



Interview: Cast and crew of urban horror Comedown, including Kidulthood director Menhaj Huda

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By Ed Owen

Urban horror Comedown premiered at Manchester's Grimmfest film festival last week – and MM caught up with some of those behind the film.

Kidulthood director Menhaj Huda, producer Dominic Norris, Adulthood star Jacob Anderson and actress Jessica Barden, who has recently been in blockbusters such as Hanna and Tamara Drewe, all took time out to discuss Comedown, slasher movies and what makes a them jump.



HOODY HORROR: Comedown

First off, Huda explained his latest film.

"It's a story about kids who set up a pirate radio station in a tower block, and start to party with drugs, cash, you name it. However, there's somebody else there, and that's how the action starts," he said.

He gave cryptic hints about this 'somebody else', explaining that though the kids are familiar with the building – they all used to live in it – since they left, he's 'completely redesigned it' to 'lure them into a trap.'

As a result of this, the majority of Comedown's action involves these characters – amongst them Anderson and Barden – attempting to avoid and survive the murderous psychopath, played by Geoff Bell.

The Everywhere and Nowhere director was keen to point out that while the film contained elements of the so called 'slasher' genre, it was something more than this.

"It's different. It's not just a slasher. It's more of a thriller and slasher.

"There's not really enough of a body count to make it a pure slasher. It's more about tension and the characters."

Norris echoed the director, describing *Comedown* as nothing like the ghost or monster stories which dominate this genre, believing it to be 'quite real'.

He added that it was nothing like the so-called 'torture porn' films which have become a part of the horror landscape in recent years.

Huda used his famous cult hit, the hoody-following *Kidulthood*, as an example for how he wished to film it.

"What I wanted to do was take the realistic world of Kidulthood, and take it into horror territory."

He added: "It's more about tense scares, waiting for something to happen and letting the audience's imagination run away with them. It's not just about gore or shocks."

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Anderson agreed with his director. “There are no supernatural elements at all. The guy-Geoff Bell’s character, could exist in the regular world- he’s insane and intelligent.”

Barden revealed she had joined the production due to this sense of realism.

“I didn’t see it as a horror,” she said. “It’s about reality and relationships. When you’re young, you’re going to do things, like go into abandoned buildings.”

When asked how she found acting in a more urban setting for the first time, the 20-year-old was keen to point this out as one of the reasons why she joined the cast.

“My earlier films often had older casts, but with a younger cast it was different. It’s more about relationships between characters.”

By comparison, Anderson is an old hand at these roles and is often asked to play hoody characters. Yet he doesn’t mind re-treading old ground.

“They have a quality for everyone, whether young or old, and that’s why I’m drawn to them.

“Admittedly they can become stale, because there’s so many – but I was drawn to the cast and crew here because they’ve made sure it hasn’t.”

On the topic of characters, both Anderson and Barden were keen to describe their respective roles –Adulthood star Anderson plays Lloyd, who he paints as a ‘good guy’.

“Lloyd is someone who’s been given a bad ride- he’s a product of his environment,” he said.

“He’s just come out of prison and wants to get away from that life, but he just keeps being dragged back into it by Gary and Jason [played by BAFTA Rising Star winner Adam Deacon].

“He’s always acted like a kid, but now he wants to be a grown-up.”

Yet Barden wasn’t quite so sympathetic about her own character.

“Kelly is like the one person in every group who always wants to have a good time.

“She lives for boys’ attentions, but is really naïve – she’s one of those people that when you watch a horror, you wonder: ‘Oh my god, why are you doing that? Why are you going back there?’”

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Despite its impressive pedigree, Comedown is also notable as most of the cast’s first attempts at horror.

Though Huda was a newcomer to the genre, it’s had a profound effect on him – he’s signed up to a similarly toned project in Soul Survivor, which he described as a ‘horror-cum-detective story’.

“I’ve got more horrors up my sleeve- not to spoil anything!

“But horror was never the highest priority on my list, but I’d definitely like to do more after this – not like franchises but single film that’d be tonally quite different.”

Anderson has previously starred in horror films, but is always cautious about which films he chooses.

“On horrors, when you’re on your first day you can get worried – I’ve seen a lot of horrors before that were really schlocky.

“But working with Menhaj was really reassuring, as he wanted to do something more subtle.”

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It shouldn't be very surprising; Huda is a massive fan of John Carpenter films, such as Halloween and The Thing, being influenced by the directing legend's preference for anteing up the tension.

He's also an Oxford University graduate in Engineering, and believes the skills learnt in his education are easily transferrable to the silver screen.

"Film's a very technical medium, so it was easy to make the jump."

Thought the 22-year-old looks set to explode onto a bigger stage – he's recently been cast in HBO's fantasy juggernaut Game of Thrones – he would definitely like to come back to the genre if he could work in such skilled company.

"It's really interesting to do things like that [Game of Thrones] but obviously I can't tell you much more!

"But I'd love to do more horror films, if the right script – like this one – came along."

While both Huda and Anderson are big horror film fans – Anderson has a soft spot for 70's pulpy horror, particularly the 'grindhouse stuff with the bright red blood' – Barden admitted she's not well-suited to watch the genre.

"I don't really watch horror – no-one will go to the cinema with me because I get so scared!

"I'm disgusting to watch these films with, but I don't like going to the cinema by myself.

"But I did watch Paranormal Activity recently – it was really scary!"

This continued when Huda listed his favourite horror films – The Last House on the Left, The Shining and Rosemary's Baby.

Upon hearing the last one, Barden almost jumped out of her seat: "I've seen that, it was terrifying!"

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