

MONDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT OCTOBER 8, 2012. Table with columns for time slots (3:00-1:30) and rows for broadcast stations (PBS, KTVI, NBC, etc.) and pay channels (HBO, MAX, etc.).



DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC./MCT Sparky of Disney's animated "Frankenweenie" is Victor Frankenstein's dog.

'Frankenweenie' Burton At Home With Oddballs And Misfits

BY GINA MCINTYRE © 2012, Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — The sound of brass and wind instruments rang out with a triumphant blast, echoing down a corridor and around a hallway where Tim Burton was seated inside a pavilion where a traveling exhibition devoted to his new movie, "Frankenweenie," was on display.

Such are the perils of promoting a movie at the happiest place on Earth. On a sweltering Sunday afternoon, Burton was fielding questions at Disney's California Adventure about his latest stop-motion animated film, a feature-length revision of a short he made in 1984.

The black-and-white 3-D movie, which opens in theaters Friday, keeps the same premise: A young boy from the suburbs borrows a page from Mary Shelley's famous mad scientist to resurrect his beloved bull terrier Sparky after he's hit by a car.

"Frankenweenie" features plenty of homages to classic monster movies — those produced by Universal Studios in the 1930s, atomic horror from the 1950s; there's even a cameo from Christopher Lee as Dracula in one of England's Hammer Film productions.

But looking down on the miniature artifacts represented in the "Art of Frankenweenie" exhibit — replicas of record players, plastic Christmas decorations and resin grapes scattered among the sketches and models — Burton made sure to note that the movie geek references were just window-dressing for a very personal story about processing grief and coping with loss.

"I was a boy once," Burton, 54, said of his personal investment in the story. "I had a dog. It was based on that first kind of pure relationship. It was quite unconditional, your first love in a way. He also had this thing called distemper — they said he wasn't going to live for very long, and he ended up living quite a long time, but there was always this specter hanging over. You're a kid, you don't really understand it, but that's where the whole thing sort of stemmed from."

"Frankenweenie" has almost all the trappings that have become so synonymous with Burton's works, though frequent collaborator Johnny Depp is conspicuously absent from the film's cast of voice actors.

The movie unfolds from the vantage point of a lovable outsider named Victor Frankenstein (Charlie Tahan), another in a long line of misunderstood protagonists dreamed up by Burton, who dwells in a high-contrast realm of misfits and oddballs.

Victor's facial features and sartorial choices hearken back to characters such as Jack Skellington ("I have a very limited drawing style," Burton said), and he shares the Pumpkin King's penchant for unintentional mischief-making.

A solitary — though not unhappy — boy, Victor spends his time inventing and playing with his best friend, Sparky. He finds an ally in his consonant-laden science teacher Mr. Rzykruski (Martin Landau) who, with a single lesson, inadvertently gives Victor the idea to resurrect his dog after tragedy strikes.

Before long, the other children on the block, eager to make their own mark at the upcoming science fair, are using electricity in ways Benjamin Franklin never intended, and soon a monster squad is terrorizing the town. Burton said he

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TUESDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT OCTOBER 9, 2012. Table with columns for time slots (3:00-1:30) and rows for broadcast stations (PBS, KTVI, NBC, etc.) and pay channels (HBO, MAX, etc.).

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