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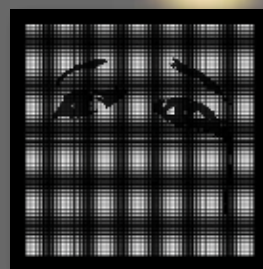
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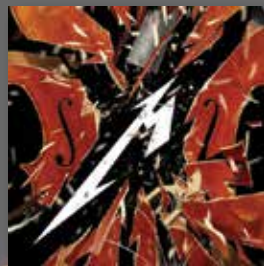
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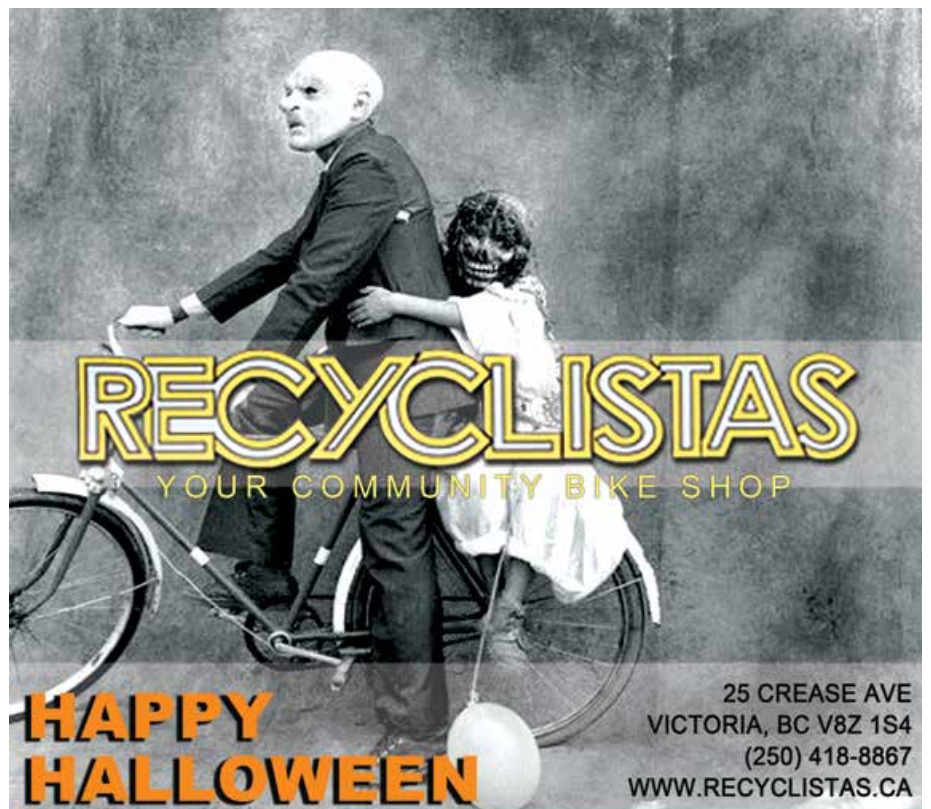
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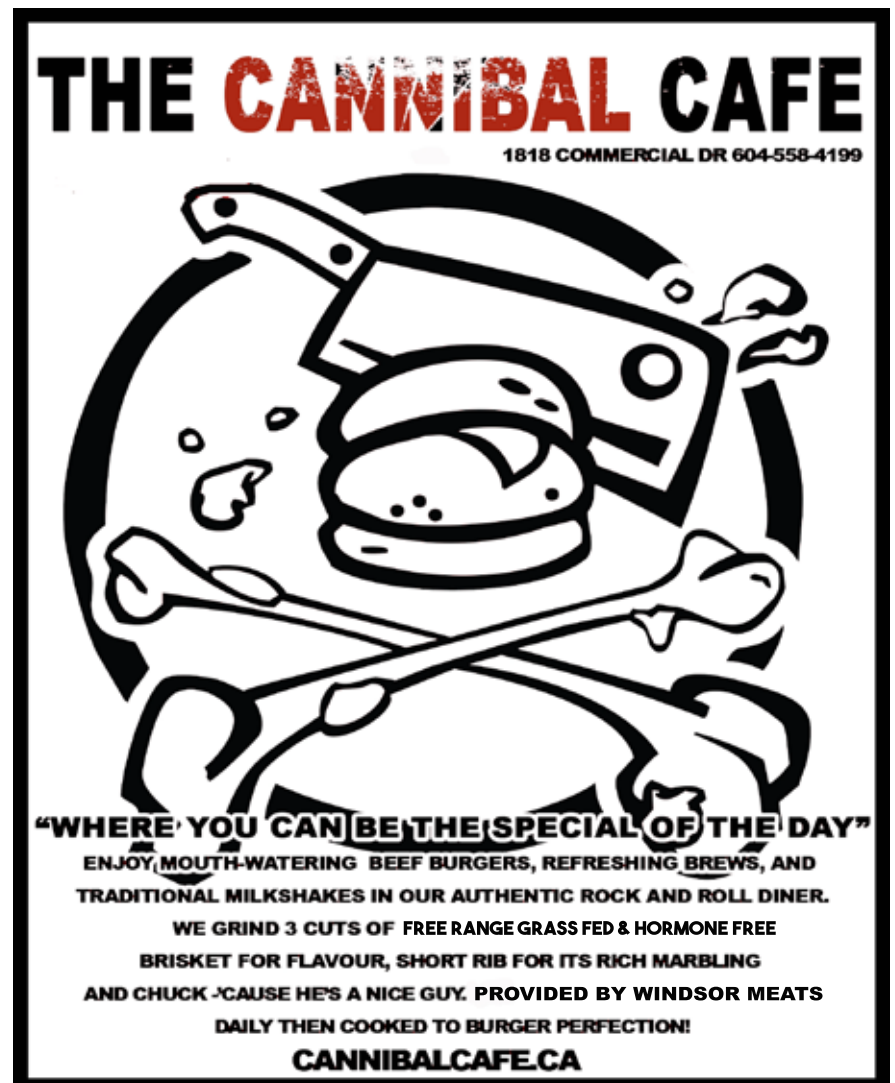
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BADHUMANBEINGS

BadHumanBeings

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

BHB: This is the whole band speaking now and we are infamous for drinking too much and not getting laid, jk. We've had girlfriends. But we play heavy music, goof around while going off on long tangents on stage. We have been told we talk too much, but that's part of the discharm.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who are you and what are you all about?

BHB: Every member has been a bad human being from the start. Travis Durand (bass/vocals) and Lee Herald (guitar/vocals) founded the band drinking beers at a local jam spot called the Hillside Whorehouse. We liked each other's musical styles, Travis being more on the punk side of things and Lee being more on the metal side, and also shared a similar twisted sense of humor so we decided to put 'em together in a pan and cook 'em up real nice... We have had three drummers all progressively with longer hair. Our current long-haired goddess of a drummer is Matty O'Toole and he's here to stay.

AU: Who else is in the band and what would it say on their Tinder profiles?

BHB: Our tinder profiles read as follows...

Lee: (currently single and this is actually on his Tinder profile, which is also currently

active) I'm 6'2", I'm in a terrible band, I cook good delicious food, I like things and stuff is cool too.

Matty: Vegan, straight-edge, Christian, celibate, book-worm. "What's your favorite bible passage?"

Travis: help

AU: Describe your sound for someone who has never heard you yet.

BHB: Say there's a band party with Refused, Pears, Red Fang, Melvins and NOFX. Everyone pukes into the same microphone, except there's no one there to hear it. Kinda like that.

AU: What's new in the

Badhumanbeings camp? Are you working on new material right now?

BHB: We have just released our second EP titled *Sittin Pretty*, and now we're sittin' pretty on 14 brand new songs that have yet to be recorded. Looking to get into the studio as soon as possible. Also, recently released a music video on YouTube for our song "Fuck You."

AU: When and where can we expect to hear it?

BHB: Probably by summer 2021 I'd guess. We'll have it up on all the usual platforms as soon as it's done... here's hoping we will be back to playing shows by then and can hook you up with physical copies as well.

AU: What themes/topics does your music

explore?

BHB: We'll do everything from pondering philosophical ideas and discussing the pressing moral issues that face our current society to Axl Rose and fart jokes.

AU: What are some examples of your songs and what are they about?

BHB: To name a few from our new EP: "Bolt to the Head" is about factory farming. "Skinny Brad" is a play on the title held by Fat Mike of NOFX. "Mao Please" is a song about the delusions of dictators. "My Souffle" is about preparing food for shitty servers... it's real deep. The last song is called "Fuck You," it's about... well, you know... fuck you.

AU: Once the Apocalypse is over when can we see you play live next?

BHB: Once the apocalypse is over, we, like phoenixes rising from the ashes, will, as a band, band together... and play the first dive bar we see... for next to no money and/or no people.

AU: What is your opinion of 2020 so far?

BHB: It's like the entire population of earth was one person seeing how long they can hold their breath for while getting sprayed with a fire hose full of fucking shit. To put it lightly.

AU: What's the Victoria heavy scene looking like these days? Any up and coming bands you'd like to give a shout out to?

BHB: Mostly, the scene crawled back into dingy basements and isolated farm lands... for now... Shout outs to SkinCrawl, REK, Vic City Rejects,

VICTORIA'S LOCALS ONLY

Wet Cigarette, Torrefy, Fairfield Fucks, Storm of Sedition, Mar Mar and the Gritz, and our buddies Chunkasaurus and BackTalker from up island.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year or any crazy stories you can share from a past Halloween?



BHB: Get dressed up as a greased-up banana and try and find a peach. As for crazy stories, one year I, Matty, dressed up as Bender from *Futurama*. I had a couple of stomped/taped screecher-oo's on inventory and when I went to light one off, it ended up blowing up right underneath an approaching cop car that I didn't notice. He ended up letting me go after a while so it was a good night overall.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

BHB: We are all actually very lovely people and are currently STD Free!

AU: Any final words for

our readers?

BHB: Epstein didn't kill himself, bathroom stall mints taste terrible, Trump is a human Cheeto, check out our shit, WEST SIIIIIIIIIDE!

AU: Where do we find you online?

BHB: Spotify, Napster, Deezer, iHeartRadio, iTunes, Apple Music, Fet life, Google Play, Shazam, Bandcamp, MediaNet, Hipster Bait

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VHS Collecting: The Modern Relevance of Home Video

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

My name is Cory Gorski and I reside in Toronto, Canada. While I would argue that I'm neither famous nor infamous, a few people do know me from the Canadian industrial band Volt 9000. However, my most recent project is the book *VHS Collecting: The Modern Relevance of Home Video*.

AU: Tell us about the book you just released.

CG: The title spells out its main theme. However, it goes into heavy detail on video store history, distribution companies, genre films, the tape collecting community, bad movies, and everything in-between.

AU: What was the genesis of the idea to write this book?

CG: Like many, I grew up with the video store being a huge part of life. It was not only our main source of entertainment but acted as a community hub. When video stores went out

of business, a big chunk of that community was lost with it. Fortunately, many film fans happily scooped-up their old tapes and over time a new community was built. After hosting a tape-swap in Toronto last year, I was inspired enough to document what I've learned from the subculture.

AU: How is the book broken down? What are the subjects you cover?

CG: The book is broken down into fourteen chapters, beginning with the rise and fall of the video store, and ending with tips and tricks for new collectors. Everything from exploitation

films to the collecting philosophy is discussed in detail. It even briefly touches on VHS pricing — emphasis on the word briefly. It's not a price guide. It's more of an analysis on why certain films hold a special place in collectors' hearts.

AU: What are you hoping people will walk away with after reading this book?

CG: Hopefully, people will realize that not only is there a vibrant tape-collecting subculture, but that it can be a healthy and productive one. The vast majority of collectors are friendly and helpful folks who are more than happy to welcome new people into the community. They're preserving a lost segment of our entertainment, culture,

and multimedia history. Their collections are breathtaking time-capsules that offer instant nostalgia the minute you walk in the room.

