

BLOOD BROTHERS

BY BONNIE DATT
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire.
"This should be an interesting Christmas release — red blood and green blood."
— Greg Nicotero, *From Dusk Till Dawn* Special-effects artist.

Jack Frost nipping at your nose.
"There's no angst. There's just a bunch of rat-bat f--kin' monsters."
— Quentin Tarantino

LEAVE IT TO QUENTIN Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez to release a gory action-horror movie three days before Christmas. Tarantino — known for his bloody, ultra-violent yet smart *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* — stars in and executive produces the first script he was paid to write. *From Dusk Till Dawn* was shelved, but the \$1,500 got him out of clerking in a video store and into writing scripts that would win an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, Cannes' Palme d'Or and national and international acclaim.

Rodriguez — known for his bloody, ultra-violent yet funny *El Mariachi* and *Desperado* — directs, edits, executive produces, shoots.... Heck, he probably brings the coffee and doughnuts. That's after he sketches the vampires for the special-effects people to create. And throws together some "fake" trailers (They're too gory to get past the ratings board, he says. "But they keep the crew excited.") And experiments with sound effects on his computer at home.

"I think Robert was shooting movies in his last lifetime," says executive producer Lawrence Bender. "There's never any sitting around, 'OK, how are we going to shoot this?' You see the rehearsal, and before you know it, there's a method of how he's about to go shoot it: You got a camera here, here, here and here, and the lighting this way and boom. And we'll go. I've never seen that before. I don't know who else can do it."

Ashes to ashes

By the time the dust was blown off *Dusk*, Tarantino and Rodriguez had become friends.

"It was kind of perfect timing," explains Bender, who also produced *Dogs* and *Pulp*. "Quentin said, 'Well, I'll do it if Robert wants to direct it.' And that was what made this whole thing explode."

And explode it does, in green monster goo. But not right off the bat (no pun intended). Come on, we're talking Tarantino.

"It's a straight-on suspense, gangster, getaway kind of film — until it turns this corner," Tarantino says. "And once it turns that corner, you are in a completely other movie."

Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez deliver a gory holiday gift

When people first read the script, they had no idea what it was, and then all of a sudden, when they got to page 70 (sound effect of turning page) — *What the hell?*

They were like questioning their own sanity — 'Is this what's going on?' [It becomes] a head-banging horror film for the horror-film fans."

To a bloody *Pulp*

Tarantino and Rodriguez both say they'll be happy if they only please these horror fans. "We're making a full-on horror film for that crowd, and everyone else is invited, all right?" Tarantino says. They don't expect a *Pulp* phenomenon.

"We got like 11, 12 million dollars, which is, uh, they don't even shoot comedies for that these days," Rodriguez says. "We thought it would be a good way to keep creative freedom — be able to do whatever we want because we weren't spending a lot, yet make it look really big and expensive so that we could do crazy things and get away with it. If you make a bigger movie for a regular studio, it has to be a middle-of-the-road kind of horror film. It has to appeal to more people because they spend more money and have to make back more money."

"All we have to do is go after our horror fans — people who just like horror movies — and if nobody else wants to see it, it's all right because it'll still make back enough money."

But, Tarantino admits, the *Pulp* crowd and the *Dusk* crowd aren't necessarily that different. "They would be hanging out on the same part of the campus — the same corner of the prison yard."

Also hanging out in that yard are Juliette Lewis and Harvey Keitel, no strangers to Tarantino scripts; Cheech Marin and Salma Hayek, no strangers to Rodriguez films; Tom Savini, no stranger to horror films; and George Clooney, um....

Clooney, riding high on his *ER* success, made a good move in doing a low-budget horror flick, Rodriguez says. "Instead of doing some middle-

of-the-road, big-budget, American comedy, where he'd just be part of the decoration, he gets to come in here and take over, in a low-budget situation, where, worse to worst, he can always just blame me."

Clooney and Tarantino play the gangster Gecko brothers, who go on a bloody crime spree culminating in the kidnapping of the Fuller family (Keitel plays the minister father; Lewis, the daughter). In the Fuller RV, they all head for the border, where the Geckos promise to let the Fullers go. But at the border is the Titty Twister bar, which just happens to be operated by vampires.

And these aren't your average vampires. Come on, we're talking Rodriguez.

"They're still these ghoulish monsters and everything," Tarantino says. "But it's great to have this kind of Mexican slant. The movie never actually stops to do that, but you see it in the architecture. You

see it in the Titty Twister, which used to be this temple for hundreds of years. They just built this titty bar around to disguise it.

"The production designer actually drew this whole subtext — not the eastern European vampire myth, but the Mayan/Mexican/Aztec — without changing anything."

The dynamic duo

Water, not stakes and garlic, is the weapon of choice against these monsters — launched with guns, balloons, condoms.

Condoms. Well, we are talking Tarantino and Rodriguez. But still, a vampire movie at Christmas?

"Usually I don't go see any movies at Christmas," Rodriguez says. "You get there, everyone's smiling and happy all the time. I want to see a real intense movie."

Ask Bonnie Datt about The Bonnie Situation.



Quentin Tarantino gives George Clooney a hand.



In *From Dusk Till Dawn*, Robert Rodriguez directs bats out of hell.