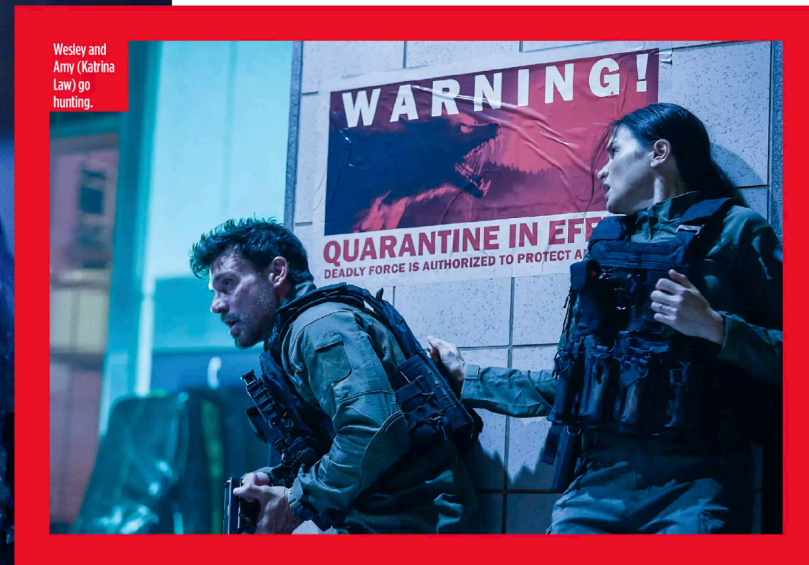


DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

# Bad Moon Rising

Steven C Miller kicks some lycanthrope ass in **Werewolves**

WORDS: STEVE O'BRIEN



Wesley and Amy (Katrina Law) go hunting.

**“We modelled the CGI after the practical werewolf, and tried to make it not look clean”**

because there just are so many moving mechanics with the animatronics, wirework, rain, and then you're adding pyrotechnics and explosions... It just becomes massive.”

Though there haven't been many action-accented werewolf movies before Miller's, the director did take some influence from its most obvious antecedent.

“I took the broodingness from *Dog Soldiers*,” he admits, referencing Neil Marshall's 2002 action-horror, “because I loved how big and muscular and cool the werewolves were, that feeling like these things could rip you apart.”

To battle a horde of lycanthropes, you need someone who's larger than life, who the audience trusts can go toe-to-toe with an eight-foot wolfman and walk away unscathed.

Here, that ubermensch is the mighty Frank Grillo, who gives the movie some serious sinew. “He's just

got grit, you know,” smiles Miller about his leading man. “Frank is one of those guys that is also just super-passionate, and you can feel that on screen. He's got heart to him and that's not always the case with the big action guys. I just lean into that, because ultimately, it's Frank Grillo versus werewolves. I mean, that should have been the title!

“Something we talked about very early on was I wasn't going to try to change him from being Frank Grillo. I just needed him to bring what he does onto the screen and battle some wolves!”

Miller isn't a director who likes to take it easy between movies, and since shooting *Werewolves* has already made another actioner, *Under Fire*. But as regards his next project, he says he'd like to try something he's never attempted before: an action-comedy.

“I love comedy, but action is my jam, so trying to mix those two would be a lot of fun,” he beams. “Those are the things that you want to do as a filmmaker, find different genres to put together – that's what I really enjoy.”

*Werewolves* is released on digital platforms on 13 January.



➔ WHILE THE PAST FEW YEARS have seen a glut of movies featuring zombies and vampires and mummies, the werewolf seems to be the one classic monster that modern cinema doesn't quite know what to do with.

“It's because they're very difficult to make and to get right,” says director Steven C Miller, who hopes to redress the balance with new film *Werewolves*. “So studios, financiers, indie filmmakers, they skew away from them. There's a general consensus that werewolf movies don't make money, but we're trying to buck the trend and do something different.”

Different, *Werewolves* certainly is. While most lycanthrope films tend to either be in the gothic horror or black comedy camp, this is as much action movie as fright flick, focusing as it does on an epidemic of werewolfery after the Earth is subjected to a “Supermoon” event.

But though the genre-mashing is new, in other ways *Werewolves* is pleasingly retro, utilising age-old processes to bring its army of

creatures to life. For his take, Miller decided early on to eschew CG in favour of practical effects, in the same way as Joe Dante did on *The Howling* or John Landis did in *An American Werewolf In London*.

“I'm an '80s kid at heart so I'm a big practical fan,” the director says. “Obviously I knew we were going to have to use some CGI, it's impossible not to, but to go 90% practical and

really throw these wolves on screen for me was crucial.”

So while there is CG in the movie, Miller says he wanted it to complement the practical effects, and that meant making sure the digital work didn't appear as polished as some CG can end up looking.

“The guys that did our CGI were so great,” he enthuses. “We modelled the CGI after the

Wesley (Frank Grillo) has evidently come prepared.



practical werewolf, and so we tried to make it not look clean. That was important for me, with the CGI elements: how can we make it feel like it's my practical werewolves? They're a little bit clunky, and that was how I asked the CGI guys to be.

“That's what the audience is gonna really enjoy – they can really feel the animals on screen, they can feel him drool. So those little CGI pieces that we sprinkle into that blends everything together.”

Of course, working with practical effects resulted in the shoot being harder than anything Miller had experienced before this. Despite being a veteran of 13 movies, he says *Werewolves*' shoot was the most challenging of his career.

“Action movies are hard in general,” he says. “On a scale of one to 10, they're an eight. Then when you add in practical werewolves it's a 10

➔ **SCI-FACT!** In his previous life as a basketball player, 7' 1" tall werewolf actor Ian Whyte had 80 caps for England.