AU: What is it about VHS that means so much to you?

CG: In its heyday, VHS forced us to consume entertainment differently than we do today. You based your movie choices on artwork and a short synopsis. You

had a limited and finite selection to choose from and got recommendations from friends and video store clerks. You even had a time-limit to watch your film before having to physically return it! Sometimes you were forced to watch bad movies, which in turn gave us a greater appreciation and understanding of film. Don't get me wrong — it's great to have a thousand reviews and near-infinite selection in today's digital film world. However, it's also easy to live in a perfect film bubble...complete with digital algorithms and perfect-score ratings that influence your choices to a fault. VHS was the wild west for film nerds. It's a different world now and with every evolutionary step forward there's something left behind.

AU: Who did the cover art for the book - is there original art throughout the book as well or is it mostly photos?

CG: I designed the cover of the book myself. A short photo section is included which is mostly private collections, along with a few historical references.

AU: How many movies only have VHS releases and have never been released on DVD or Blu-ray? Do you think VHS is important in terms of archiving film history?

CG: It's impossible to put a number on how many films have yet to be given a DVD/Blu-ray/Digital release. Quite a few never released past VHS/BETA. For that reason alone, it's important to have folks creating archives of our film history. Some distributor-only collections (which is when you only collect releases from a single distribution company) might be the only collections of which have ever existed outside of the original manufacturing warehouse. Much of that history was never documented either — most companies threw out all their index records. It's up to present-day collectors to piece it all back together and solve the mystery as to who-released-what.

AU: What are some of your favorite obscure VHS horror movies?

CG: I'm a big monster and zombie movie fan. VHS releases like *The Return of the Aliens Deadly Spawn* sit on my top shelf, in all its big-box glory...or should I say, gory. Much of the cover art was not family-friendly! Other times, the cover art pushed your level of curiosity to the limit. The artwork on the cover of *The Milpitas Monster* (specifically the Trend Video release) made you wonder what the heck the monster was even supposed to be. I've amassed a solid collection of zombie-flicks too, ranging from the obscure (*The Alien Dead*) to mainstream classics (*Dawn of The Dead*) to the downright absurd (*Night of The Zombies*).

AU: Is there a certain special movie you are still trying to track down on VHS?

CG: Honestly, no. I guess I'm spoiled because I've found all my "bucket-list" tapes over the years. However, the great thing about collecting VHS is that it's a near-endless endeavour, limited only by physical space. My personal collection is

technically never finished, despite having all the key pieces I remember renting as a kid.

AU: What are some of your favorite VHS covers of all time?

CG: I think *Return of The Living Dead* has some of the most iconic VHS cover art ever. Plus, it's actually reflective of the film! Too often distribution companies would put together amazing cover art (*Night of Horror* and *Revenge of The Zombie* from Genesis Home Video come to mind) which had nothing to do with the actual movie. Other pieces, such as the cover art of *Shockwaves*, *Chopping Mall*, and *The Stuff* simply screamed out, "Rent me!" while sitting on the video store shelf. I also remember the light-up LED eyes on the cover of *Dead Pit* leaving my fellow grade-school friends and I completely enamoured.

AU: Can VHS collecting be lucrative financially for certain titles? Are horror movies the most sought after?

CG: Some titles are worth quite a bit, sure. However, it's important to collect titles you want, not titles other people claim are worth money. That being said, horror movies are worth the most. It's no secret. There's a reason why most thrift-stores are picked clean of horror and exploitation flicks. The fans are rabid.

AU: Is VHS a nostalgic format because so many people remember spending so much time at the video stores in the past?

CG: Well, I've never met a VHS collector that didn't spend hours at their local video store. It was a huge part of our lives. Every continent on earth was renting and watching VHS tapes. The influence it had on society was bigger than we think, because it's not just VHS collectors who remember those stores so fondly, but almost everyone. Even the casual-to-moderate movie-goer can still remember the experience of walking around with a tiny bag of popcorn, perusing racks of VHS tapes on a Friday night. I don't think it's melodramatic to say that video stores were an integral part of the community and the primary source of entertainment throughout the 80s and 90s.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year. What's the craziest Halloween you ever remember and why?

CG: While this year (2020) might be a wash-out, I've had tons of amazing Halloween experiences. The best of which were when my friends and I would dress head-to-toe in costumes and scare trick-

or-treaters as they came to the front door. Being scared, especially when you know you're safe, can be an exhilarating and even funny experience. I believe it was writer Jack Kilborn who said, "On a rollercoaster you can hear both screams and laughs." I think Halloween is the one night where that sentiment can be universally celebrated.

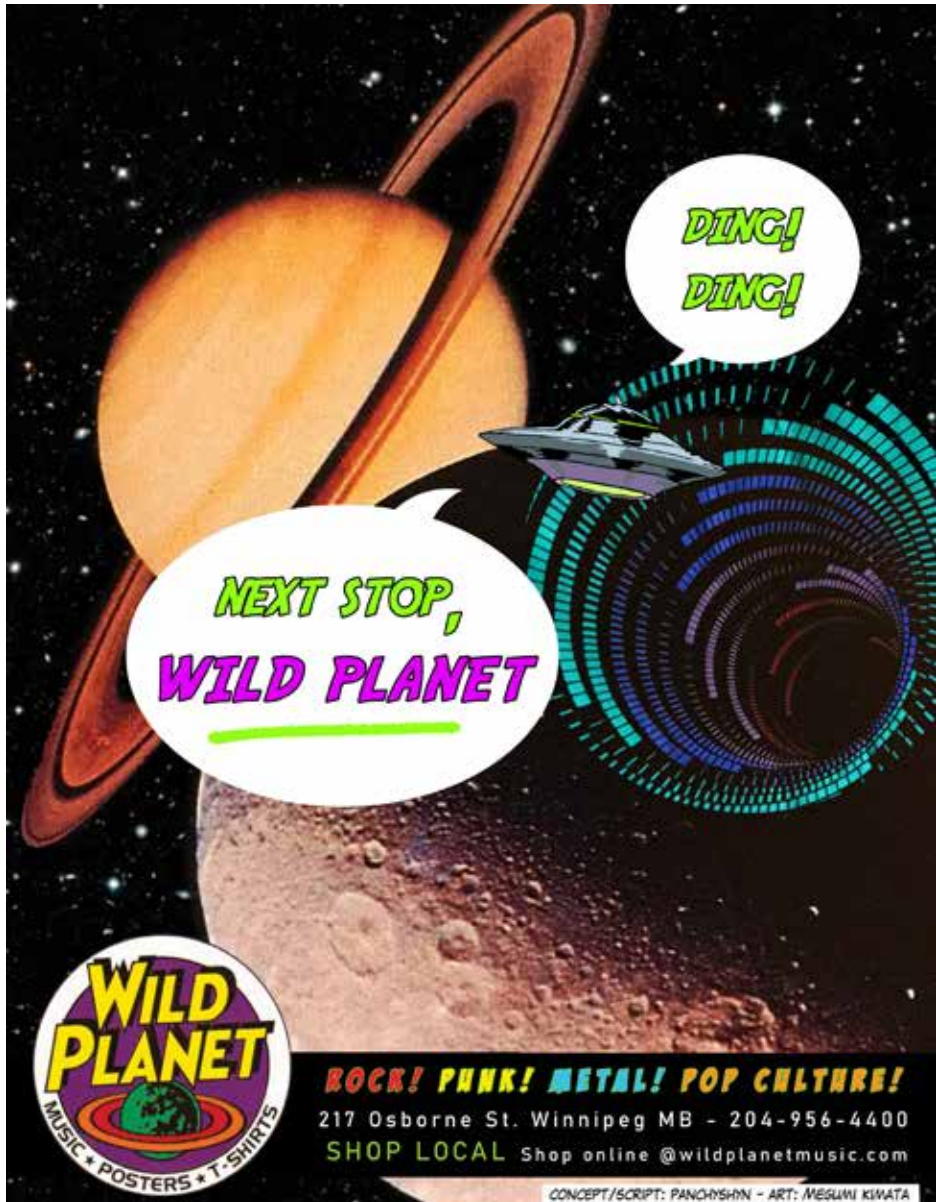
AU: How do people find you online and where can people buy the VHS Collecting book?

CG: You can find the book on Amazon. I'm also on Instagram as "VHScollecting" and reachable via email (gorski983@hotmail.com)

AU: Have you written any other books in the past? Any other books planned for the future?

CG: This is my first book. I do have plans to write in the future. In fact, one of those ideas directly ties into the same topic...but on that note I can say no more!

@VHScollecting





Famous Monsters Speak: Billy Hopless and Jackson Phibes Rise Again!

Interview by Billy Hopeless

From when I first bought a Color Me Psycho cassette in the late 80s and the debut Forbidden Dimension CD, and played a few times on late night science fiction double feature rocking horror shows with in the 90s, I've always felt a cruel kinship with the ghoulish garage surfin' Albertan monster squad leader, Jackson Phibes. Now, many years later, I'm pleased to offer you this trick and treat conversation to fill your blow mold jack-o-lantern minds .

Absolute Underground: Hallows again J.P., it's been a while since we last saw each other back in 95 at the Starfish Room. So what's the cabinet of Dr. Calgary been up to lately?

JP: Many years, holy crap! Probably exactly the same as every other hapless musical fool in These Unprecedented Times: I wrote and demo'd the next FD album.

And I keep playing the riffs over and over at bedroom rock volume until I'm even squirrellier than ever before!

AU: Speaking of current cabinets tell us about yer running mates in yer mad monster party.

JP: Bass boss Virginia Dentata is the most recent

addition, and she's been with us since 2014. She is married to drum boss P.T. Bonham and supplies us with gruesome and terrifying bottom end (and baked goods). She also is spreadsheet savvy and manages all the merch/money etc.

P.T., the masked mysterioso, has been with FD since 2006 as well a few stints before then. He was also with me in Color Me Psycho way back in the Dork Ages.

AU: Killers! How do explain your over 30-year career of good music for bad people?

JP: I try not to think about it! I guess, it's always been my personal musical and artistic outlet, so as long as I'm around, some kinda FD will probably be around. Forbidden Dimension is maybe a cooler name than The Tom Bagley Retaliation.

AU: Cool for creeps, after so many years, how do you keep the bodies (of work) fresh and not rotten cliches like the Only Jerry era Misfits or so many bands in the horror rock genre that just pic any horror movie of the Netflix and chiller playlist?

JP: I think I always approach songs from a story-telling perspective and I try to dig a bit deeper than I used to when this thing started in '88! Not a lot of tunes about Rockin' at Graveyard Beach anymore, more kinds of specific scenarios.

Sometimes I will still just do a musical impression of a pre-existing thing, but if I going down that road, I try to pillage ideas from not super-obvious sources.

Obscure-ish pulp stories, or even just the image on the cover of some long forgotten paperback can provide imagery for lyrics. Weird things I mishear other people saying is another source (thanks, old age!).

The last album (*Muchas Moscas* 2018) had a song ("Sweet Cheryl Kermit") that was actually from a bizarre auto-correct, so I grafted that name onto the story of a society-climbing Etruscan mummy. I also like the lyrics to have a punchline at the end.

AU: I've always been a big fan of masks. I love your Don Post punk song "Tor Johnson Mask" and since its Covidoween this year, what type of masks do you wear for personal protection?

JP: Thanks for likin' Tor! Unfortunately my Tor mask has started to crumble to dust, so I had to retire it. Virginia D. made my fave PPE mask of all which has a print with Viewmaster reels all over it. Other than that, a big latex Christopher Lee Mummy mask comes in handy for grocery store/beer runs.

AU: Kharis king cans, eh, mummy needs his medicine. Now what are six sinister seasonal scream fright flicks that our readers might not have seen that get the Phibes five-scar rating?

JP: With these lists, I always trot out

1) *Curse of the Demon* (1957) because I never get tired of it, so there's that!

