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## Aliens, monsters and killers welcome — meet the mind behind Midnight Madness

Sept. 22, 2010 | 9:25 a.m.

The floor popcorn from the 2010 **Toronto International Film Festival** has all been swept up, but before we close the book on the signature cinema event, Hero Complex contributor **Michael Giltz** brings us a look at the fanboy spirit of the festival.

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**Midnight Madness**, a nightly dose of horror, sci-fi, Hong Kong action and other genre favorites, is one of the most distinctive and entertaining features of the Toronto International Film Festival, which just came to a close this weekend. The mastermind behind it is Colin Geddes, who has been programming the celebration of B-movies for 14 years (one year as co-programmer and the rest solo).

"Every night at midnight at the film festival we show some weird, wild film from around the world," said Geddes, chatting just hours before the screening of the Hong Kong police actioner **"Fire Of Conscience"** brought this year's program to a close. "We kind of throw the art-house pretensions out the window. The films are just there to entertain and have fun. Of course, it's still art. But it's kind of much more of an entry level to enjoy the excitement of a film festival."

2010 was a banner year for Midnight Madness, with nine out of the 10 films world premieres and several of the movies making major noise in the market. **"Super"** (starring **Rainn Wilson**



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as a regular Joe who turns himself into a caped crusader) was the first movie snapped up at the fest, and “**Insidious**” (starring **Patrick Wilson**) was another success story.



Rainn Wilson in

“The program started in 1988 and was designed initially for those films that don’t seem to fit the festival definition,” said Geddes, who lives in Toronto with his girlfriend and is known for his enthusiastic, crowd-pumping introductions to the movies he’s selected. “Over the years, we’ve had a lot of remarkable talent start there and break out of there. **Peter Jackson, Eli Roth, Takashi Miike** all started in Midnight Madness. This year we’ve got Takashi Miike with ‘**13 Assassins**’ in the Masters program. He started in 1997 with ‘**Fudoh: The New Generation.**’ It’s nice to see this director who comes back every year with a new film be recognized as the master he is.”

**Mark Hartley**, the director of “**Not Quite Hollywood**,” a documentary about the Aussie exploitation-film business that played Midnight Madness, and “**Machete Maidens Unleashed**” (which played this year in the main festival) is another talent who appreciates the boost Geddes provided to his work.

“What’s great about [Colin] is he really cultivates a sense of camaraderie amongst the filmmakers,” said Hartley, who revealed that Geddes was the first person he sent a rough cut of his current feature. “Toronto is a *gigantic* film festival, and you can easily get lost there, being a filmmaker there. But the way Colin organizes things, there’s a really collegial feel about being part of the films that he programs.”

Geddes beamed at the idea of succeeding in creating a bond among the artists and between them and the festival.

“I try and make them realize, you’re now alumni,” he said. “We want you to come back. If you bump into this director, shake his hand because he broke his cherry at

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Midnight Madness as well. The films that we get, the directors are a certain breed, a certain type that like this material and are genuine film lovers.”

As is Geddes, who is thrilled that TIFF allows him to program movies outside of his bailiwick of Midnight Madness. He’s helped select Russian musicals and heartfelt animated films (last year’s “**My Dog Tulip**”) for the main festival.

Geddes is also the director for **ActionFest**, a new festival launched in April in Asheville, N.C., that is dedicated to all things action. Geddes was a savvy choice, because he immediately gives the festival a legitimacy and access to his Rolodex of top genre directors around the world. The first edition gave a lifetime achievement award to **Chuck Norris**, but stars are not the focus of ActionFest.

“This festival is about the people *behind* the camera,” Geddes said of **ActionFest**. “The stunt people. Let’s give the second unit and action directors credit because there’s no Oscar for stunts or second unit. Without those guys, films are nothing. We’re really trying to make a case for that. These guys need to get their respect or due.”

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So yes, Geddes loves all types of movies. But he's more likely to have read the parody "**Pride and Prejudice and Zombies**" rather than **Jane Austen's** original classic. And for a long time to come, he'll be there every year at Toronto, touting his latest find in what he deprecatingly calls glorified show-and-tell.

Maybe, he suggests, it'll be time to hang it up "if I'm *still* doing *Midnight Madness* when I've got a paunch and I'm balding and I call myself Uncle Midnight." He ran with the vision: "*I'm **Uncle Midnight** – the kids like the boobies and the gore,*" he growled in an imitation of a cheesy late-night local-TV horror movie host.

He laughed and added: "I'll do it as long as it keeps being fun. I never want to waste their time or money. If I can't get excited about it, how can I select it? I like that my passion shows, and hopefully it'll be a little bit contagious."

– Michael Giltz

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