

MOVIES

Richard Donner

As moviegoers watched the barrage of blockbuster sequels this summer, they might have asked themselves whom they had to thank for this trend? Spielberg? Cameron? Try 73-year-old Richard Donner. From *Superman* to *Lethal Weapon*, Donner has had a knack for directing the film that becomes Hollywood gold—the franchise.

Donner, who grew up in New York City, began his career directing classic TV series like *The Twilight Zone* and *Gilligan's Island*, but began his foray into film with the 1961 Charles Bronson film *X-15*. From then on he has segued between film and TV work.

Of all of his movies, the one that Donner's fans may remember most fondly is the unlikely kid action-adventure flick *The Goonies* (1985). "This is the film that seems to resonate more than any other I did... In fact, Spielberg and I are going to make a second *Goonies* and we'll bring back the cast as adults."

One popular sequel-laden Donner franchise almost never made it past part one. "Originally, Mel's character was supposed to die in the first *Lethal Weapon*, but I'm glad we decided to let him live."

Now, after five years away from the big screen, Donner is digging for gold again, with Paul Walker in the time-travel-fest *Timeline*. "I've always wanted to do a Michael Crichton book, and when I read this one I was immediately excited," says Donner.

Timeline is produced by one of the most successful producers in Hollywood, who also happens to be Donner's wife—Lauren Shuler Donner. How does the couple work together without straining their relationship? "It's kind of like asking how porcupines make love... Answer: very carefully!" Donner laughs. "You try not to bring it home, which is why... Lauren [usually] works with directors she's not married to."

Richard Donner continues to make great films. But it isn't awards or fame that inspire him. "When I read a script, I'm trying to see if it's something that I'm going to have the enthusiasm to make," Donner concludes. "I'm just happy to have my wife like my work and have my audience laugh if it's a comedy or cover their eyes in terror if it's an action piece—that's your Oscar in life." —E.B.

Big Pictures *Movies you'll love and the people who make them.***The Last Samurai**

Warner Bros. December 5

Director: Edward Zwick

Starring: Tom Cruise, Billy Connolly

In 1870s Japan, Civil War veteran Captain Woodrow Algren (Cruise) attempts to train the samurai in modern war tactics, but he gets seduced by the honorable code of the ancient warriors.

**Big Fish**

Columbia/Sony November 26

Director: Tim Burton

Starring: Tom Cruise, Billy Crudup, Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney, Helena Bonham Carter

A son (Crudup) tries to understand the legacy of his dying father (Finney) by visualizing four different tales that his father has told him.

**Timeline**

Paramount November 26

Director: Richard Donner

Starring: Paul Walker, Frances O'Connor

Based on the novel by Michael Crichton about archaeology students who travel to the Middle Ages in a 3-D fax machine to rescue their professor trapped in fourteenth-century France.

**Out of Time**

MGM October 3

Director: Carl Franklin

Starring: Denzel Washington, Eva Mendes, Dean Cain

A small-town sheriff (Washington) has to stay two steps ahead of his own police force as a double murder investigation points to him.

**Intolerable Cruelty**

Universal October 10

Director: Joel Coen

Starring: George Clooney, Catherine Zeta-Jones

A slick divorce lawyer (Clooney) falls hard for a client's ex (Zeta-Jones), who may or may not be setting him up for a windfall con job.

**Veronica Guerin**

Touchstone October 17

Director: Joel Schumacher

Starring: Cate Blanchett, Gerard McSorley

True story about the titular crusading Irish journalist (Blanchett) and how her exposés into brutal drug wars in the '90s led to her murder.

**The Texas Chainsaw Massacre**

New Line October 17

Director: Marcus Nispel

Starring: Jessica Biel, Jonathan Tucker

A remake of the classic '70s horror tale with rusty-chainsaw sound effects now in Dolby Surround Sound!

**The Haunted Mansion**

Disney November 26

Director: Rob Minkoff

Starring: Eddie Murphy, Dan Knotts, Terance Stamp

Based on the classic Disney attraction. Murphy is a workaholic father who is taught the value of family by a ghost.

**Scary Movie 3**

Miramax October 24

Director: David Zucker

Starring: Charlie Sheen, Anna Faris, Denise Richards

Spoofting everything from *Signs* to *The Matrix*, nothing is sacred in this third installment of the comedic franchise.