

Seed of CHUCKY

The Producers Wanted to Pump Up the Self-Referential Humor, but Universal Wasn't Laughing

By Fred Topel

CHILD'S PLAY series creator Don Mancini has three workable ideas for a fifth Chucky film, yet none of them are likely to go into production. Despite the success of 1998's *BRIDE OF CHUCKY*, Mancini finds that Universal Pictures, which produced the last three of the four killer-doll films, simply does not want to make another movie.

"Columbine really scared a lot of people off of these movies, with some practical reason, because it's much harder for studios to advertise these movies now," Mancini admitted. "Chucky has a really young audience. Normally, they could advertise these movies during prime-time, and you just can't do that anymore. That's part of the reason they were really scared off."

Producer David Kirschner felt the politics of Joe Lieberman—who heavily attacked Hollywood violence during the 2000 campaign—played a part, too. "As a result of all the media attention that went with that, a host of people, including Stacey Snider, stood before Congress and testified. I think she felt that much more, if you will, responsible for not advertising [violence] to kids. As a result of that, we were in a very difficult position. That advertising has been important to the lifeblood of this film. Because it's a toy that has come to life,

that makes it that much more difficult with an R rating."

Snider herself was not available for comment.

Currently, the only completed script is *SEED OF CHUCKY*. The story begins where *BRIDE OF CHUCKY* left off, after the dying Tiffany doll gave birth to a child. This child grows up gender-confused, because it is not

"anatomically correct," like its parents (which is also why the title is *SEED* and not *SON OF CHUCKY*).

Meanwhile, within the *CHILD'S PLAY* reality, Universal decides to make a film about the doll killings. The seed sees the animatronic puppets on a TV show, and mails himself to Hollywood.

There, he uses

the voodoo incantation to resurrect Chucky and Tiffany in the animatronics' bodies. This movie-within-a-movie setup would have allowed Mancini to write a part for Jennifer Tilly—who played Tiffany in *BRIDE*—to appear in the movie as herself. Said Mancini, "I wanted to push the comedy

even more, because I felt like that was something that was really successful in *BRIDE OF CHUCKY* that

people responded to, and I frankly didn't feel that Chucky as a concept was particularly legitimately scary after you see all these movies.

"Another thing I wanted to do was subvert the expectations of what people would bring to a movie regarding the son of Chucky. I felt like we already have these two characters that are psychopathic killers—it was a great opportunity for a lot of humor and satire by having the child of Chucky be completely innocent. What would drive Chucky more insane than to have this kid who wants nothing to do with killing, who is a total pacifist?"

As *BRIDE OF CHUCKY* spoofed road movies and romantic comedies, *SEED OF CHUCKY* spoofs domestic dramas like *ORDINARY PEOPLE* and *KRAMER VS. KRAMER*. Chucky and Tiffany hate each other, but try to fix their "marriage" for the

ANNND...CUT! *SEED OF CHUCKY* would have centered on the filming of a *CHILD'S PLAY*-like film. Below: Shooting the original.



sake of their child. However, Tiffany puts the kid in dresses and calls it Glenda, while Chucky, calling it Glen, wants to teach him to kill like his father. That family dynamic happens within the story of all three dolls searching for human bodies to occupy.

"What forms the framework of the plot is that [Tiffany] decides that she wants to be Jennifer Tilly," Mancini continued. "They hole up in Jennifer Tilly's attic and they secretly have to get her pregnant, because they need to make a human baby for the soul of their child. So they conspire to artificially inseminate Jennifer Tilly, and there's this whole scene where Chucky is jacking off to get a sperm sample, and he's looking at *Fangoria* instead of *Playboy* for inspiration."

As Tiffany aims to become Jennifer Tilly, Chucky plans to inhabit the body of the fictional film's director, who is having an affair with Tilly. "This other part of the story is that Jennifer Tilly's career is in such a bad place that she's saying, 'I'm an Oscar nominee. Now I'm fucking a puppet. What happened to my career?' Jennifer was totally into doing all of this—she's such a good sport and totally gets it. She went, 'Make me a bitch. Really, just make me horrible.'"

