

Guillermo del Toro infuses haunted house movie with gothic style



Director Michael Mann and director Guillermo del Toro attend 'In The Labyrinth: A Conversation with Guillermo Del Toro' at Samuel Goldwyn Theater. — AP

Haunted house movies are a Hollywood trope. But the latest about to hit our screens, by director Guillermo del Toro, promises a lush, more gothic fantasy than most, with a sentimental heart.

His "Crimson Peak", which rolls out around the world this month, borrows strongly from del Toro's love of Edgar Allan Poe stories, especially "The Fall of the House of Usher", and the 1939 film version of "Wuthering Heights", with their complex reflections on human psychology. And, as fans of the Mexican director of "Hellboy" and "Pan's Labyrinth" have come to expect, the film boasts extraordinarily rich imagery.

"I love the visuals of horror, but I don't like the mechanics of horror," del Toro, 51, explained to

AFP in an interview in Paris. "I refuse to use Judeo-Christian notions of evil... I don't make my ghosts evil, the ghosts are ultimately sad."

'An Anglo-Saxon tradition'

The director, who lives in Los Angeles and who has alternated between big-budget Hollywood popcorn fare such as "Pacific Rim" and more personal Spanish-language projects such as "Cronos" and 2006's triple Oscar-winning "Pan's Labyrinth", said his latest movie "is the first time I do a dark adult movie in English".

That was justified, he said, because gothic romance—which he describes "Crimson Peak" as being—"really belongs to an Anglo-Saxon tradition". Still, much like the house at the centre of

the movie, the screenplay took on a life of its own as production advanced, being rewritten and changed to adapt to new ideas and to casting changes for the lead characters of Edith and Thomas.

"Emma Stone was going to play the part of Edith and Benedict Cumberbatch the part of Thomas, so they were very different characters when they were going to play that," del Toro said. In the end, an Australian actress, Mia Wasikowska, and British actor Tom Hiddleston, who played the villainous Loki in the "Thor" movies, took the starring roles. They had previously performed together two years ago in another dark romance, "Only Lovers Left Alive", about dissolute vampires.

A 'very Mexican' director

Wasikowska plays a young American woman who is seduced by and ends up marrying a mysterious stranger, Thomas, and goes to live with him and his sister (played by "Zero Dark Thirty" actress Jessica Chastain) in their family manor. The dilapidated estate, coated in snow and with doors that groan as they open, hits all the notes of gothic storytelling and haunted houses. But, hewing to a theme in many of del Toro's films, "Crimson Peak" also focuses more on the female characters in an effort to make the well-worn genre "more modern and lively".

Although he is more widely seen through his Hollywood output, del Toro—who, by the way, says he believes in ghosts—sees his work as "very Mexican". "The way I accept the extraordinary as something ordinary, and the melodrama you see in all my films, all that is extremely Mexican," he elaborated.

And the fusion of the occult and history that so fascinates him, and which won him such acclaim with "Pan's Labyrinth", is still a source of inspiration. He said he would now like to look at making a film noir or "something on the Second World War... but it has to be something strange". — AFP



Andrew Lincoln, from left, Chandler Riggs and Steven Yeun attend AMC's "The Walking Dead" season six premiere fan event at Madison Square Garden. — AP

'The Walking Dead' hosts huge premiere for fans

A premiere Friday for the sixth season of AMC's "The Walking Dead" at Madison Square Garden was so big and orchestrated, its stars attended a rehearsal that afternoon to prepare. The event, which awarded fans with tickets via giveaways and sweepstakes, screened the season premiere and then held a panel with 18 cast members.

"It's a giant arena with 18,000 seats and Led Zeppelin's played here, I think Muhammad Ali fought here, so it's really a special venue," actor Austin Nichols said. "I'm honored to be here." The red carpet itself was moved inside at the last minute due to rain and wind, but that didn't keep away the fans, many who dressed as zombies, or "walkers," as they're called on the series.

