his head blown off, how's Crowley gonna come back?" It's explained so many times in the movies. He's a repeater.

GREEN: You have to just make a choice, we're making this movie the way we're going to make the movie and you can't sit here and be like, "well, how do we please the people that are gonna say that's taking too long and or that's this…"

FANG: Well, you don't want any filmmaker to do that. You want a filmmaker to make their movie,

GREEN AND MCDONNELL: Yes.

GREEN: But it is funny how one person can be like, "Oh my god, we get it, it was explained so many times," and there's other people who still can't comprehend it.

MCDONNELL: You can still read it on message boards. It happens still, all the time.

GREEN: I've learned to not look at message boards. I don't even look at reviews anymore. You'll learn.

MCDONNELL: I've learned fast.

GREEN: The first person that wishes you to get cancer on a message board, you'll be over it.

FANG: One of the things greatly sticks out is the flashback sequence in HATCHET II. It's the most striking part of the series-

GREEN: That's my favorite part.

FANG: It gets so dark and it's legitimately eerie. Is there anymore of that style in HATCHET III?

MCDONNELL: We didn't do any flashbacks,

FANG: Not necessarily flashbacks, but that mood?

GREEN: There's dark stuff-

MCDONNELL: It's actually very dark. This one is very moody and very dark. Even the beginning, stuff that me and the editor, Ed Marx have cut together is pretty intense; right from the get-go. But it still has the same comedy, and it's the same style that we've done the other HATCHET films with. We want to make sure we keep that, because that's what everybody

likes, that's what we likes.

GREEN: The ending, especially. For me, when I made one, I already knew what II was, and when I made II, I knew what III would be, but I knew I wasn't going to be the one directing it, before I ever shot a frame of HATCHET II. But this time, I'm not saying it's the end, you never know-

FANG: But you're approaching it as the end of, at least, this-

GREEN: This piece. I approached it like that, and so the ending was tough for me to write; even on set, watching it. So, the crew and the cast never got scripts with the ending, so nobody knew until we shot it. That was when you really saw the crew start paying attention, when they realized, "oh, they're shooting the final scene." Everybody gathered around to see what was actually happening, and what goes on.

One of my favorite monsters is Frankenstein, because there's sympathy for him, and really I tried, especially in that flashback story, to keep a shred of sympathy for Victor Crowley because this wasn't his fault. I feel like we get in that how this thing wraps up. There are so many people that are like, "I bet I know how it ends," and nobody's gotten it right, yet. It's fine, no one's starting a contest of it. Don't worry about it, just watch it and see where it goes.

MCDONNELL: It's funny, they really want to know before they actually see the movie. Just go see the film.

GREEN: How does he kill people? What are the cameos? And how does it end?

FANG: We live in a perpetual hype culture. Before HATCHET II came out, it was "what's HATCHET III?" It's endless.

GREEN: We're already—the question, "So, HATCHET 4?" It's like, "Let's talk about HATCHET

III”

FANG: You’ve been to the swamp now for both films. Did you have any conversation relative to how to shoot it differently, or what can we find that’s new?

MCDONNELL: My whole thing was, “let’s go to New Orleans and actually shoot this in the swamp.” Which, I think everybody wants to kill me for, because it was so damn hard.

GREEN: And it looks like HATCHET II.

MCDONNELL: No, it doesn’t!

GREEN: There’s moments where you can definitely tell it’s the swamp, but the thing to remember is that even though HATCHET II was on a soundstage, it was the same tree from the swamp, the same moss, the same everything, just flown in and put there. It’s the same thing, there’s just a roof over our heads that the audience can’t see. As soon as we told people it was a soundstage, they were like, “looks fake!” It’s all real, everything about is real. There were no fake trees. HATCHET, if you watch closely, when they’re running you can see the pots that the plants are in, because that was in the desert. This time, we were in the real swamp, the elements were horrible.

MCDONNELL: The elements were absolutely terrible.

GREEN: But it does look beautiful. There’s moments where it’s like, “holy shit.”

MCDONNELL: When we were doing part two, I hated the fact that we couldn’t do big wides. The widest we did was the shot of Kane and Tony going towards each other, and that wasn’t even that wide.

GREEN: But we were also shooting 1:85. This time, the movie starts at a certain point, we stretch to 2:40, because the scope of this one—there's so much action, and so many more characters.

MCDONNELL: It'll look bigger. So, we did change the visual style a bit, and when you do see the swamp, it's a swamp.

GREEN: It 's so beautiful, it looks fake. Every time I look through the lens, it looks fake.

MCDONNELL: The funniest thing was Will Barratt, our DP, was like, "BJ, I'd be setting up a shot, and you would come over and just change it. Right off the bat." I just wanted to do certain different things, and Will, I gotta tell you, Will killed it on this one. He brought the thunder.

GREEN: He had the equipment he wanted. HATCHET, the biggest thing shooting the exteriors is condors, the big, huge lights. They get to set and then they couldn't get them up to where the set was, so the whole movie's lit with like nine lights, and we just did the best we could.

MCDONNELL: I actually like it though. Now, when I watch it, it's cool.

GREEN: And then, HATCHET II, budget-wise, we couldn't get everything we wanted, but was at least a little bit more contained. With any movie, when HATCHET came out, people said, "this sucks," and two years later it's like, "it's a classic." HATCHET II comes out, "the first one is so much better," now they watch it again, it's, "II is better than I." This one, it'll be curious to see what people say, it's an action movie and that's what BJ brought to it. There's an action style to it. Stunt work, wire work, people getting thrown through the air 20 feet. It's really, really crazy. And that's where he just went nuts with what he wanted to do, making it more of an action movie than the other two.

MCDONNELL: It was just really good to mix the two things together, and still keep the horror element to it. We just had a lot of fun with it, we really made it killer.

GREEN: The design of Victor Crowley, too. Even from I to II to III, it's the same molds. We never changed the look, we just got better at how we applied it. So HATCHET, we had to keep him hidden because half of his face was just a mask. It was a rubber mask that couldn't movie, and the more you looked at it, it was horrible. HATCHET II, we were able to do his entire face so he had expression, and could move and you could see both of his eyes all the time. Plus, by the time we get to the sequel, that's the character the fans are coming to see. So, you want to show him, you don't want to hide him all the time. This time, same stuff, but we did all silicone instead of latex, so it was fifty pounds, which in a 100 degree heat, doing stunts, I don't know how he did it without dying. But, it was so seamless in the way it moves, and so realistic. It's still the same molds, but we finally perfected, even down to the hair. Because it's silicone, we could reuse the same head every night. So, this time the hair was individually placed, real human hair. He looks exactly like we always wanted him to.

MCDONNELL: He's a scary fuckin' Crowley in this one.

GREEN: We're releasing this teaser poster here, and I sent them the picture of him, and the marketing people were like, "Let's tweak this." But I actually think it's cool, because people still don't know.

HATCHET III is out in 2013