I've been eyeballin' a lot of older Japanese movies, some just on YouTube lately, so I'll say:

2) *Vampire Doll* (1970 - really good Arrow Blu-ray of that)

3) *Black Cat Mansion* (1958)

4) *Kuroneko* (1968) - another Japanese ghost cat revenge potboiler

5) Various episodes of Boris Karloff's *Thriller* (such as "Pigeons From Hell" and "Masquerade") always get trotted out around this time of year...

6) *The Dunwich Horror* (1968). Certainly not the most faithful Lovecraft adaptation, but I love the mood and dime-store psychedelic effects. And Sandra Dee gets nekkid. Might be a body double though, it's kinda gauzy.

-bonus vid-

7) *The Paul Lynde Halloween Special*, of course!

AU: How do you go wrong with that Kiss the wicked witch and center square to block! Movies always need snacks so what are you handing out for trick or treats at the hilarious house of Forbiddenstein?

JP: Zuke's Mini Naturals (rabbit recipe) and Benny Bully's (beef liver small bites)!

AU: My Hellhound Bean approves! Ok welcome to the night gallery! (No I'm not talking about the long dead but not forgotten Calgary live venue) as well as your macabre music, I've always loved your mad art. Is there anywhere where your deadly drawings are hung to dry before our bleeding eyes or can be purchased for our own demonic decorating?

JP: All my artwork, for fun or even just some regular joe commercial stuff, can be found on my Flickr page: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tombula/>

AU: Lastly since I just dug up your body of art and I hear you're blooding some of the artwork on the cover of this issue, can you conjure a quick sketch of you as Count Chockula and me as Frankenberry to accompany this interview ?

JP: ...doin' it...

AU: Oops, just about forget our reader question , little Grant Lawrence wrote in: Will there ever be a Color Me Psycho reunion? I don't know if you can conjure Aleister Hexxx to ask him but he misses that desolation sound from back in the 80s?

JP: Probably not. Two Color Me Psychos are in FD, we're still buddies with Al Von Zipper and everybody kinda went on and had more fun doing the stuff we did after that band split. It was fun band to be in at the time, but ya can't go home, Little Grant. Ya can't go home.

Plus, it was all about the big heads of hair.

Well, wasn't that scary kids, see ya next time on monster chiller horror theater!

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Forever & Ever Again: Culture Shock (1980–82)

Brian Maitland (vocals), Steve Quinn (guitar), Gord Badanic (bass), Rob Tomkow (drums)

The Way I Remember It*

By Gord Badanic

In 1978, I was in grade 10 (age 16) at McPherson Junior High in south Burnaby, BC. I played French horn in the school band and was diligently taking the Royal Conservatory exams for classical piano.

Rob Tomkow (grade 9, age 15) played drums in the school band, and Ross Edwards (grade 10) played the school band's electric bass.

Being viewed as mostly harmless, we were given free rein of the band room at lunchtime to play loudly. Rob on drums, me on piano, and Ross on guitar. Ross really wanted to recreate the Who, so he talked me into buying a bass so I could play that AND the French horn, just like John Entwistle. Rob was already a fan of Sandy Nelson (who was

one of Keith Moon's influences), so drumming like Keith Moon was not a big leap, and Ross roped in a neighbour of his (Steve Quinn) to sing.

In terms of influences, Ross introduced us to the early Yardbirds, Kinks, Who, Sonics, and a lot of 60s garage. Steve was into the Ramones, the Rezillos, the Sweet, and the Jam. Steve was in grade 12 (presumably only age 18). That put him in the same graduating class as Michael J. Fox.

After some extremely tedious debates, we called ourselves The Zoo (after the Who bootleg LP *Who's Zoo*). The Zoo only did a couple of gigs around 1978-79, including Gary Taylor's Rock Room, playing mostly Who and Kinks songs, and a few originals (such as the now thankfully long-lost "Tina Peel Has Teen Appeal").

By late 1979 though, our musical interests were already going in different directions: Ross wanted us to sound mostly like the Yardbirds, and the rest of us were becoming more influenced by the Undertones, Buzzcocks, and the Jam. Ross left The Zoo to form the Roadrunners, so Steve switched to guitar and Brian Maitland (editor of the *Noise for Heroes* fanzine) was brought in to sing, mostly because he had the snappiest mod wardrobe in town. First we changed our name to the 4 Imposters, but soon settled on Culture Shock (after an awesome song by the Rezillos splinter group S.H.A.K.E.). We still played a lot of Who and Kinks, and began to write originals. To fill out our sets, we also played stuff by the Pointed Sticks, the Jam, Stiff Little Fingers and later, Agent Orange (when they put out their first records).

In the world before the internet, learning about anything outside of your school, the three

channels on TV or the newspaper took an incredible amount of time and effort: black jeans had to be mail-ordered from the UK, local fanzines and imported magazines talked about music you never heard on the local radio and could rarely buy, and hand-written notes

mailed to other music fans around the world was the only way to communicate with them. Just like texting, but with a 4-5 week gap between replies.

Brian (as editor of a fanzine) knew a lot about guitar/punk/pop, and he was always receiving records to review, and telling us about new bands like the Moondogs, Wipers, Nasty Facts, Stepmothers, CH3, and Salvation Army. I wrote back and forth with Chris of the Freshies (later and better known as the comedian Frank Sidebottom), and also the good folks at the Dead Kennedy's label, Alternative Tentacles (AT). In later years, when I helped run the Zulu Records label, I became the Canadian distributor of AT as well as Black Flag's label, SST.

At this early stage though, and despite our enthusiasm, the truth was that we were barely able to play our instruments, and it was a major victory for all of us to arrive at the end of a song at the same time. It seemed to us that more ambitious goals like making records or playing real shows were utterly unachievable, calling for a level of skill completely out of our league and requiring contacts and resources that we could never hope to find in South Burnaby. So we were mostly content with learning dozens and dozens of songs we liked, for our own amusement, and then going out for burgers and fries after practice. Aim high, they always say.

By 1980 we did finally start to play live: at first,

mostly at friends' crowded, sweaty house parties, then (despite our clearly being very underage), we somehow managed to get a few shows at

licensed venues such as The Smilin' Buddha.

In 1982 we recorded six original songs in a real studio in an afternoon: two we put out ourselves on a 7" single. We could only afford to manufacture 300 copies, and hand-printed the covers in two batches (the silver ones and then the orange ones). The single went to #1 at CTR

(the local campus radio station).

We started to get gig offers – hall gigs, headlining a political rally, and even playing with our heroes the Modernettes (again, at the Buddha). The local community cable TV station made a half-hour special about the band. But just as we began to get a little wind in our sails, we broke up.

We were all busy and in university. Of the 300 records, it turned out that we had pressed up at least 200 more than anyone wanted (the remainder, sadly, were accidentally donated

to the Burnaby dump). These days, the single is now one of the most hard-to-find artifacts of the Vancouver punk scene and, perversely, worth over \$500 each. Too bad that I have only one copy myself. Several years later, another song from the recording session ("Stay Away") appeared on the *Undergrowth Vancouver 84* compilation cassette tape, released in 1984.

The other day, my kids asked me to show them how to play "Blitzkrieg Bop." I told them I didn't know what they were talking about.

-GB







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subculture

By *wendythirteen*

I'm exhausted.

From doom scrolling.

From right wingnuts.

From standing up to the shit flinging bullshit of every 'ist' and 'ism' ilk.

I cannot relax.

There is a black cloud hovering around my brain.

I'm still in the fight.

I really fucking hope, that on November 3rd, America rids itself of those fascist shitbags currently repping as Republicans. People argue online that as a Canadian, I need not care, but I do. The world needs a wakeup call to send these emboldened assholes of reckless hate back under their rocks. Their rhetoric is not humanity, empathy or love. Totally unacceptable.

Their blatant, festering bollocks crossed the border into Canada, inciting our collective of placard carrying pukebags flaunting their 'rights' while potentially endangering citizens with their ridiculous anti-mask freedom utterances. I'm fucking tired of it. Seriously, fuck them. Wear a mask. Give a shit about your neighbour and

communities, you selfish assholes. The hypocrisy of your garish privilege is insulting to every person of color who has been and continues to be systemically recolonized.

I saw a meme the other day chastising people who block or delete people on social media with a different "opinion." It's not a fucking opinion, it's a matter of morality, and being a decent human. Equality and human rights dictate that fact.

'Nazi punks fuck off' isn't lipservice. It's the truth. Fuck your white supremacy and imagined slights. You fucking suck.

I'm exhausted. Every morning I wake up wondering if my little old lady kitter died overnight. It's been a trying month. She is just so frail and thin. It fucking sucks. On the days she hides I'm an even bigger ball of dreading stress, usually accompanied by tears. A part of life with pets is the certainty of a lesser lifespan death. Your love for them isn't enough. Sigh.

It seems to be an analogy for the state of my livelihood in the uncertain live music world lately. Some days I wonder if I'll ever throw another show. Every scroll through social media of people wantonly partying it up and taking selfies like there is no pandemic enrages me. The more this happens, the longer live music is sidelined.

I really feel for the shuttered venues trying to hang in there. Thank fuck the Canadian Government stepped up with financial support for the creative phase four workforce. Serious gratitude. Phantom deficit be damned. If that money is good enough for corporations, it's deserved by all citizens. At least the citizens stimulate the direct economy, instead of the cash being hoarded by the wealthy muckity mucks offshore. Trickle down is a farce.

Shout out to all the go getters trying new live performance platforms. I have yet to watch a live stream except for one Bishops Green partial test set. I think a decade of being saturated on social media glimpsing shaky drunken shit recordings from gigs has ruined any inclination to watch without sighing heavily. When you lived your music witnessing life for two decades at mega decibels, shitty computer speakers on a small device doesn't really cut it.

Luckily. As a soul soother, I see live jazz every Saturday afternoon during my one shift a week door gal-ing. My last shift was under populated. It seems the non stop coverage of the reckless American tangerine allegedly contracting Covid

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finally clicked at the Grey hair day care. The ones that did show hand sanitized with zero prodding and I didn't have to reprimand for mingling once. A refreshing attitude change of that similar demographic that I've been butting heads with all summer trying to enforce the health protocols. You are not invincible to a deadly virus.

I pray my depression and impending grief converts to elation sooner than later.

Stay safe.

Stay home as much as possible.

Keep a safe distance from others.

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CURSED BLESSINGS



Cursed Blessings Records

Cursed Blessings Records is an upstart label owned by Al Nolan of the Almighty Trigger Happy

infamy.

Their first release will be the debut 12" by Toronto-based hardcore outfit Dragged In on Oct 25th.

Dragged In will be doing the eastern Canadian dates with Sick of It All and Agnostic Front when live shows resume.

The next album release will be a

7" by Seized Up from Santa Cruz, California, featuring members of Good Riddance, BL'AST and the Distillers. Seized Up's new 12" is out now on Pirate's Press Records in the USA.

Finally, there will be a 30+ band digital compilation coming out October 31st, exclusively on the Cursed Blessings website, featuring bands on their roster (Dragged In, Fully Crazyed, Almighty Trigger Happy, Choices Made, No More Moments) as well as Random Killing, Hotel Murder, Gag Order, Stand Against Fear, Evil Age, Revival and many more. They will also have their "Digital Safety Pin Series," which is a monthly series of digital releases, exclusively on their website. The first band featured is London Ontario's Hellaphant (power pop punk), followed by Toronto's Cola Heads.

New releases slated for 2021 include brand new Almighty Trigger Happy in 2021 (first new music in over 20 years), which also marks the bands 30th anniversary, as well as a 7" for Siksika Alberta's No More Moments.