"The Walking Dead" is about people trying to survive in a zombie apocalypse. Over time, it's evolved from being about people trying to escape the undead to people trying to outlast others as civilization and order has crumbled around them. "It was always going to be about

how an environment changes people," star Andrew Lincoln said. "Some turn to the dark and some try and keep hope alive."

Lincoln said that in the sixth season, however, the zombies make a comeback: "The zombies are very much back in the foreground." "Emotionally, physically, everything is absolutely relentless," added actor Ross Marquand. "They're dealing with the threats from all these different tribal factions that are trying to kill them. We're dealing with more and more zombies than ever before. It's just incredible."

"The Walking Dead" is one of the most watched shows on television and has a global fan base. "I'm from Zimbabwe," actress Danai Gurira said. "People watch it there. I've been stopped on the streets of Zimbabwe for being Michonne so, it doesn't get more far away than that, you know? It's really exciting to see that my work in the United States is embraced by my other home that's so far away." The sixth season of "The Walking Dead" premieres Sunday at 9 pm Eastern. — AP

Why 'Spotlight' is the film that will make journalism look good again

It's been nearly 40 years since "All the President's Men" turned two young reporters into stars, inspired a generation of young people to become journalists and conferred on the Washington Post Editor Ben Bradlee a national renown. Now, the best journalism movie since Alan J Pakula's classic is coming to theaters and fans of early screenings are hoping "Spotlight", opening November 6 from Open Road Films, gives a similar boost to journalists and their profession. It could also cement Marty Baron as the 21st century reinvention of Bradlee.

"Spotlight" takes audiences inside the Boston Globe's 2002 investigation into how that city's Catholic hierarchy ignored and even enabled priests who sexually abused children. Audiences have been impressed and awards buzz is rising for the film, director Tom McCarthy and an ensemble cast that includes Mark Ruffalo and Michael Keaton.

Newspaper people

But nowhere is early excitement greater than in the hearts and minds of newspaper people, who see in "Spotlight" an authentic and uplifting movie about a business that has been battered by disappearing ad revenue and an epochal shift of readers to alternative platforms. True to the story of the real-life investigative team it profiles, "Spotlight" does not have a featured star. It captures a four-person reporting team (later joined by many colleagues) relentlessly chasing down the tale, not of individuals' sins, but a system that condoned the sinners. While there is not a star turn, the team's (and the film's) moral and ethical heart beats in its unwavering leader - the editor, Baron, as portrayed by Liev Schreiber.

Those who know Baron have been tickled by how uncannily Schreiber captures the real-life editor. Previously a master of coiled machismo (think the title role in Showtime's "Ray Donovan") Schreiber in "Spotlight" captures Baron's coiled intelligence and quiet resolve. When Baron came to the Boston Globe in 2001, he had already established a reputation as one of the profession's top leaders, after stints at the Miami Herald and Los Angeles Times. A day before he walked into the Boston newsroom for the first time, Baron recalls that he read a piece by a Globe columnist on a sexual predator priest whose case had been sealed by court order.

Baron asked his new underlings why the official records had been sealed and whether the Globe had ever gone to court to challenge the veil of secrecy. "He asked a simple question that kind of embarrassed everyone who had been there. That one question really got this project rolling," said Sacha Pfeiffer, a "Spotlight" team reporter, played by Rachel McAdams. "Then he continually pushed us not to write just about priests who abused children but to write about church officials who covered up for priests who abused children."

The Baron character is an unlikely hero. Soft-spoken and understated in the extreme, the journalist evidenced none of the swagger of the Post's Bradlee, a confidante of President Kennedy, who spoke loudly and profanely and who once stopped a job hire at the Washington Post, judging of the prospective hire: "Nothing clanks when he walks."

'It was freaky'

Baron, who left Boston to become executive editor of the Washington Post in 2013, still speaks in a semi-hush. Liev Schreiber reportedly told Baron he was having trouble trying to capture someone who doesn't emote. But said former Washington Post Publisher Katharine Weymouth, who hired Baron: "He did it perfectly. He just nailed Marty. It was freaky." In one scene, the Baron character is rallying

his stressed and exhausted reporters. He offers no clarion call about freedom of information or the power of the Fourth Estate, telling the journalists, simply, that they should be proud that they are doing "good reporting." Reporter Pfeiffer laughed at the accuracy of that moment.