The killings in *SEED OF CHUCKY* are even more comedic than those in *BRIDE*, both playing off the family drama angle and referencing other genre films. "There was a scene where the character of this sleazy paparazzo, this tabloid photographer who was following Jennifer Tilly around trying to get naked pictures of her, ends up in this sequence that parodies *REAR WINDOW*. He's taking pictures of her through the windows of her house at the same time that the dolls are choreographing this whole thing where they're artificially inseminating her.... He's going to go develop these pictures and that provides motivation for Chucky to kill him.

"At the same time, [Chucky] wants to make a man of his son. It's driving him crazy that Tiffany is referring to this kid as Glenda and dressing him in dresses, and also that she doesn't want him to be a killer. So he

sneaks him out in the middle of the night and goes to this photographer's dark room. It's supposed to be a parody of a father-son fishing trip, but it's 'I'm going to teach you to kill.'

"They lay in wait in this darkroom and Chucky basically says, 'Okay, you watch me. Follow my lead...' Glen comes running out to warn [the paparazzo]. Of course, the guy sees this freaky little doll come running after him. He freaks, staggers back and falls against these shelves with all the photo developing chemicals. This acid falls right on his face. It's eating his skin away and Chucky's like, 'Atta boy! That's my son!'"

Mancini even went as far as to create a marketing tagline that referenced the double entendre to the *SEED* title: "Get a load of Chucky now." "That went even beyond [*BRIDE*'s tagline], 'Chucky gets lucky,'" said Mancini. "I don't even know if the people at Universal got that but the fans would have liked that a lot."

Some Universal executives told Mancini they thought the *SEED OF CHUCKY* script was too inside and the general public might not get it. With *SEED* rejected, the Internet quickly picked up rumors that Mancini was writing a spoof of *HANNIBAL*, even though that idea never got past the idea stage.

"It was a joke," Mancini said. "[Producers] David Kirschner, Corey Sienege, and I were just sitting around thinking, *What can we do to try to light a fire to get them interested?* *HANNIBAL* had just come out and I said, 'What if we did this movie that was basically a parody of *HANNIBAL* and it was about Chucky's only surviving victim out for revenge? But instead of wanting to feed him to wild boars, [he] wants to feed him to toy poodles or something?'"

"The virtue of these characters is that because they're dolls, you can plug them into so



TOYING WITH SATIRE: *HANNIBAL* was one of the potential targets of a *CHILD'S PLAY* sequel, but Universal didn't see the humor.

many different kinds of situations and it's always ripe for satire and parody. Whereas in *HANNIBAL* Lecter was holed up in Florence because he was a man of culture, Chucky would be in Venice—the Venetian in Las Vegas—where he'd be part of a ventriloquism act... When Chucky's only surviving victim puts out the bounty on him, the ventriloquist character decides he's going to turn him in to get the reward.

"A reporter got wind of [this plotline] through Jennifer actually, but we never even got to the point where we pitched that to studio. Frankly, we were skeptical that Universal would even want to parody *HANNIBAL* when they're doing *RED DRAGON* now."

Mancini thought of another idea to counter the issue of making R-rated films. "I came up with this idea: What if we did *A CLOCKWORK CHUCKY*, where Chucky's deprogrammed somehow *a la* *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, where he's hooked up and forced to watch

scenes from his previous movies? He becomes completely sick at the sight and thought of violence. I thought that was hilarious that you could actually do a PG-13 movie where you tone the violence way down but still amplify the comedy.

"I thought it was a clever solution to the challenge they were posing. You could actually make the movie about the current environment and how it's difficult to make violent movies. It would be really funny to show Chucky in classic horror movie situations where he's in the backseat of a car with two teenagers necking on some lover's lane. He's sitting there and here's a knife and here's a cleaver, but it just makes him sick and he can't do what it is that he wants to do. We pitched it to them and they kind of went, 'Well, no, we don't really get it.'"

Despite all his frustrations, Mancini remains optimistic that a *CHILD'S PLAY* sequel will happen. "The world's always turning," he concluded. "Sooner or later they will decide to make one."

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