



That blindfold won't shield *Crazy Eight's* Gina (Traci Lords) from the terrible secrets of her past.



*Saw's* Dina Meyer knows a thing or two about being trapped in creepy, dilapidated buildings.

## "CRAZY EIGHTS" Counting on terror from the past

For many horror fans, the period between November 9-18, 2007 was a hectic time as they scrambled to catch the 8 Films to Die For released as part of After Dark Films' Horrorfest 2. Among the independent features assembled for this festival, one in particular stood out for its fine production values and equally strong cast: *Crazy Eights*, directed by James K. Jones and produced by Patrick Moses via their IKM Productions company.

*Crazy Eights* (hitting DVD, along with the other Horrorfest 2 flicks, March 18 from Lionsgate) is a morality tale—a traditional ghost story that brings six childhood friends together to mourn the loss of one of their own. At the final request of their deceased pal, the group must travel together to a secluded estate to unlock a time capsule, which in turn opens the floodgates for repressed guilt and experiences these friends shared in their youth.

Director Jones also co-wrote the film with Dan Deluca, and the filmmakers all had a clear vision from the beginning of what they were striving to accomplish. "We've studied all the masters of horror," says Moses, a producer on Bravo's *100 Scariest Movie Moments*. "This genre in particular is great for telling stories of morality. Fans of the genre really appreciate that, and when you look at almost every single great horror film made, it's usually that kind of tale on some level."

With inevitable budget constraints, the team focused not only on a tight script with a small

group of characters set at one location, but also delivering technical gloss. "One of the big things for us was always the look of *Crazy Eights*," Jones explains. "We felt that was going to be just as important as everything else."

Moses agrees. "There were a lot of things we did on *Crazy Eights* that you normally don't see. The decision to shoot on 35mm anamorphic is definitely going to give viewers an experience that they wouldn't typically get from a low-budget horror film. And you're not going to see a cast like this in one either." Indeed, the ensemble consists of plenty of recognizable faces, including Frank (Vacancy) Whaley, Dina Meyer from the *Saw* films, Traci (*The Tommyknockers*) Lords and Gabrielle (*Burn Notice*) Anwar. "Frank Whaley and Traci Lords were the first two people we cast," Jones reveals. "I'm a huge Frank Whaley fan."

*Crazy Eights* was shot in roughly 20 days in Crownsville, Maryland, and despite the short prep time, all of the actors were able to contribute significantly to their characters' development, even offering suggestions on the spot. "Frank got really into it," Jones recalls. "There's this little monologue that he and I worked on together for a scene where he's alone and confined to this space he can't escape. It originally didn't have dialogue, but Frank started spewing out a bunch of ideas, and we refined it. We really didn't have time in the production to do it, but Frank totally nailed it. So we set up two cameras and shot it on the fly. It was a really

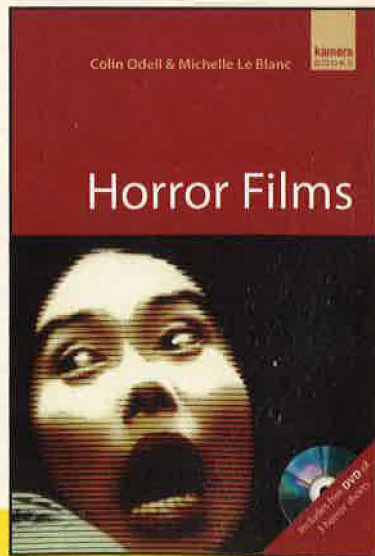
fun, unexpected thing."

The filmmakers were often pleasantly surprised by the professionalism of their entire cast. "Dina Meyer had just wrapped *Saw II* when she came onto our set," Jones says. "You put the camera on Dina, and she comes alive. She's very cognizant of camera positions and being able to play toward it, which allowed us to move faster. She gave a great and strong performance. Gabrielle Anwar was terrific too; she took her character and made her soft and really weird and freaky."

Being selected to be a part of Horrorfest 2 was a surprise to all those involved. "We had just gotten back from color-correcting the film," Jones remembers, "and we literally got a call out of the blue that said the folks over at After Dark Films liked the movie and wanted it as part of the festival. We did some research on it, and it seemed like a fun thing to get involved with." Those who caught the film last November on the big screen might be surprised when they sit down to watch the upcoming disc release. "There's a longer version that we had committed to do, and that's going to be on the DVD," Jones notes. "It has some of the scenes we had to delete back in it."

Considering the duo's affinity for the horror genre, it's no shock that they've already completed another horror feature. "After *Crazy Eights*, we went on to do *The Wreck*," Jones says of their new film, in which a young couple on the way to the hospital to deliver their first child become stranded in the woods after a car crash—and soon discover they're not alone. "For that one, we decided we'd give the gore fans what they want. There's 15 minutes in it where audiences usually just cover their eyes! Instead of another ghost story, we followed up by making something that's visually disgusting."

—Robert Galluzzo



If just reading about creepy cinema doesn't quite quench your thirst, *Horror Films* (Kamera Books) by British authors Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc also includes a DVD featuring three scary short films. The book is a journey through the history of fright flicks from Europe, the Americas and Asia, covering key titles and filmmakers and delving into the genre's appeal. Find out more at [www.kamerabooks.co.uk/horrorfilms](http://www.kamerabooks.co.uk/horrorfilms).

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