



# EVIL ALIENS

A love letter to Jackson and Raimi...

On the eve of the UK premiere of *Evil Aliens*, director and writer, Jake West, gives Secretia the bloodthirsty details of his passion for splatstick movies.



It's a warm summer's evening and I sit in a Camden bar, sipping a Zinfandel waiting for Jake to arrive. Looking through his CV, it's impressive for a British indie film-maker. He has made a string of documentaries for DVD extras (notably for the *Evil Dead* trilogy and the forthcoming *Phantasm* box set),

a short film and one feature length movie, *Razorblade Smiles* - with his second to be released here in the UK imminently. I look up from my documents and catch sight of a dark-suited man with spiky hair pointing in my direction. "There you are!" he says with a beaming smile.

On talking with Jake, his passion for movies becomes glaringly obvious: he's positively electric when he's on the subject. His film-making roots were humble ones - studying photography, art and English A levels with an OA in film studies at sixth-form college, then on to study for a BTEC in media studies (specialising in video production) and finally a BA honours degree in Film. "Most of the people I met at film school didn't go on to make movies: the last film they ever made was their graduation film. I guess it's because film-making is really hard and it takes a long time to get a film off of the ground. Plus you need other skills: you've got to be able to raise money and talk other people in to making it, too." After graduating, Jake worked as an editor in the industry to pay the bills

and showed his scripts around in his spare time.

It was in Cannes in 2002, promoting the short, *Whacked*, that he had the idea of making a second feature film. He had narrowed his choice down to either a zombie or a sci-fi film but with so many zombie flicks being announced his decision was made for him. "I didn't want to be up against a glut of zombie movies. So I thought what is really cool about zombies? What do I like about them? It wasn't because they amble around; it was because you can kill them with complete impunity and the audience cheers when you do! They're dehumanized. I wanted to make a really fun and splattery film and I wondered whom the audience could go up against. So I started to research into the alien phenomenon: alien abductions, anal probes, crop circles and none of them make any sense. It's like they're being nasty for the hell of it! Perfect!"

The style of the movie was very important to Jake. "I really wanted to go for the feel of the movies I loved as a teenager like *Braindead*, *Evil*

*Dead*, *Evil Dead 2* - all the splatter movies - because they never held back and they really delivered for the audience. Most horror films you see don't take things far enough. Well, I wanted to take things as far as I possibly could. I wrote the treatment [outline] and did a lot of the design work in advance because I needed to work out what the aliens would look like. Then it was down to getting the money - which is usually the hard part. I tried a couple of industry contacts, and there was some interest, but after a few weeks they came back with Does it have to be a splatter film? and Can't we make it more X-files and more realistic? But that wasn't the movie I wanted to make." A while later, Jake got a call from a friend that he did some pop promos for, and, over a pint, his friend said he was interested in putting money in to a film. "I thought we were just meeting for a social! So





I got him to read the treatment and a few hours later he called me back and said he was really interested in it. He paid me to write the script and dropped the cheque around the next day."

Even though the film is set in rural Wales, the 5 weeks of principal photography was on location in London and on a farm near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. "We needed to buy crops so we could create crop

and in the end it took a year to finish the post-production."

With the film completed, the first real test came for Jake at the San Francisco Sci-fi convention, (Yet) Another Hole In The Head, in June of this year. "I was quite nervous, but the audience just went fucking ballistic - they loved it," he smiles. "We got a standing ovation and we won the film festival. In fact, they loved it so much they wanted me to stay an

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circles and we needed heavy farm equipment - especially a combine harvester," he grins. "We booked another week's shooting to be done a couple of months later as there is a sequence we do that takes place in a liquid manure tank. The aliens follow a character in to it, but we didn't know how to do it. Finally we found a proper film set with a floodable tank. Then it was just a case of making shit look like shit!" he laughs.

The film is littered with 150 digital effect shots produced in Jake's own effects facility in his flat. "My landlady, she lives upstairs, and I got a phone call from her one day confused that the electricity bill had gone up by 600% and wanted to know if I knew why! I had to confess to her - we were running computers 24/7. It was hell in my flat - fucking boiling! We had 2 or 3 people essentially doing the work of 100

extra day to do another screening. It was a very enthusiastic response."

If you've got the stomach to handle the gore and you're capable of preventing your sides splitting with laughter watching a film about a disreputable cable television team investigating a wild alien abduction story on a remote farming island off the Welsh coast - then Evil Aliens which had its UK premiere at Frightfest on August 26th - will be screened in selected cinemas over the country later in the year. Jake meantime will be promoting the film at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, and at London's Raintance festival later that month.

**Words: SECRETIA**

For more information go to:  
<http://www.jakewest.com>  
<http://www.frightfest.co.uk>