"This band is the REAL deal, like Black Flag for our era," says label manager Doug Smart, "We are super stoked on these guys!"

www.cursedblessingsrecords.com



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Ricin Hider Spooks Up Some Fun on EP Crawlers

By Dustin Wiebe

"I just wanted to write horror movie soundtrack music. You know, spooky stuff," Anthony Frank explained when asked about his instrumental solo project, Ricin Hider. You may recognize him from Regina's hard rocking, progressive rock n roll trio Black Thunder, but this is a decidedly different affair. While shades of heaviness and odd time signatures can be found in this material, it favors layered synthesizers, drum machines and samples over heavy guitars and acoustic drums.

Ricin Hider started in January 2019, drawing on the influence of Italian composers Goblin, particularly their work in the films *Dawn of the Dead* and *Profondo Rosso*. Horror movie scores (such as Fabio Frizzi's *City of the Living Dead*), 16 bit Super Nintendo music (*Castlevania 3*) and the French synth wave band Carpenter Brut were also notable influences. His list of influences makes sense. You can hear elements from all of these interwoven into the project's sound.

Last year Frank chipped away at putting together songs for Ricin Hider's first release, *Morte Del Campo* (translating to Camp Death). It was intentionally released shortly before Halloween of last year. The concept is it's a soundtrack to a fake movie he envisioned in his head about a group of kids going to camp on an island and are slowly sacrificed by the counselors. Frank acknowledges that, "the concept is super morbid, but that's what I'm going for: horror." Each track paints a picture of the different scenes in the "movie" that sounds both vintage and modern.

The recently released EP *Crawlers* meets at the crossroads between menacing and fun. While it doesn't have an overarching theme like *Morte Del Campo*, Frank still thinks of the compositions in relation to film, likening the exceptional "Nothing Ellis to do But Die by the Shore" to the upbeat song you'd hear in a horror movie overtop of a montage. The track channels Gary Numan while making reference to Canadian film score composer Howard Shore and Brian Ellis, a funky synth player/songwriter formerly of the band progressive rock band Astra. It's also noteworthy it features vocals as well being an upbeat and catchy, prone to get caught in your head piece, standing out amongst the rest of the Ricin Hider catalogue.

At the moment Frank has no plans to take this project to the stage, explaining, "What am I going to do? Have the backing tracks play through the P.A. while I play leads on synth? No thanks." He is already hard at work on the next release, so keep your eyes peeled for that in the future. In the meantime you can hear both of Ricin Hider's releases on their bandcamp page, as well as on the usual suspects of streaming services in the near future.

<https://ricinhider.bandcamp.com/>

PHOTO CREDIT: Beth Liber

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Drug Sauna

Interview by Chad Persley

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Cory Martinez: You're talking to Cory from Drug Sauna and we're a two-piece doom band that only plays IN a van. We are Deano - bass/vox and Cory - drums.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who are you and what are you all about?

CM: There isn't a ton of history, actually. Last year we had this idea to start a band and only play in a van. We were set to play Vantopia 7 (yearly van festival hosted by Vandits VC) before we even knew if it would work. So the day before Vantopia came, and we thought we should probably get together and at least write one song. That was our

first practice ever. So we wrote a ten-minute song and learned a cover... still not knowing if we'd even physically fit in the van. Turns out it worked! Haha!

AU: Describe your sound for someone who has never heard you yet.

CM: We're slow and heavy. Just drums and bass. Dirty and doomy caveman shit.

AU: What exactly would you say is in the drug sauna?

CM: Drugs, doom, smoke, and lights. That's about it.

AU: What are your preferred drugs to

bring into the drug sauna?

CM: Deano looooooves the weed. I prefer mushrooms. But we'll pretty much do anything.

AU: What can you tell us about your latest EP release on vinyl this month?

CM: It's a one sided color 12" picture disc. It's the most arrogant way we could think of releasing this thing. It was recorded on the front lawn of OCL Studios IN a couple vans by Josh Gwilliam. There's some video of it on our YouTube channel, as well as a short documentary our friend Jason Delisle made.

AU: What themes/topics does your music/lyrics explore?

CM: We like drugs and getting drugged. We also like boogie vans. That's pretty much it.

AU: What is significance of the Van in your live shows?

CM: Well the van IS the show. We both belong to

Vandits Van Club in Calgary, so we just incorporated our favourite thing into the band. People always say, "Oh that's so cool, you can just pull up and play anywhere!" Yes and no. There's more to it than that, it actually takes some planning and shit. Our natural predator in the wild is power, and cops.

AU: What can you tell people who do not know what Vanning is?

CM: Vanning is just rocking out in your custom van. It's like hot rodding, but there's a bed in back. Or in our case, a BAND!

AU: Will we ever see you take this show on the road?

CM: Maybe! But we're both self employed and 100% busy all the time. Plus we're wicked old, haha. But you never know! We're obviously gonna continue to play in and around Calgary. But I can't see us getting too far from home. We've had tons of offers to play in Europe and the States, so maybe in the spring.

AU: When is the next time we can see you play live?

CM: The thing with Drug Sauna is, that it's a seasonal band. We were gonna play the Vanuary (yearly Vandits VC fundraiser) show this past January, but it was -25°C that night. Fuck that shit. Now that the record is out, we'll see what happens in the spring. Hopefully the world is more back to normal by then.

AU: What is your opinion of 2020 so far?

CM: Here's my Yelp review for 2020: 0/10 worst

CALGARY CARNAGE

year. Would not recommend.

It's obviously been a bad year for just about everyone. But what are you gonna do, right? Wear the fucking mask, and then soon we won't have to wear the fucking mask.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year or any crazy stories you can share from a past Halloween?

CM: I can't see it being a regular Halloween this year. I'm pretty excited for sexy Coronavirus costumes, though.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

CM: It's funny, people think playing in the van is such a cool idea, but it's as cool as it is stupid. The logistics of doing a Drug Sauna show aren't that of a regular band that just show up

to the club with their gear, plug in and play. It's a ton of work. We have to build the show from the ground up. Jess Panther is our sound girl, so she probably does the most work setting up and tearing down the PA every time. The whole thing is a giant hassle, haha!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

CM: Get in the fucking Drug Sauna!

drugsauna.bigcartel.com
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Nightbreed

The Cabal Cult

Interview with Restoration Director
Russell Cherrington

by Ira “Berserker” Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?
I'm Russell Cherrington. I guess I'm most well known in the Clive Barker world as the person who took *Nightbreed* and turned it into the *Cabal Cut*, which is a version of a film that actually has more in common with the novel *Cabal* than with the film that was released in 1990 called *Nightbreed*. It's basically a project that I started on my own which led to a Director's Cut of *Nightbreed*. Then the *Cabal Cut* that was released on Blu-ray, and it led to 50 screenings around the world, which made the world interested in that film again. The other side of what I do is in the music industry. Right now I'm working on a film called *A Band of Brothers* and it features Armored Saint, Metallica, Anthrax, Queensrÿche, and it features all the big industry players. People from the kind of 1980s Los Angeles heavy metal scene.

AU: When and how did you first become aware of the works of Clive Barker?
RC: Clive Barker came into my life around the time that he published *The Damnation Game*, I read it and loved it. So I went and bought all six *Books of Blood* and read one a day for a week. Then all of a sudden I read about a film called *Hellraiser*. I remember going to the cinema and watching

Hellraiser three times in a week. I bought the book *Weaveworld* in 1987. I think that is probably why I fell in love with the work. *The Books of Blood* are amazing, the ones I bought initially had Clive Barker covers so I started to see his artwork at the same time, which was revolutionary as well. It just made me go, "Wow, this guy isn't like anybody else." And obviously I read the blurb on the cover of the *Book of Blood* where Stephen King said, "I have seen the future of horror and his name is Clive Barker." I was reading King, James Herbert, and Dean R Koontz, but Clive was much more of a literary author than all of them put together. The way he wrote a sentence, the way he constructed words, the way he made you feel about these characters was somewhat different. It was much more classically written, and he'd reference things like *Doctor Faustus* by Marlowe. Clive's scenes were very powerful and very interesting. He just seemed like a kind of visionary in that field.

AU: You were involved in adapting a Books of Blood story, "Jacqueline Ess: Her Will And Testament," why did you choose that story?
RC: I actually also did an adaptation of a story that should have been in the *Books of Blood* but was left off called "Coming to Grief". But when it came to "Jacqueline Ess," I think that it had an impact on me when I first read it, and it never left me that story. It was always my favourite *Books of Blood* story. I wanted Juliette Binoche to play Jacqueline Ess. I didn't want to go down the stereotypical horror route. Julian Sands, Craig Sheffer, Doug Bradley were going to be in it and a lot of the people that worked with Clive were in it as well. Eventually it found a home at Raven Banner films and because of the financing deal they were forced to bring Canadian director and proceeded to completely change the script until it had no bearing on what I'd written so I had to step away.

AU: Did they ever complete the movie?
RC: No. Truth be told, I feel it lost all its impetus after I was not going to be the director anymore.

AU: When did you first meet Clive Barker?
RC: In 1987 when he did his book tour for *Weaveworld*, I went as a fan with a book and I met him. Then every time he did a book signing after that I always went. After a couple of years he came to know who I was. Then when *Hellraiser III*

was made I was in Los Angeles in 1993. I went to a book signing and Clive looked up saw me and said, "What the fuck are you doing here? You live in Manchester." Then he got a little piece of paper, wrote on it and passed it to me. It was his phone number and it said, "Call me tomorrow, come up to the house and I'll show you around." From then on we were friends.

AU: I first met him at a book signing too. I was getting him to sign my arm to get it tattooed and he ended up drawing on me. So I have original Clive Barker art tattooed on me.
RC: That's super cool because you are now the equivalent of a walking *Book of Blood*, aren't you? His art is great, it's fantastic. I love the fact that his work shifted more towards art as time went along.

AU: How did you first discover the lost film elements you would need to create the Cabal Cut of Nightbreed?
RC: Well, because I've always been friends with Clive and everybody that works Seraphim Films. I used the pass through LA two or three times a year. One trip I went to LA and Mark Miller, Vice President of Seraphim Films at the time, said, "Oh, we've got these two VHS tapes with *Nightbreed* written on them. We don't know what's on them because they're in PAL VHS", which is a British Standard. "Do you want to take them back to England and see what's on them?" So I took them home and watched them, it was actually the work print of the first version of *Nightbreed*. I went WOW, I'm actually watching the film that Clive said existed, but nobody's ever seen. It was in a really rough form. My editor Jimmie Johnson and I got together and watched it and we thought if we cut the movie up and cut this up, get the soundtrack and do a little bit of overdubbing, we might be able to make a film out of it. We looked at Clive's first script and said, "Jeez, it's all here!" We spent two months editing it, and we put it together and we ended up with like a two hour thirty-eight minute cut of a movie that nobody had ever seen before in the world. And it was like I made it for me and Clive Barker, that was it, I didn't make it for anybody else. I printed the discs, put Seraphim Films on it. I took some of the original poster artwork that wasn't used and I made a cover, I wrote a little spiel on the back cover, then I gave it to Clive as I was leaving after one of my visits. A day later, Clive rang me up in tears, saying he'd watched it twice and that this was the film that he had always intended to make. Then a festival came along and they wanted to screen *Nightbreed*, and Clive said I've actually got something better, a proper version. We screened it, and that was the beginning of the *Cabal Cut* screenings and Occupy Midian campaign.

AU: I understand you have found even more lost footage since then?
RC: There is a version that exists now that's been fully restored, with only about 45 seconds of workprint footage, and the rest of it is from the original film stock. It's a three hours and ten minutes long version that nobody has ever seen.

AU: What is it about Clive Barker's work that speaks to you the most?
RC: Clive writes about the secret self. So he writes



about what's inside you that you really want to be, that really speaks to me. You can embrace all the things you want to do. You can make them happen and you can change your life and the world you live in. That's what his characters are essentially about, especially the protagonists. I also empathize with the notion that we shouldn't look at the bizarre and the alternative as being the weird, we should actually look at the straight people as being the most fucked up. Clive does a really good job of presenting that argument.

