

## Q&A: Tim Burton Brings "FRANKENWEENIE" Back

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
Wednesday, 03 October 2012 11:15

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An icon, Tim Burton has ignited the darker recesses of audiences' imaginations with an aesthetic so his own, the likes of MoMA have recently dedicated exhibitions to his work. With *FRANKENWEENIE*, Burton revisits both his own childhood and his early days in the industry, updating a 1984 live action short with a stop-motion feature that filters his youth through a love of the macabre.

FANGORIA sat down with Burton to discuss the film, about a young boy named Victor Frankenstein and the chaos that ensues upon resurrecting his pet, and best friend, Sparky.

**FANGORIA:** One of the most outstanding characters of the film is Martin Landau's Mr. Rzykruski, and his speech which almost seems like its speaking directly to the kids in the audience about not being complacent or lazy in their lives. Is that a joy to you, speaking directly about questioning, and weird other interests to younger audiences?

**TIM BURTON:** For me, this one has lots of simple messages. I went back to remembering how it felt in school, and how weird every other kid felt, and how weird the teachers were. I always likened, this is going to sound horrible, but it's why I always liked the *FRANKENSTEIN* movie. Where I grew up, I always felt like the people were like the angry villagers. It's like you're the monster and they're the angry villagers. So, there's that thematic kind of thing that always felt right. And just the weird teachers that were also both scary, but inspiring. I just tried to draw on all those things that you remember and the types of kids, the politics and the way kids act to each other. That helped, for me, to flesh it out into a fuller movie. You still have this essence of a kid and his dog, but those kind of things help flesh it out, basically.



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**FANG:** Well, it seems like a mob mentality can be even more prevalent now.

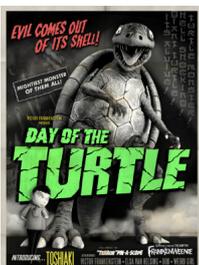
**BURTON:** I think that's why I liked all those movies. It was easy to relate it to real life. You could look at FRANKENSTEIN and it wasn't a stretch to relate to your own life, growing up in Burbank. That's, you wouldn't ordinarily look at FRANKENSTEIN and think of Burbank, but it never felt like a big stretch.

**FANG:** How did now become the right time to revisit FRANKENWEENIE?

**BURTON:** Especially with stop-motion films, you kind of have to strike while—NIGHTMARE took almost ten years to get made. This is kind of similar, because it has to do with finding the right group of animators, because it is a rarified kind of medium. It took a while to get all those elements together, so it does take several years to mount these things.

**FANG:** You've spoken about the process of stop-motion and how you're not necessarily there all the time, it's so meticulous. Did you ever worry it could get away from you?

**BURTON:** No, because it's such a slow motion process. You board it, I give the shots, you see a rough layout. I can work on other things, because it is such a slow, you can maybe see a few seconds a week. It wouldn't have done me much good. It's easy to monitor, that's the luxury of it. If there was a rare occasion where the performance wasn't right, you could change it, or just re-time it. I never, ever had that feeling of, "Oh my god, it's going to get away from me."



**FANG:** On the monster movie end of FRANKENWEENIE, is there a feeling of, you can go bigger with the monsters due to it being animation?

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**BURTON:** I remember, over the years with NIGHTMARE, "oh it's too scary for kids, blah blah blah." But kids they know what they can handle. I handled it. My parents said I was watching monster movies before I could walk. Every kid has their own level of what they could. My daughter, she's three years-old and her favorite movie is WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS. So, it's like kids can take it. For me, it's like the perfect Disney movie. Basically, boy and his dog, it just happens to be FRANKENSTEIN. I remember when we did the short, the whole point was it was meant to go out with PINOCCHIO, as a featurette, but it freaked everybody out. Then, they watched PINOCCHIO and kids were crying and screaming and leaving the theater. That's what Disney founded. If you take out all the scary parts of Disney movies, you wouldn't have Disney movies. Adults forget that. I don't know what happens to people. FRANKENWEENIE is fun, fun monsters. They're little puppets, for god's sake [laughs].

**FANG:** Are you hoping kids take away a taste for monster movies?

**BURTON:** Yea, I think so. It's what I loved. It is interesting because modern- I started to show my kid, you go back to those old movies and it's not the fast paced... You're kind of curious to how kids will respond to that stuff. It's not rapid fire editing, it's more mood oriented, but I was surprised by how much kids still like that. For me, you can look at those and relate it to real life. It's like a dream. It is like exploring the subconscious, and it's a way of exploring those things kids support to kids.

**FANG:** Speaking of childhood, is FRANKENWEENIE your most personal film?

**BURTON:** It's up there. I tried to, from just down to the casting and working with people I hadn't worked with for awhile, Catherine O' Hara and Martin Short, Winona Ryder, Martin Landau. I tried to keep any kind of personal connection I could with everything.

**FANG:** Do you have a different approach to getting the voicework done? Do you try and get the actors together?

**BURTON:** Oftentimes, you can't. I think Martin and Catherine did a couple together.

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**FANG:** Do you think there's ever a noticeable difference when you do have them gathered?

**BURTON:** Sometimes, it depends. You do so many sessions. I had to call them back three, four, five times. It's a real hodgepodge. It is amazing. Hopefully, it works like they're all there, but it is interesting what you can, because it's also different, especially when you're dealing with puppets. Because it's different from even doing drawn film, or computer film. There's just something about the puppets speaking, which is just different. It's a lot of little sessions.

People like Catherine, I had them do three characters each. When you have them, you want to think, go off and do a bunch of characters and we'll just write the script, because they're so good at it. So, it was fun to let them. We stick pretty much to the script in this one.

**FANG:** Finally, what is your favorite monster movie?

**BURTON:** I grew up on them all. It was interesting going back and looking at FRANKENSTEINs and DRACULAs. They're quite strong. There's just something so beautiful about it.