

Jeff Kirkendall's Thoughts For The Month Column

Thoughts, Opinions, Reviews, Commentary & More!

Hello and Welcome! My name is Jeff Kirkendall and I'm an independent filmmaker and actor from the Upstate New York area. This is the section of the Very Scary Productions website where I write about topics related to independent filmmaking, digital video production, acting, movies in general, horror movies in particular, my own indie movies, as well as anything and everything related or in between.

I decided to create this commentary page because I find that I often come across things that either interest me, excite me, intrigue me, or maybe just bug me. Any topic related to movies and cinema is fair game, from the most mainstream to the most controversial. For example I'll often read about movie projects that I have a strong interest in or opinion on, for one reason or another. This page gives me a forum to discuss these things. It's all about discussion and furthering understanding of our pop culture. Anyone who has feedback concerning what I have to say here, feel free to contact me (see the contact link at <http://www.veryscaryproductions.com/>).

I'd also like to point out that the following is just my opinion, and everyone is free to agree or disagree with what I have to say. Enjoy, and to all the Indies out there: Keep on Filming!

SUBJECT: ***Freddy vs. Jason*** – Will it work? - December 2002

As of this writing, the long talked-about clash of the horror titans ***Freddy vs. Jason*** has reportedly been filming for over a month. Unless you've been submerged under Crystal Lake or locked in the boiler room of a house on Elm Street for the past decade, you're probably already familiar with the project I'm referring to. For the uninitiated, "Freddy" refers to the character of Freddy Krueger from the ***Nightmare on Elm Street*** movies, and "Jason" refers to Jason Voorhees from the ***Friday the 13th*** films. Both of these characters can be considered horror movie icons, and both have had long cinematic careers. Now they are coming together. The movie that people have been buzzing about for the last ten years or so is finally a reality.

Before discussing the plot of the film, or whether or not the characters from the two franchises will gel together in the same picture, I'd like to first talk about some other factors involved in determining whether or not this movie has a chance at being successful. Making the assumption that the movie will be good – and New Line Cinema generally doesn't disappoint when it comes to their horror pictures – the question is whether or not a lot of people will go to see it. On the surface it would seem to be an easy question to answer. Fans have been buzzing about this idea forever; therefore everyone is going to rush to the theater when it comes out and the movie is going to be hugely successful. For a fan of both franchises like myself, it would be nice to believe that, but unfortunately I don't think it is a given. As I mentioned previously, ever since the early 90's when ***Scream*** came out, the horror market has changed dramatically (see *TFTM August 2002*). Most teen horror films today concentrate on being hip and at least somewhat self-referential. Even for franchises as old as the ***Halloween*** series, the style seen in recent films differs drastically from earlier entries. One can already see this influence in the reported casting of ***Freddy vs. Jason***. While Freddy is still being

portrayed by Robert Englund, who would be considered a horror veteran, the lead heroine is a young singer from the dance band Destiny's Child. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it does confirm the fact that this is not going to be a movie populated by eighties genre actors and actresses, which would most likely only appeal to hardcore horror fans like myself. It's a good bet that this movie is being aimed more towards the youth audience, or, put another way, a young mainstream crowd. The reason I bring this up is that over the years I have heard a lot of discussions about whom, if anybody, from the previous movies (like Heather Langenkamp or Lisa Wilcox from the earlier *Nightmare* films) would be involved here. As I always suspected, these older genre veterans won't be in this movie. Therein lays the potential problem: in aiming towards today's teen audience, will this movie alienate the hardcore horror fans and people who actually grew up watching these franchises? Also, even with the casting of today's fresh faces, will the young crowd be interested in seeing these "older" horror icons? The chilly box office reception to **Jason X**, the excellent tenth installment of the **Friday the 13th** franchise, makes the answer to these questions very uncertain. One can only hope that the movie will offer enough familiar elements from the earlier entries in these franchises to appeal to the hardcore genre fans, while still being innovative and fresh enough to attract today's youth audience. This is a delicate balance to achieve indeed.

As far as the plot of this movie is concerned, the big question would seem to focus on how these two characters can exist together in the same movie, and who will stand up against them. The first part of this question centers around the fact that, while both franchises have been enormously popular over the years - especially the *Nightmare* films - the two series really are like apples and oranges. Even though many people group these two franchises together regularly in conversations about slasher pictures, they couldn't be more different. The **Friday the 13th** movies are a good example of the basic slice and dice slasher formula. Victims are dispatched in various gruesome ways with various blunt instruments by a silent and seemingly unstoppable killer. The **Nightmare on Elm Street** movies on the other hand are what might be best described as violent supernatural soap operas. The reason I say this is that the *Nightmare* films, while having some obvious elements in common with movies like **Friday the 13th** and **Halloween**, just have too many notable differences for them to fit comfortably in the same category as the masked slasher pictures. Without getting into a lengthy discussion of these differences, one obvious distinction is the fact that Freddy, unlike the killers in many other pictures, is quite vocal throughout the proceedings. This adds greatly to the drama of the movies. Another difference would be that the *Nightmare* films center much more on their heroines than other movies. There is a certain gender dynamic and sexual tension at play in the *Nightmare* films that isn't seen in other horror movies. While there are female victims in these movies, as in other horror pictures, women characters often occupy a higher place in these films than in other franchises. It's worth noting that when Freddy is vanquished at the end of each movie, it is *always* by a woman. And lastly, and most importantly to this discussion, is the fact that much of the action in the *Nightmare* films takes place in the dream world. This definitely complicates matters for the new film. Blending the back woods stalk and slash style of **Friday the 13th** with the suburban surrealism of **Nightmare on Elm Street** will be a formidable task. How Freddy and Jason will act together on the same plane of consciousness is the question I have heard everybody asking. We can only wait and see how these two disparate styles will blend together.

The last question is who will stand up against these two fiends. If New Line Cinema decides to follow the pattern of their ***Nightmare on Elm Street*** franchise (which I believe they will), it will be a resourceful young heroine who reaches deep down inside to find her inner strength and vanquish the evil. Can the year 2003 (which is when it is reported this movie will open) provide us with such a hero? Will she be able to measure up to past Elm Street heroines like Nancy Thompson and Alice Johnson? Only time - and the writers and casting directors - will tell. We can only wait to find out. The movie everybody is supposedly eager to see is finally on the way. Here's hoping it turns out to be well worth the long wait.