AU: What's your new music documentary?
RC: It is a film about the band Armored Saint. But it's also about the LA metal scene from about 1983, to about 1990. There's lots of people like Metallica in there, but Armored Saint are the catalysts. The film is called *A Band of Brothers*, because they've known each other since seventh grade, and they're still together now at like 66 years old. So you can imagine their journey together for almost 50 years. They've weathered every storm. The movie's made with a narrative heart, it's in the final

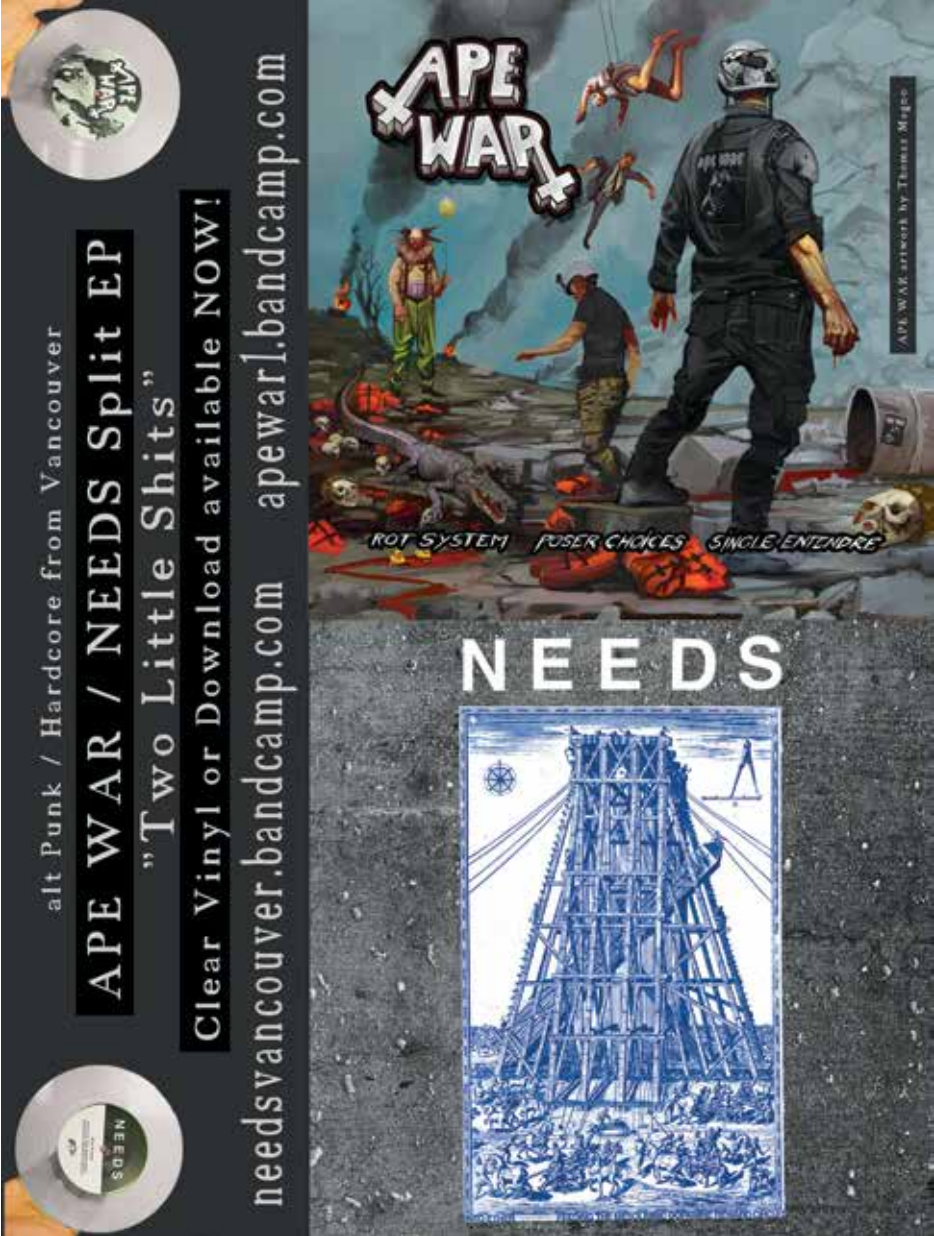
stages of post-production. **AU: Are there any other Clive Barker projects you'd still like to see adapted for the screen?**
RC: I adapted *The Damnation Game*. So if somebody wants to give me \$20 million... **AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?**
RC: It's my favourite day of the year. I like to go for walks in the twilight, in graveyards and by big old mansions in England. To me, Halloween is about the old principle of All Hallows' Eve, so I celebrate in a very pagan way.

AU: You are Strange & Beautiful Productions?
RC: Yeah, that's me, Strange & Beautiful Productions. I started back in about 1993. I've directed music videos and movies and written scripts under that name for 27 years now.

AU: Has the Occupy Midian movement accomplished its goal?
RC: I don't know if the goal has been achieved yet. If we could release the three hour *Cabal Cut* of *Nightbreed* that would be amazing.

AU: What will Clive Barker's lasting legacy be?
RC: I think Clive Barker will always be known for *Hellraiser*. I also think future generations will study his literature and realize he was one of the greatest imaginers of the 20th century.

www.facebook.com/russell.cherrington
www.clivebarker.info
www.clivebarkerarchive.com





Nightbreed

The Monster Beneath The Face
Interview with actor Hugh Ross who portrayed the character Narcisse in Clive Barker's Nightbreed.
by Ira "Horrorshow" Hunter

AU: What acting roles are you best known for?
Hugh Ross: *Nightbreed*, of course. *Trainspotting*. *Sharpe* with Sean Bean. *Bronson* with Tom Hardy. But the bulk of my work has been in the theater.

AU: How did you first get involved in acting?
HR: I'm an archetypal stage struck child really. In school I went to a dramatic society that did a Scottish pantomime, I'm from Glasgow originally. Then I came to London and went to drama school at RADA and that was the beginning of it.

AU: Had you heard about Clive Barker's plays at the The Dog Company theatre group?
HR: Yes I knew Clive socially, that's first of all, I met him through some friends in London. I went to see various of his plays. The reason I was cast in *Nightbreed* was that he was a good friend. One of Clive's best qualities is he is extraordinary loyal. Lots of the people who have been in his movies



have been people he's worked with before he was even remotely famous. He came to see me doing a pantomime, and on the back of that, because pantomime is very in your face kind of stuff, my role as Narcisse came out of that, really.

AU: What were your first impressions of Clive?
HR: Quite shy, self-effacing and fun. Fascinated by the macabre. I had no idea just how successful he was going to be. I remember the *Books of Blood* coming out and being very impressed and then *Hellraiser* happened and then the rest is history.

AU: Did you have to audition for Nightbreed?

HR: No, Clive just offered Narcisse to me. He'd seen me doing this in your face theater, and thought that would be right for Narcisse. Narcisse says, "I'm an actor, see. There's a face beneath this face."

AU: How would you describe Narcisse?
HR: Midian is all about the undead and the people

that have ended up in this strange place. All the undead seem to have a higher moral sense than the people living above the ground, as it were. His history is that he was an actor in a former life and he becomes a friend of Boone, the lead character.

AU: Did you make up a backstory for him?
HR: I think fundamentally the actor's instinct is the most important thing. I think the script is what you respond to. I think you just have to let your imagination go. I was very lucky in *Nightbreed* in that Clive was very keen for my improvising. So Narcisse was very freeing to play because Clive was relaxed about letting your imagination soar.

AU: You were the comic relief in some very tense situations, were those improvised?
HR: Some of that was in the script and some of it was improvised. They did some test screenings in LA and flatteringly my character went down very well. They decided they would do enhancement shoots, and a lot of that was improvised and developed. We were all hoping it was going to be a huge hit and there would be *Nightbreed* 2-3-4-5 and 6. Of course, *Nightbreed* has been referred to as the *Heaven's Gate* of horror. Because it had a huge budget and then flopped big time. But of course now has become this rather nice cult film.

AU: I believe then it was the highest budgeted horror film with over 100 monsters and creatures. Then they re-edited Clive's version?

HR: They did re-edit it and they kind of kept adding in explosions, rather than Clive's take on things which is much more psychological, and interested in character relations. They kept tinkering and cutting things out. Trying to make it into what they thought was going to be a very big hit. I think what often happens if you tamper with somebody's imagination like Clive's, you can throw the baby out with the bathwater.

AU: I feel they tried to market it as a slasher film and focus it more on Dr. Decker.
HR: Yes, they added that very gory slashing of the family near the beginning Decker kills the family. That was added as a bit of more gore. I think you are right, slasher was at the top of their minds.

AU: I think that experience really soured Clive Barker to the way that Hollywood works.
HR: Yes, it did.

AU: It was like his baby being torn apart and he only directed one more movie after that.
HR: That's right. So from that point of view it was

very, very sad, but the great thing has been that Russell Cherrington has done an amazing job of regenerating interest in *Nightbreed*. He did the *Cabal Cut*, which was a great achievement.

AU: What can you tell people about Occupy Midian and the Cabal Cut of Nightbreed?
HR: That has to do with the passion to try and restore Clive's original vision. It was absolutely Russell's passion for the film that got it put together as they tried to find all Clive's lost footage. Russell put his heart and soul into it. When it came out, we had a lot of fun going to various festivals, and the fans absolutely loved it.

AU: You have a scene where Narcisse is in the hospital and you cut your own face off.
HR: That was that an extraordinary scene to shoot because I had blood bags in my wig and it was very important that we got it in one take.

AU: Was that the actor revealing his other face?
HR: Yeah, that's right. The face behind his face.

AU: What was David Cronenberg like on set?
HR: He was very nice. Quite shy and reserved. I think he was a bit nervous about doing the acting, but he was absolutely a complete gentleman.

AU: Were you a fan of horror growing up?
HR: I liked Hammer horror films. I always wanted to do a kind of Peter Cushing part in something.

AU: Who did the special effects on Nightbreed?
HR: Image Animation. My makeup artist was Neill Gorton, who's become huge in the horror makeup world. The makeup took ages, I used to sleep in the chair while he fiddled and put on the false head. In the original cut, Narcisse is beheaded. I had to have a head cast done, which was a horrific experience. I don't know what happened to my head. That must be somewhere knocking about.

AU: What's your fondest memory from the set?
HR: That first scene was just an absolute gas to do and a great opportunity to be as bold as you could be. I also loved the scene where Narcisse knocks the pane of glass through the door. That was very exciting to do. All those kind of mad things you don't normally get asked to do, particularly for somebody like me who's a theatre animal doing Shakespeare. It was a big relief to do *Nightbreed* and I really enjoyed every minute of it.

AU: How was working with Clive as a director?
HR: It was funny because we were friends and also he had his director's hat on. I remember him with a big cigar being on the set. It was very amiable and happy. He gave me a lot of freedom, a lot of trust, and trust is the most important thing when you're working with a director. It was creative.

AU: Can you describe Clive Barker's artwork?
HR: It's sinister and extreme and vivid and imaginative and dark. It's a kind of dark imagination that I'm rather in awe of.

AU: Where was Nightbreed filmed? It has that Canadian element when they were in Calgary.
HR: I filmed entirely in Pinewood Studios. I think all that footage in Calgary was added afterwards.

AU: What makes Clive's vision so unique?

HR: He's not afraid to go into the dark places that a lot of people are very nervous about exploring.

AU: Have any plans for Halloween this year?
HR: Growing up they had Halloween in Scotland, but not in England. We used to have all sorts of Halloween rituals in Scotland. I think celebrating Halloween was perhaps originally from Scotland.

AU: What was your role in Trainspotting?
HR: I shot two scenes. One with Ewan McGregor, and one with Ewen Bremner. It's where they are interviewing for a job to go on the straight and narrow. So I'm sort of the head interviewer being rather harsh while interviewing the two bad lads.

AU: Which role is yours in the movie Bronson?
HR: He's called Uncle Jack and his first line is, "Well fuck me inside out." It's a very weird scene with this very strange collection of David Lynch characters. Often I play rather extreme characters.

