



Q&A with Director Mark Hartley (*Patrick*)

What inspired you to remake the 1978 film classic, *Patrick*?

I should stress that I firmly believe that not every film should be remade. Films that haven't aged a day should be left alone – as should films that are so well made that they cannot possibly be topped.

In regards to *Patrick*, I thought it was the perfect candidate for a remake. The original film is very rooted to its year of production – 1978 – and when you re-visit it in the year 2013 its shock value and suspense elements have greatly decreased. However, it has a timeless plot. It's a classic love-story-with-a-body-count. It's about a troubled young psychopath who has limitless powers, but all he wants to focus them on is making the girl he's obsessed with fall in love with him. I thought that was such a great idea and also felt that the advances in technology – and the ever-increasing invasion of privacy that has developed along with them – made the story intriguingly relevant.

The 1978 version was an iconic Ozploitation* movie. What do you remember of watching these types of films growing up?

The "Ozploitation" films I most fondly remember growing up are *Patrick*, *Snapshot* and *The Man From Hong Kong*. What appealed to me about them was that they played like the films from overseas that I liked – but had local accents and landmarks that I could relate to. *Patrick* was the first ex-rental VHS tape I ever saved-up for and bought, and I was amazed to discover that the film's director, Richard Franklin, had been a student at the high school I was attending. That was incredibly inspiring to a young, wannabee filmmaker, knowing that Richard had graduated from the same school and ended up in Hollywood directing *Psycho II*!

How does the 2013 film differ from the original?

The original *Patrick* was very much a homage by Richard Franklin to his mentor, Alfred Hitchcock. In turn, our film takes a large part of its inspiration from Richard's work and the suspense films I loved from other Hitchcock admirers (most notably Brian De Palma and Dario Argento).

The film's cinematographer, Garry Richards, and myself were also inspired by two modern Spanish horror films: *The Orphanage* and *Julia's Eyes*. We really wanted to try and capture some of the style and sensibility of those movies. So, our *Patrick* strives to be more spooky and atmospheric than the original. Re-locating the film from an inner-city medical clinic to a re-purposed convent down the coast helped ramp up the mood, as did being incredibly fortunate to recruit the legendary Italian composer Pino Donaggio (*Don't Look Now*, *Carrie*, *Dressed to Kill*) to provide the film's string-laden Bernard Herrmann-esque orchestral score.

With a career predominately in documentary (*Not Quite Hollywood*, MIFF 2008), what was the transition like directing fiction?

It's a bit of a misconception that my background is in documentary. Prior to *Not Quite Hollywood* I had directed 150+ music videos – so I had certainly spent a fair amount of time working on sets with crews, artists and quite a few actors. On *Patrick* I was lucky to be working with many long-time collaborators, including the writer, cinematographer and production designer. So, to be honest, the transition to directing a feature-length narrative was very trouble free.

I was aware that the shoot was going to be tough and tight, so Garry [Richards, the cinematographer] and myself produced a very detailed shot list and an extensive library of relevant film references. That really helped us get the film shot without delay – and hoodwinked the cast into thinking that we knew what we were doing!

***Patrick* screens as part of Night Shift, MIFF's late-night program of thrillers, horrors and dark comedies. How would you describe *Patrick*'s genre?**

Patrick is a thriller with horror elements. It's certainly a throwback, and hopefully evokes the suspense thrillers from the late 1970s and early 1980s that screenwriter Justin King and myself still love watching.

Hardcore horror fans assuming that because it's part of the Night Shift program and thus must be full of extreme content might be disappointed. *Patrick* does not have people getting their fingers shredded one by one by a potato peeler, but it proudly counts amongst its ingredients old-school prosthetics, a smattering of nudity and a fast-paced – and bloody – climax. We're also equally proud of the fact that it does not contain a single hand-held shot.

The film features a stellar cast including Rachel Griffiths and Charles Dance (*Game of Thrones*). What it was it like to work on set?

This is going to sound like a by-the-book publicity quote but it really was a pleasure to work with two very generous actors so dedicated to the project. It turned out that *Patrick* was Rachel's first genre film and she really embraced the opportunity to play a character as brittle and tortured as Matron Cassidy. She had a wealth of great ideas on how to add more "spook" to her role. Ultimately, it's a character and a performance that I don't think people have previously seen from Rachel.

It was also an absolute pleasure just to sit back and watch Charles at work. He breathed life into the character of Dr Roget in ways we could only have dreamed of when we were writing the role.

Having actors of Charles' and Rachel's talent and experience also meant that we could get away with doing very few takes. This really helped us: our shoot was tight enough, but within that schedule we only had Rachel and Charles for a limited amount of time. I can only hope that if I get the opportunity to make another film, I'm as lucky with cast.

Do you know what happened to the actor who played *Patrick* in the original film?

We tracked down Robert Thompson during the making of *Not Quite Hollywood*. He had relocated to the Republic of Oman and was teaching English as a second language to children. It was a little too difficult to fly him home to make a cameo in the remake – but the film does feature appearances from some of the original cast, original costumes and props. Behind the camera we also had some of the original crew working on the film, led by producer Antony I Ginnane.

***Patrick* will have its world premiere at MIFF. How do you think Australian audiences will react watching it for the first time?**

It would be nice if they felt that they were watching a style of film rarely made in Australia. But more importantly, I hope that they get a few thrills and spine chills – and decide that they'd like to take a look at another Australian genre film ... and then another ...

**Ozploitation was a period in the 70s and 80s, after the R rating was introduced in 1971 that saw the emergence of numerous Australian films focusing on sex, violence, horror and action.*

The [MIFF Premiere Fund](#)-supported *Patrick* is screening on the following dates:

- **Saturday 27 July, 6.30pm at Greater Union**
- **Friday 2 August, 11.30pm at Greater Union**
- **Friday 9 August, 9pm at Hoyts.**