"Marty is very smart, very demanding," Pfeiffer said. "That can often make him scary but it also makes you want to work very hard for him. He doesn't have the swagger of a guy like Ben Bradlee, but he was a great boss. One review described him as a bad ass boss. I thought that was perfect." "Spotlight" ends with the fallout from the Globe series - priests jailed for abuse and Cardinal Bernard Law exposed for shuffling offenders from one parish to another, where the sexual abuse of young parishioners continued. Following the newspaper's expose, Law resigned as archbishop of Boston and took a post in the Vatican.

The Globe won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, considered the most prestigious of journalism's top awards. Three of the journalists depicted in "Spotlight" work at the Globe, while the fourth is at a journalism nonprofit in Boston. When Baron left the paper three years ago it saddened the staff, but signaled the launch of a renaissance at his new home, the Washington Post. Like a lot of other big-city dailies, the newspaper of Watergate had suffered massive advertising reductions, as new Internet rivals stepped forward. That led to staff reductions and lowered ambitions. But Baron's nearly three-year tenure and the subsequent purchase of the paper by Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos - who bought the paper from the long-controlling



A screenshot from the film 'Spotlight'.

Graham family - have put the Post on an upward trajectory unmatched in American journalism.

Baron has been to three screenings of "Spotlight." The preternaturally-contained newsman concedes that he has "teared up" at each showing, always during a scene in which an elderly

Globe customer reads the first expose and must confront the truth about her church. The editor pronounces himself "thrilled" with the film. "I think it's a love letter to investigative journalism and to local journalism," Baron said. "It speaks to the impact we can have if we devote the energy and

the resources to difficult work. It's kind of a reminder of our highest and most important mission." Told that he, personally, doesn't come off so badly in the film, even perhaps a bit super-heroish, Baron laughs: "A Jewish superhero!" He chuckles again: "First one ever!" — Reuters

Alyasra Fashion announces the first fossil store in Kuwait

Alyasra Fashion announced the opening of the first Fossil franchise in Kuwait at The Avenues Mall, the country's largest shopping center. The Fossil store will occupy a privileged location in Avenues - Grand Avenues. The Fossil Group plans to open several stores in the Middle East market over the next few years. The newly opened store has a complete product offering showcasing the range of Fossil product categories including watches, leather goods, eye-wear for men and women.

Fossil is an American lifestyle brand, creatively rooted in authentic vintage and classic design. Since 1984, Fossil has been creating high-quality products that preserve the best of the past while updating it for today's consumer. Fossil has grown from a small watch business to an international lifestyle brand with a strong retail and e-commerce business featuring an eclectic assortment of accessory items that

includes watches, handbags, small leather goods, and jewelry. Fossil is proud to be a growing global company, serving customers in over 150 countries. Across the globe, fans frequent Fossil stores and engage with the brand through social media, identifying with the lifestyle and impeccable design that define Fossil.

Alyasra Fashion announced, "The setting up of Fossil concept in Kuwait reflects the company's ongoing commitment towards expansion and diversification. We have the full support of our stakeholders for maximizing our business potential for Fossil. The company's success lies in a deep under-

standing of customer needs & emerging market trends. Our team carefully selects the product portfolio from Fossil, to meet the varying demands of our customers. After all, our team is our most valuable asset and leading through quality is our primary objective."

By taking the best from Fossil's brand heritage and combining it with modern innovations, Fossil's refined brand position "For the Curious Set" speaks to the most distinctive ideals of its core brand DNA, while broadening the scope to engage like-minded kin. Fossil focuses its lens on core product icons, through the filters of design, color and culture. We're taking the heart and soul of the brand—who we've always been and what we strive to create—and sharing this passion with our growing global audience.