AU: Any more recent projects?
HR: I'm in *Outlander*, a big time travel series set in Scotland. My character is called Arch Bug.

AU: Were there any aspects of the book, Cabal, that weren't explored in the Nightbreed?
HR: Not that I can remember. It's 30 years.



AU: I remember one scene where you break Boone out of jail. Then him and Lori make sweet love in the jail cell. The book was very descriptive, because Boone has been dead, so his bodily fluids are cold. I always thought there's no way that could ever translate to film.
HR: No, no, I wouldn't think you could do that.

AU: There's a pretty funny scene in Nightbreed where you're dancing with a female corpse.
HR: That was one of the scenes that was added. I think I improvised the song that I sang to her. Simon Bamford always laughs because I had that line to Simon about sailors. That very camp line "Sailors." I think the fact that there is some humour in *Nightbreed* is one of its big pluses.

AU: Any advice for aspiring actors?
HR: Yes, get as much work as you can. Acting is a craft, so you have to practice your craft.

AU: What has given Nightbreed its longevity?
HR: In some strange way there's something in it that absolutely fires up people's imaginations and kind of stays with them. People respond to the darkness of Clive's imagination.

AU: Do you have a famous Narcisse quote you could leave us with?
HR: You will find me and you'll need me.

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Protokult

Interview with Martin Drozd - Guitar and Vocals

Absolute Underground: How did Protokult come to be?

Martin Drozd: Inspired and fascinated by various metal genres alongside folk-culture, after a few years of experimenting, Protokult was meant to fuse the two together while paying homage to the past, Bacchanalian festivities and honouring the underground.

AU: How would you describe your sound in five words?

MD: Massive. Head-banging. Relentless. Uncompromising. Serene.

AU: Protokult just released your new album *Transcending The Ruins* on October 1st, how do you think it will be received by fans?

MD: I'd say it's the most consistent. There's appropriate "breathing room" here and there but it's a banger from start to end. The age-old formula works so we try to stay true to what makes metal great in the first place, it'll appeal to a wide variety of fans' tastes.

AU: What kind of listening experience are you trying to give fans with this album, its singles?

MD: Heavy metal is alive and well. Perhaps it's meant to thrive in a more underground subculture and that's part of what makes it rewarding. It's an epic journey with rich soundscapes all the while trekking into metal's most respected territories. It's a rush meant to be enjoyed either as a whole journey or at any entry point, we've ensured that.



AU: How is the writing process for the band?

MD: A riff or simple idea and away we go! I write the majority of the music and if it still feels the same a day, a week after original conception; that instinctive energy remains preserved, we keep it.

AU: Are any of the band members known on the local Toronto scene from any other bands?

MD: I try to pay homage to Type O Negative (Xero Tolerance: cover band) during the autumn months and have a symphonic-goth project, Mortalfall.

Jack has Pterodactyl Problems, Vias and Korrosive (proper thrash!) Kaveh is also in Korrosive as well as Into Oblivion. Ekaterina has some folk-ensembles she sings with; Meden Glas and Blik.

AU: How did you decide on the tracks for this album? How much more music can fans expect?

MD: We felt the tracks flowed really well and gelled with each other, every time we play them, we still get that rush and wanted to capture that energy and voyage on record. We approached this record with a bit more maturity and consistency so the result is heavier, faster, darker. Of course there are still some party-themed, fun moments but we never wanted to be a one-trick pony. We've already started to write a few new heavy tunes in that more blackened-thrash-speed direction (with melodic-folk finesse of course) so whether we'll release them as singles, a split or even possible EP we'll see what happens over the next year or so with the industry and interests.

AU: What can people expect live from your band compared to other bands, when concerts return after the Covid pandemic?

MD: The stage is often a warzone or party zone ha! So we're either having loads of fun (wrenches pouring beer, the occasional dancer or creature) or emitting aggression that sucks you in like a vicious vortex.

AU: Where do your lyrics come from? What inspires your writing?

MD: The best teacher is experience so there are a few personal songs like "Feed Your Demons," "Troubled Lad," and "Valley Of Thorns," so of course life experience and reflection play a role. Otherwise, the fascination with folklore, history and nature is still persistent in tracks like "Mark Of Thunder," "Oy Kanada," "1516," and "Rusalka."

AU: Are the songs a collaborative effort?

MD: Members will add their two cents every so often but I typically conceive and structure the songs in a specific way and if it sticks, feels right (or I don't change it) then we keep it. Ekaterina will usually add/write her own vocals and lyrics.

AU: How would you describe the evolution of the band's sound?

MD: Ok, I will come clean once and for all. Dave and I met in high school around 2003-04. The name we kept from the original conception due to always wanting to meddle with genres and

TORONTO TRASH

sounds but in all honesty, until the *Ancestral Anthems* formative era (2007-2009), we had no clue what we were doing! It was like all our fresh, over-excited influences were clashing with each other. I even made an ambient record that never saw the light of day! (Maybe one day it will). It was grudgingly difficult, sometimes fun, and sometimes depressing to find and develop the right sound and lineup; if you look through Metal Archives, you can see how many members we went through! So the band didn't "seriously" start or develop its heathen-metal sound until *Ancestral Anthems* was released, and it was a rather bold, daring but scattered effort. *Marzena* (2011) saw the arrival of Ekaterina, so we focused more on ethnic instruments, melodies and female vocals and with *No Beer in Heaven* (2014), that was the indulgent culmination of those elements. *With Transcending The Ruins*, it's like a mature, refined version of the first record, it's heavy where it has to be, and there are female parts (exclusively) where they have to be, a natural course so it's not a forced fit.

AU: Top five bands that your band sounds like that fans of them may enjoy.

MD: Arkona, Helloween, Korpiklaani, Skyforger, Pagan Reign

AU: What metal genres influence you as a band the most?

MD: Every member has a different preferred metal genre, I'm a black metal-thrash guy and so is Kaveh, Jack is more into the death metal, Dave likes his power and classics, whereas Ekaterina fancies folk and gothic metal.

AU: Where can fans follow Protokult...

MD: <http://protokult.com/>
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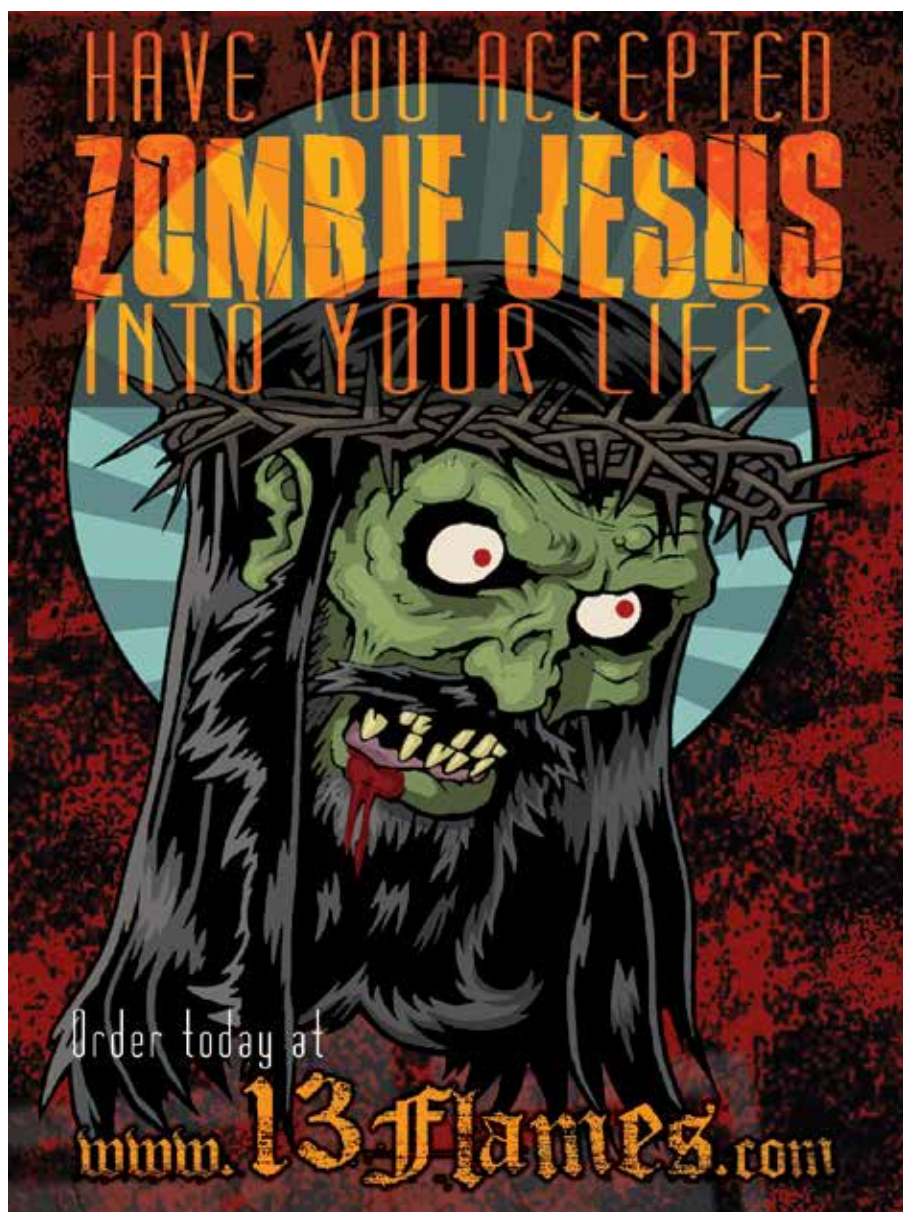
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Rezurex

Mi Calavera De Amor

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most known for?

Greetings, my name is Daniel deLeon, lead singer and songwriter for Rezurex. I have long history in the underground punk, postpunk, goth and psychobilly music scene. I first started with my first band, *The Insaints* (1988) from Modesto, CA. This band was very controversial by the actions of my lead singer, Marian Anderson. I wrote and played guitar only at that time. It's a very long story about that band. Best would to check out the documentary film called, *Last Fast Ride* directed by Lilly Scourtis Ayers. When I moved to Los Angeles I started a band called *Calavera* (1995). That was my first psychobilly project, though at that time I didn't know the genre yet. We just made up our own style with influences from blues, rockabilly and punk. Later to discover there were bands like us in Europe that have been around since the 80s. There was not a psychobilly scene yet in LA at the time.

I also joined a band called, *The Deep Eynde*, in '96.



Then began *Lobo Negro* and my first time singing for a band. We later changed the name to *Rezurex*. I wanted to make a fun Halloween themed band and here we are now still going strong since 2002. It was perfect timing as the psychobilly scene grew and was more in demand for LA!

AU: Do horror movies inspire your music?

DD: Horror/Sci-Fi movies are the best inspiration for lyric writing for me. That is what we are known for. My favourites are *Evil Dead*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Return of The Living Dead*, *Dead Alive*, and the classic Universal Monsters movies.

AU: Who else is in the band and what would it say on their Tinder profiles?

DD: I have Matti Jade (lead guitar), Michael Maniacal (upright bass) and Ben 9000 (drums). For

They were a goth band when I joined but they became more punk in the end. This band later influenced my postpunk side project called *Neon Kross* which is still active. I also played guitar in the band *45 Grave* for a year during the reforming of the band. That was an honor to play in one of my favourite punk bands.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band.

DD: Around 2001 I reconnected with Marian from *The Insaints* and we started a band called, *Thrillkillers*. It went great until after our first show she passed away. Not knowing what to do, next my bass player, Rockin Rick Tanner told me I should just sing since I was the main songwriter.

a tinder profile you just need to mention you're in a band, that should be enough, haha.

AU: Describe Rezurex's sound?

DD: It's Elvis gone punk, with a Halloween theme.

AU: Did any Psychobilly bands influence you?

