

METRO 60 seconds



'Splat packer' **ELI ROTH**, 41, is an actor, producer and director notable for bloody horror movies such as *Hostel* and *The Last Exorcism*. *The Last Exorcism II* is out now

Why did you want to do a sequel to *The Last Exorcism*? We loved Nell's character and wanted to see where she would go from here now we've defined that she was, in fact, possessed. The first film was a thriller trying to decode if this was a girl suffering a mental breakdown due to abuse. We knew the second time they would be going in for a different scary experience.

You're the producer on this franchise. Is hard-core horror mainstream these days?

I'm always going for the widest audience possible. When *Hostel* opens No.1 and *The Last Exorcism* opens No.1, you're not doing it for a niche audience. You are the mainstream.

So you haven't toned down your sensibilities since *Hostel* and its sequel, which

helped spawn the term 'torture porn'?

I will never do anything by watering it down or selling out. Take [TV series] *Hemlock Grove*: it's a dark book but we were inspired by *Game Of Thrones*, where you can take your time with dramatic storytelling but have all the nudity and sex and violence of an adult movie. We told Netflix we wanted to make something like *Twin Peaks* and they went for it.



“I grew up thinking nothing's worse than what humans are capable of”

A pretty flat gag by Ronnie Corbett. Two guys in a café. One guy laughs at the other guy because he's on Tesco Mobile. The other guy laughs at the first guy because he doesn't have a Samsung Galaxy S4 and the best customer service on any network. The End.



There's nothing funny about



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Speaking of *Twin Peaks*, you assisted David Lynch early in your career. What did he teach you?

There are Lynchian elements in all my work. He gave me advice about directing and about shooting what's in front of you versus what's in your head. He's an amazing mentor and I introduced him to the woman who's now his wife.

Is he someone you can still go to for advice?

I try not to bug him too much. But I've known David 20 years now, so he's almost like a brother. As is Quentin [Tarantino]. It's weird that they don't know each other. They live five minutes from each other but both of them are such hermits. I'm like: 'Will you guys just be friends already?' They'd love each other.

Why haven't you directed a feature since *Hostel: Part II* in 2007?

I needed to take a break from it. When I was eight years old, I said: 'I'm going to be a director.' I achieved that and had all this incredible success and suddenly, at 35, I realised that if I didn't stop and take some time for myself, it was going to suck the life out of me.

Were you able to enjoy your success after you took your foot off the pedal?

Well, with success comes a lot of dark things, like jealousy. There were a lot of people who loved being around me when I was dead broke at 30. But suddenly, when you're hugely successful and they're not, they become incredibly bitter and turn on you. I had to step away from that.

You co-wrote and starred in the forthcoming *Aftershock*, about grisly goings-on following an earthquake in Chile. I loved [Chilean film-maker] Nicolás López's movie *Promedio Rojo* and he loves horror movies, so we wrote *Aftershock* based on stuff he told me he went through in the 2010 earthquake. Shooting that film was like a rebirth for me.

Is the grief that comes with acting worth it? Directors often get slated for acting. Directors shouldn't act if they're no good. After I acted in *Inglourious Basterds*, Quentin said: 'Now you can write great parts for yourself because you've acted with the best. You've worked with the toughest director and you made my dialogue sing.'

The *Green Inferno* is about student activists who meet unpleasant fates in the jungle. You used

a real Amazonian tribe: did they grasp they were playing cannibals?

Yes, they all wanted to be in it. We showed them *Cannibal Holocaust*. They thought it was the funniest thing they had ever seen so the kids, the old people, they're all in the movie in these tribal costumes. People in tiny thongs, painted red, bones in the nose. They loved it.

What's more terrifying to you, the supernatural horror of films like *The Last Exorcism II* or the reality-based horrors of something like *Aftershock*?

Nothing's as scary as real life. That's probably from growing up with Jewish parents who gave me a very strong Holocaust education: 'If we were in Europe, you'd be in an oven right now!' That's how the Jews dealt with that horror: by making jokes and talking about it constantly. I grew up thinking nothing's worse than what humans are capable of.

Does it drive you nuts when the US gun lobby blames film-makers for violence?

What's frustrating is how people look at the symptom, not the problem. It's hard but you can't have it both ways. If you're going to make a movie you know is going to push buttons, you can't turn around and say: 'Why are they blaming me?' But the history of the world wasn't created because of violent movies. **Matt Mueller**

The Last Exorcism Part II is out now. *Aftershock* is released in cinemas on August 16 and on DVD on August 26.