

MONSTERS INVASION

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The FANGORIA Fright File of up-to-the-minute newsbreaks
and other horrible happenings!



Photo: Luke Wynne/Copyright Universal City Studios

Why little Andy would want to play with another Good Guy doll is just one of many questions waiting to be answered in *Child's Play II*.

"CHILD'S PLAY II": Chucky (a.k.a. Charles Lee Ray), everyone's favorite mannequin of mayhem, returns to movie screens this fall. *Child's Play II*, the sequel to United Artists' \$40 million 1988 hit, began production on November 7. But not for United Artists. After MGM/UA was purchased (temporarily, it turned out) by an Australian entertainment company called Qintex, the new owners inexplicably decided to place the entire lucrative Chucky franchise into turnaround mere weeks before the start of principal photography, thus putting it up for grabs by competing studios. Industry insiders were stunned. The reason given for the decision: moral grounds.

UA's new owners found the series "too exploitive"(!).

Whatever, UA's loss has turned into genre-savvy Universal's gain. The \$13 million-plus *Child's Play* sequel is currently in production on the Universal lot, shooting a number of its major sequences on the same soundstages (long rumored to be haunted) on which the silent Lon Chaney Sr. classic *Phantom of the Opera* was filmed.

David Kirschner, the original film's producer, does the same on the follow-up. John Lafia, the first film's co-writer and director of the hip cult item *The Blue Iguana*, as well as a pair of *Freddy's Nightmares* episodes and a *Monsters* for Laurel Entertainment, directs. (Lafia

has also recently penned a sequel to John Landis' *An American Werewolf in London*, called *An American Werewolf in Paris*, for Landis and Universal.) Chucky FX are again being devised and executed by Kevin Yagher and his crew, with Yagher directing second unit as he did on HBO's *Tales from the Crypt*.

The production is something of a vindication for Chucky's creator and the writer of *Child's Play II*, Don Mancini. Mancini had written the original script for the first *Child's Play*, once titled *Blood Buddy*, and eventually received screenplay credit with John Lafia and director Tom Holland on the finished film. But in the wake of the first film's release, Mancini was distressed to find his contribution negated in print by Holland in various genre publications.

"There'd been a Writer's Guild arbitration to determine credit," elaborates Mancini, somewhat reluctant to dredge up the painful past. "Tom had asked for sole screenplay credit and co-story credit, which was outrageous. I asked for sole story credit and first position on the screenplay, to be shared equally with John and Tom, and that's the way it came out. Tom was so furious he wouldn't allow either John or myself on the set. Then Tom was saying that *Child's Play* was his original screenplay, even though the credits say it isn't. I had to call the Writer's Guild to get him to stop."

Due to the story's nature, the only original cast members

returning for *Child's Play II* are Alex Vincent and Andy Barclay and, naturally, the inimitable voice of actor Brad Dourif as Chucky. The plot finds little Andy taken away from his mother by the courts, which judge her unfit to care for him following the violent events of the earlier film. Andy is placed in a foster home where he meets Kyle (Christine Elise), a 16-year-old girl also in the care of foster parents Gerrit Graham and Jenny (*American Werewolf*) Agutter. Although at first they do not get along, Andy and Kyle eventually form an alliance for survival when Chucky is resurrected and once more comes after Andy, still intent upon transferring his spirit out of the doll's corpus and into the boy's body.

Screenwriter Mancini, between minor on-set script revisions, offers several observations on Chucky's appeal. "Part of the attraction is that Chucky is this product," he opines. "*Child's Play* is, to a degree, a satire on consumerism and merchandising. And so, Chucky represents something timely that people lock onto. Because he's this killer, he's kind of a joke on the world. Visually, he is a joke—a pun, in a way. And he's very much aware of the joke he represents and is very tickled by that, always exploits that as much as he can. As a toy, Chucky can exist right under the characters' noses in the story, which opens up all sorts of suspenseful possibilities."

—Mark Carducci