DD: I can't really say any psychobilly band had influenced me except one *The Hellbillies* that made me interested in having an upright bass in my band. I wouldn't say we are true psychobilly, we just fall in that category because of the upright bass. We are a version I created from other influences like Elvis Presley, The Stray Cats, Misfits, The Damned, and early 50s rock and roll.

AU: Tell us about your most recent album.

DD: Our newest album, *Skeletons* was just recently released. Our new music video for the song, "Mi Calavera de Amor," is a tribute to the Mexican holiday, Dia de Los Muertos. The music also fits very well for the tradition. I sing in Spanish and English. With special guest vocals, Rene Dlamuerte from *The Brains* (Canada) and Dan Zombie from *Niño Zombie* (Mexico). And my keyboard player from *Neon Kross*, Shawn C. Miller adding his work to make a more dramatic sound.

AU: What record label are you on?

DD: We are on Cleopatra Records, who has partnered up with Batcave Records. It has been great working with both labels and we hope to continue working with them on the next release.

AU: You do partial corpse paint make-up, Day of the Dead style, when you perform. Do you enjoy the added theatrical element?

DD: Yes, I have always enjoyed adding some theatrics to the live shows. It makes it more entertaining for me and also the audience. If I had a larger budget it would be more awesome, like having pyrotechnics and more stage props.

When I first did the half skull makeup at a Halloween show it got such a great reaction that I decided to keep it.

AU: What themes do your music explore?

DD: From gothic love songs to horror themed inspiration, I explore many possibilities in song writing. I usually have a vision in my mind, like a movie playing that only I can see.

AU: What are some examples of your songs?

DD: From our new album, *Skeletons*, I keep the

horror movie theme in the songs, "Nightmares" (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*), "House on Haunted Hill" (from the movie), "Creature" (*Alien*). The other songs I made up the themes on my own from dark romantic love songs, modern swing styles and fast punk rhythms. A mix of all my influences.

AU: Once the Apocalypse is over, when and where can we see Rezurex play live next?

DD: Yeah, hopefully soon! We are booked for some European festivals for 2021 - Punk and Disorderly and Wave Gothic Treffen (Germany) and The Psychobilly Meeting (Spain).

AU: What is your opinion of 2020 so far?

DD: We are living in a science fiction movie but it's actually real.

AU: Any cool bands we should check out?

DD: I would mention and give a shout out to *The Thirsty Crows* because they are similar to *Rezurex* creating their own version of psychobilly themselves. I enjoy their music and would recommend. They are on Batcave Records, too.

AU: Any crazy Halloween stories to share?

DD: Yeah, I've had some wild Halloween nights that usually ended up partying in the cemetery, haha. But with respect to the graves, of course.

AU: Anything else we should know about you?

DD: I've been doing art, photography and filming and directing music videos. I'm hoping I can make my first full length horror movie eventually.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

DD: I want to thank all of you that have supported Rezurex throughout the years, and the people that pre-ordered our new album. Make sure to support other bands in this difficult time by buying their merchandise or sharing their pages too! Until things get back to normal we will see you at the next show, I'm looking forward to it.

AU: Where can we find you online?

DD: www.batcaverrecords.com or our Instagram and Facebook accounts.

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THE DECADE THAT ROCKED

Interview with Rock Photographer Mark "Weissguy" Weiss

by Clark Mantei

Hi everyone. It's time for another edition of Blast From the Past. I'm Clark Supermantei... Your wild mannered reporter.

For this issue we have an interview with Mark Weiss, the legendary photographer from New Jersey who has just released a book of his photos from 1980 through 1989 entitled *The Decade That Rocked*. Mark "Weissguy" Weiss started photography, as fate would have it, when as a teenager cutting lawns in his neighbourhood he came across a client who offered him a really good camera in exchange for cutting his lawn for a year. Mark soon started attempting to take photos at local Rock'n'Roll concerts within the Tri-state area. He eventually made his way to becoming the rock world's most renowned photographer in the 1980's. He has worked for the world's most famous acts, from Kiss to Ozzy, to Mötley Crüe and Van Halen, and the list goes on and on. Mark started on

his own in the 70s which soon led him to work for magazines like *Circus*, *Hit Parader*, and even *Rolling Stone*. I was honoured to speak with him about his new sensational book that gives us a front row and backstage view of that legendary era. It was the hair band driven decade of Rock'n'Roll indeed! The incredible 1980s. So please have a read and enjoy the interview with the man who captured the magic moments of the music.

AU: Who are we officially talking to today?

MW: My name is Mark Weiss and I am a rock and roll photographer. I shot rock and roll for a lot of bands in the 80's. The kind of bands that shaped that decade. I've toured with, done album covers for, and created the visual imagery of that decade pretty much. That's me.

AU: You've released your new book *The Decade That Rocked*. I actually said "Which decade is the book about?"

MW: Laughs "Oh yeah, exactly. I'm gonna get a shirt saying What decade was that Mark?"

AU: Where am I talking to you from today?

Mark Weiss: New Jersey. I was born and raised in Jersey and then I went to New York City. Then I

came back to where I was brought up, and raised a family.

AU: So you got your first camera and started developing photos yourself in a darkroom and then you sold them?

MW: Yeah, pretty much. Developing only black and white, not color. I would take photos of like *Peter Frampton* one night at MSG and when he came back to town, I would sell them in front of the concerts. I developed the pictures in my parents bathroom and then hung 'em on clothes lines. My parents eventually helped me out and we made a proper darkroom in the garage.

AU: Your bio says that your school teacher helped you learn to use a dark room?

MW: That teacher definitely taught me and encouraged me.

AU: I see a lot of pictures in your book from those early daze going back to the 70s, including *Led Zeppelin*. Did you have to sneak your camera into the shows way back then?

MW: Yeah, I used to give a few bucks to the guy at the door so he wouldn't really check my bags. I'd slip a \$5 bill under the table and he just skirted me in. I did that for a few years.

AU: Then in 1977, when you sold pictures at a *KISS* show outside MSG, the cops detained you and you went to see the judge? Who told on you?

MW: Yeah, it was the cops but you know that came down from management. Usually the cops didn't really care.

AU: So in the 70s you were still an unknown getting into concerts and taking pictures for the fun and love of it?

MW: Yeah, I did it for that and also to get laid, as it got a lot of attention with the girls. In school I was kind of a quiet guy. So it was a good conversation piece to get to know people. So when the band *White Tiger* played the clubs, I was 18 and all the girls would come to see the show. I ended up being their photographer. It was mostly them and *Twisted Sister*. They were both really big in the Tri-state area.

AU: After you got busted for selling *KISS* pictures, how did it come to be that you got a hold of *Circus* magazine?

MW: I just went back home kind of bumming out and I took the *Circus* magazine and I opened up the masthead and I read where they were located. They were located in New York City, so I took the same train that I used when I went to Kiss and I got arrested and I went to *Circus* magazine. It was just really good timing. It was a secretary who took a liking to me and said "Hang out and when they're off deadline, I'll have them come out and say hi." and that's what they did. I ended up meeting the owner of the magazine, the publisher, *Gerry Rothberg*, and he told me a few little tricks to do to get in the magazine using certain film. A few months later, I had some pictures of *Aerosmith* and *Ted Nugent*, and they ended up running my picture as the centerfold of Steven Tyler.

AU: I still own that issue. Do you still keep in contact with the publisher of *Circus*?

MW: Yeah, I do actually. I like him. He's getting on in age but I give him props. I'm always thanking him because in the 90s when they closed shop, I asked him if I get my photos back, as it had turned out that they owned them and he said, "Sure, come on in." and he gave me back my photos. A lot of the photos in the book are the shots that he gave back to me.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

AU: When you first started working for bands did you originally have your own props and backdrops?

MW: No, I just winged it as I went really. I'd come up with ideas. I'd have to buy seamless paper of course, but that was about it.

AU: One of the most famous shoots you did was with *Mötley Crüe* all covered in blood. Who came up with that idea?

MW: Nikki Sixx. Yeah, he came up with a blood and I came up with the girls.

AU: Did you partake in a lot of *Mötley Crüe*'s partying ways?

MW: Well, I had no choice. If I wanted to go on the bus I had a partake, and they didn't have to twist my arm. When I first went on their bus in 1984 was when I was touring with Ozzy and Nikki's like, "You want to come with us, man?" and I'm

like, "Hell yeah!" so he skirts me on the bus. Then Tommy Lee, sitting in the driver's seat with a big smile on his face, puts his leg out and stops me from coming on the bus. Then Nikki starts biting me as Tommy is holding me back. I'm like, "What the fuck is going on?" and Tommy's like, "Draw blood." I'm like "What do mean draw blood?" and he says "Just draw blood" and I'm like "I ain't biting him back." Basically they're pouring Jack Daniel's down my throat and I started to feel the pain after 15 minutes of Nikki biting me. I finally bit him back and drew blood, then they let me on the bus and I polished off that bottle. That was when I started drinking Jack and liking it.

AU: Any good *Van Halen* stories to share? You shot David Lee Roth when he was in full flight. Was that during a concert or during a soundcheck to get the perfect shot?

MW: That was during the show. I would shoot several shows in a row, so I knew when he was



gonna jump. I would just plan it out right, and get the shot. There's a little luck involved too of course, and I just happened to get it at the right time. I missed a little of Eddie on the corner of that shot, it's cropped out in the book, but in the full frame you can see like half of Eddie's face screaming while looking at David, and it is just awesome. Van Halen hired me to go on the road every once in a while and do pictures for publicity.

AU: Eddie Van Halen seemed like a bit of a recluse and a pioneering scientist of music, always working on his guitar equipment. Was he sort of just shy and kept to himself?

MW: Yeah that's what he did. He's a genius with his music.

AU: Did you ever pinch yourself and say, Holy shit, look what I'm doing for a career?

MW: Yeah, every day I do. I still pitch myself.

To be continued next issue...

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Paradise

Interview submitted by Jon Asher

Absolute Underground: For those unfamiliar with Paradise, give us some background on you guys.

RL Black: Back in 2002, brothers Frank and Fred Kelly along with their favourite partner in crime Jet Phil, had an idea for a concept band based on a Kon-Tiki drink menu, so they recruited good friends, guitar master, and Sword's axeman Mike Plant and drum god Michel "Away" Langevin of Voivod to help out. The first album was written and produced within a month! Two or three years later, the second album, *Hotel*, was out. At that time I was only doing some backing vocals on the recordings. Today the line-up has



changed and Frank was fed up with singing, so I took his place.
AU: So Paradise is back in 2020, 15 years after your 2005 release *Hotel*, what brought the band back together for your new self-titled album?

Frank Kelly: Just wanted to make noise again and be with the guys. Can't stay away from rock and roll too long, it's a calling.

RLB: Yeah, had a couple of different projects in between, but rock pulled us back in.

AU: You describe your sound as volcanic rock and somewhere between heavy rock and metal with stoner vibes. For those who haven't heard your self-titled album yet, what can they expect? What kind of listening experience is trying to give fans with this album?

FK: Heavy straightforward rock with hooks...Not reinventing anything but we're having fun doing it.

AU: We know Covid has been tough on all bands and we noticed you put together a quarantine van video series, where did you get the idea for these, and what has the band up to during Covid lock-down?

FK: Vans have always been a part of our lifestyle so it was pretty obvious for us. We're already writing the next record ...

RLB: We wanted to let people know that vans aren't only for kidnapping, it's time to let go of all these nasty stereotypes.

AU: When the world returns to normal, what can people expect live from your band compared to other bands? We read you've toured Cuba before, will you be going back for another tour there Any plans

to tour Canada or any other countries?

FK: We were working on touring different countries before everything started ...we'll need to get back to it when it all comes back to normal ... and yes definitely Cuba ... it was magical!

RLB: One thing people can always expect is that it's gonna be loud, and so far we've had lasers, pyrotechnics, fire and costumes, who knows what stunts we'll pull next... As for touring, we were planning for some Ontario dates before Covid, so hopefully we'll get back to that and we'd love to do some UK gigs for sure!!

