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MovieBytes Interview: Screenwriter Francisco Castro

An interview with screenwriter Francisco Castro regarding the Screamfest Writing Competition.

Q: What's the title of the script you entered in this contest, and what's it about?

A: The script is called DESOLATE. It's about a truck driver who becomes stranded with a woman and baby in an abandoned rest stop in the middle of nowhere. When they discover strange creatures stalking them, the three must figure a way out or make the ultimate sacrifice.

Q: What made you enter this particular contest? Have you entered any other contests with this script? If so, how did you do?

A: Screamfest was the premiere horror festival. I figured if I could make semi-finalist or something close to that, then maybe I'd have some ammunition under my belt before the script went out on spec. I knew I needed that because DESOLATE was very dark and twisted like THE THING and ROSEMARY'S BABY.

Q: Were you satisfied with the administration of the contest? Did they meet their deadlines? Did you receive all the awards that were promised?

A: More than satisfied and thoroughly impressed. Not only did I enter the contest, I attended the screenings and Q&A's. Rachel Belofsky, the director of Screamfest, knows the genre and the people behind it.

Q: Were you given any feedback on your script? If so, did you find the feedback helpful?

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A: Joseph Stefano, the writer of PSYCHO, presented the Best Screenplay award to me. We sat down after the ceremony and talked about the script. His insight were enormously helpful.

Q: Has your success in this contest helped you market your script? Were you contacted by any agents, managers or producers?

A: After winning at Scremfest, my agent now had the ammunition to take the script out. I met with several production companies. The script was optioned by Candy Hearts Production and is now partnered with Stan Winston Productions.

Q: What's your background? Have you written any other screenplays or television scripts?

A: I'm from New Iberia, Louisiana (the home of Tabasco Sauce) and came to Los Angeles to attend Loyola Marymount University where I got my MFA in Screenwriting. After working on several productions as a PA and Writing Assistant, I got my break into the TV writing world when I was accepted into the Warner Bros. Dramatic Writing Program. WITHOUT A TRACE was my first writing credit. I wrote the episode "In Extremis" and received a Humanitas nomination. My dramatic comedy, OL'DOGS, was a finalist at Slamdance. It's in the vein of ABOUT SCHMIDT and SIDEWAYS. My dramatic comedy, GHOSTTOWN USA, won best pilot at PilotQuest. And my indie spy drama, DEAD LEGENDS, won third place at the Big Bear Lake International Film Festival. I'm producing it with my partners at UNSUB Productions. James Caan, Andre Braugher, and Michael Rappaport are committed to the project.

Q: Do you live in Los Angeles? If not, do you have any plans to move there?

A: Yes. In LA. Just a ten minute walk to the beach.

Q: What's next? Are you working on a new script?

A: I did a follow up to DESOLATE called CLIFF MONSTERS, a fun action-horror like TREMORS. Inspired by the sightings of giant flying reptiles during the late 80s, it's about a Latina deputy who must protect her small border town from creatures thought to be extinct. Recently, the Dallas-based visual effects studio, ReelFX (SPY KIDS 2, SAVING JESSICA LYNCH), is committed to the project.

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