MONTREAL MASSACRE

AU: Any last words...

FK: The end

RLB: Down but not out !!

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You Can't Kill The Boogeyman

By Vince D'Amato

It is that glorious time of the year again, the season where we start pulling our favourite horror Blu-rays off the shelf and begin piling them into a "watchlist" order for the month of October...



this story starts in the middle.

1998 – Halloween H20: Twenty years later. This was the seventh entry in the franchise, and while it hasn't aged particularly well, there was quite a bit of buzz around this back in '98 as it boasted a new young cast that included Michelle Williams...

Energized by new and upcoming talent, plus the inclusion of Jamie Lee Curtis, fans were eager to see what new heights the franchise would hit. Ultimately, it came to a somewhat disappointing petering-out with the follow-up Halloween: Resurrection...

about the re-vamped sequels, namely Jamie Lee, in the first ten minutes before carrying on into something that seems to tell us, the audience, that Resurrection was definitely way cooler and "wittier" than its previous entries.

Going back a little further, to Halloween Parts 4 and 5 (1988 and 1989, respectively), these two back-to-back sequels actually had achieved its own mini story-arc within the larger Halloween/Michael Meyers concept...

5 centered around Harris' character who is the daughter of Laurie Strode, and also boasted the return of actor Donald Pleasence as Dr. Loomis (Halloween I & II). Donald Pleasence would then continue the character's storyline into Halloween 6: The Curse of Michael Meyers...

Of course, there is also Halloween III: Season of the Witch to be justifiably considered in the Halloween canon, even though Curtis/Strode, Pleasence/Loomis, and even Meyers/The Shape are nowhere to be found in this absolutely bonkers sequel...

So, if we dial all the way back to the end of the first/original John Carpenter's Halloween, the end of this film (don't read here if you haven't seen it – and if you haven't, then what the hell?!) sees Loomis shoot serial killer/stalker Michael Meyers aka "The Shape" from a second-storey balcony...

was Carpenter nailing home the concept of his killer Michael Meyers as a literal "boogeyman."

However, over the next 42 years, the concept of Michael Meyers as a "boogeyman" has meta-fictionally manifested itself into the entirety of the Halloween canon itself, and completely without irony. And this is what I just realized, only this week, as I finally re-watched Halloween H20 (1998).

In John Carpenter's Halloween (1978), Michael Meyers disappears after being shot six times. Halloween II (1981), Laurie Strode finds out Michael Meyers is his sister (!) and kills him by burning him to death.

In 1998 we get the complete re-vamping that starts with Halloween H20 where the now-dead Loomis is mentioned on screen, Laurie Strode returns with a son (!) and no mention of any daughter; and then Halloween Resurrection (2002) that saw the immediate death of Laurie Strode before going on its merry way...

Blumhouse brought back Jamie Lee Curtis (again) as Laurie Strode, she is alive (again) and has her daughter back – and a granddaughter now – with absolutely no mention of the son from H20 (!) and this is the first post-1978 film that eschewed the

Absolute Horror

plot twist of Laurie Strode being Michael Meyers' sister. This one really dialed it all the way back before starting off again.

So, when Blumhouse's "sequel" (and I use this term loosely) was released, many fans took to social media to create their own maps and timelines tracking all of these sequels, remakes, reboots, and all of their discrepancies and contradictory plot-points from each other.



Michael Meyers, and this neighbor said that about Laurie Strode. Did you know they were brother and sister? She had a son, what happened to him? No she didn't, it was a daughter, and the daughter died, and now she's the boogeyman – no, no, Laurie Strode died in a mental hospital – no she didn't...

Which just goes to show, this is why you really can't kill the bogeyman.

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TERRIFIER

Interview with actor David Howard Thornton a.k.a Art the Clown
By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we speaking with?

David Howard Thornton: Hey, I'm David Howard Thornton. I'm an actor here in New York City. I'm probably most well known for playing Art the Clown in the horror film *Terrifier* and the upcoming *Terrifier 2*.

AU: What is the premise of *Terrifier*, for people who haven't seen the movie?

DHT: It's pretty cut and dry, it's a nice throwback to old slashers from the 70s and 80s. It has that Grindhouse feel to it as well. Well, it's a premise where a clown comes across two girls on Halloween night coming back from a party and he goes after them and kills everybody that gets in his way.

AU: What was in his bag?

DHT: The bag? I would say that it's got all his, you know, "his toys" in there and maybe a midnight snack or two.

AU: Would you say that Art the Clown became an instant horror icon?

DHT: I guess I could say that, it feels weird for me to say that. I leave that more up to the fans to decide but I have not seen a character like this, especially an independent film character, explode in popularity like Art. It has been pretty amazing to watch happen. So I guess you could say he's kind of becoming like a cult favourite at least.

AU: He first appeared in the movie *All Hallows' Eve*, which I haven't seen. Could you explain that? Is there more of his origin in that one or is he still very enigmatic?

DHT: It was a different actor that played him, his name is Mike Giannelli. So I took over the role of Art when I played him in *Terrifier*. *All Hallows' Eve* is an anthology film. So it's three different little short films and I guess Art is the character that kind of links them all together in some way. They really don't go into the origin at all in that one either, he's just pretty much just an agent of chaos.

AU: How did it work with Dread Central?

DHT: They were our distribution partners. We made the movie first and it was picked up by them.

AU: What sort of budget were you guys working with? How long did it take to film

***Terrifier*?**

DHT: I don't know if I can say the exact budget but I mean, it was like five figures. So it wasn't even a six figure budget. So it was probably lower than you think. It was pretty much a miracle that we were able to make the movie that we made. It shows the quality of the people that were making it. It was a small crew but everybody gave it their all.

AU: Yeah, I was really impressed with the special effects. Do you know who did all the gore?

DHT: Yeah, that was Damien Leone! He wrote it, directed it, edited it and did all the practical effects himself. He did basically all of the movie on that end.

AU: Because the roll was silent, even when you're getting stabbed, you never speak or scream. Did you have specific clown or mime training?

DHT: I wouldn't say I have professional training in it. I've been a lifelong student of silent clowns and like great physical comedians. I grew up watching the old silent films and like Buster Keaton, Chaplin, all the Marx Brothers I loved a lot, especially Harpo. Oh and of course, Mr. Bean, I'm a huge fan of Mr. Bean, Doug Jones, Jim Carrey. I took a lot from them and put all that into Art, but I also had a really good teacher for about five years where I understudied Stefán Karl, who was known as Robbie Rotten on *LazyTown*. We toured together with *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* for five years I was his understudy as the *Grinch*. He is a of master physical comedy so he taught me a lot during those years on tour.

AU: Was that how you got this role?

DHT: I got the role because there was an open call and they were looking for a tall skinny guy that had clowning or physical comedy experience. So I guess I've been preparing for this role my whole entire life and didn't know it up to that point.

AU: So for this movie it is all practical effects, no CGI. I think that's why the gore fans really took to this movie. Would you say you guys sort of pushed the envelope a little bit?

DHT: Oh, definitely. I look at a lot of mainstream horror films now and they've pulled back so much from showing that kind of stuff. Back in the 70s and 80s, especially, they would show the kills and now they cut away from the kills you don't really see the gore as much. I think that's what a lot of people have been missing. The people are afraid to take risks because the producers are more concerned about putting butts in seats. So they're trying to make horror films more PG13. They don't really want to go for that R rating anymore. So I think we're trying to bring things back to where it used to be and I think that's why people are latching on to it so much. We are using the practical effects we're not relying on CGI to show the kills. We're doing it real. Well not real, real! We're not killing people... that would be bad.

AU: What can you tell us about the sequel?

DHT: There's so much I want to say but I can't because I can't reveal things, but it's definitely going to be bigger and better than the first one. Everything has improved greatly. I am so excited for everybody to see it. It's going to be more of a narrative story this time round. I know that some people were like, "Oh, there's not much of a plot for *Terrifier*," but there's definitely more of a plot for *Terrifier 2*, we're bringing a really good protagonist into this one and we're doing a lot more locations. So you get to see him in all kinds of fun environments and doing all kinds of crazy

kills and we're definitely not pulling back on the kills, at all. We've filmed a kill scene recently that I think is going to rival the infamous hacksaw scene in the first film, just in sheer brutality.

AU: No one was safe in *Terrifier*. You kind of through the rule book out. I thought that was refreshing.

DHT: Oh, definitely. No one is safe with Art.

AU: How's Art's dental bill?

DHT: He just doesn't go to the dentist. So there is no dental bill. If he did, that dentist would be able to retire.

AU: Was there anything that you guys were thinking "Oh, we went too far", or were there any ratings board concerns?

DHT: No because we released it independently we didn't have to go through the ratings boards and stuff like that. But I know when we were originally trying to find distribution, some studios wanted to pick us up and put us in theatres. But they wanted to make some big cuts to the film and Damien said absolutely not. So I think if we had gone to the theatres, we'd probably have gotten like a hard R, or at least an NC 17 rating.

AU: Do you think it could turn into more than just the next sequel? Could it be a trilogy or a continuation? He seems like he's sort of the new Michael Myers or Jason.

DHT: Oh, definitely. We already have a third film in mind. So, we have an "endpoint" already for him so we want to have a good trilogy at least. But I think we're looking at an ending that still leaves itself open for more, if people want more in the future. So we'll see.

AU: Do you think there will be action figures?

DHT: Oh, I hope so. I would love that. I'm waiting for my NECA and Funko Pop figure.

AU: There was one scene in there that was sort of a *Texas Chainsaw*-inspired scene where you're wearing the woman's breasts.

DHT: Oh yeah, we did a lot of homages to horror films that came before. So I would say that scene was like an homage to both *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as well as *Silence of the Lambs* with Buffalo Bill.

AU: Does the sequel take place around Halloween?

DHT: Yes.

AU: Do you have any plans for Halloween? Is that something you generally get excited for?

DHT: We'll see what comes up. I kind of play it by ear every Halloween.

AU: Do you dress up like Art the Clown and scare people?

DHT: Not yet, no. This past Halloween I went as Bert from *Mary Poppins*.

AU: Were there any times when you were in the makeup and you went out and scared real people?

DHT: Oh yeah! Recently when filming the new film we had cops called on us on set one night. I was

doing an exterior shot and people were on the way to work in the morning before the sun came up and they see this guy walking across the street covered in blood dressed as a clown.

When the cops came in, they were like, "So we hear there's a clown?" and I'm like, "Hi." They're like, "Oh, we see why we were called now..."

AU: What is it about clowns that scares the hell out of people so much?

DHT: Well, I think that they walk a fine line of the uncanny valley because they look human, but they're not quite human. And they're supposed to be something that's kid friendly. But then you have a killer clown, it's the antithesis of what the clowns are supposed to be. So I think that's what really freaks people out. It's just like when you see little kids in horror films, that's always freaky because something that's supposed to be innocent, but they twisted it in a way.

AU: Was it difficult to ride the tiny clown bike?

DHT: Oh, yeah, the crash you see is a real crash. I was falling off that thing all the time.

AU: Is it fun to stomp someone's head to mush with clown shoes on?

DHT: Of course, how could that not be fun?

AU: When can we expect to see *Terrifier 2*?

DHT: We're hoping to release it by this October.

AU: It's a direct sequel?

DHT: Correct yes. It takes place a year after the first film.

AU: What scares you?

DHT: Oh my gosh, tornadoes because I was in a huge F4 tornado when I was a kid so it's just one of those things that freaks me out.

AU: Any other projects to promote?

DHT: I'm supposed to be working on two other horror films this year, but they haven't been announced yet.

AU: Final words for Canadian gorehounds?

DHT: Just a big thank you to every single one of you who that has supported us. It's the fans that have made *Terrifier* a success. It's the word of mouth that's gotten out there from everybody and it's been absolutely fantastic, it's surpassed my wildest expectations. It's all because of you guys so big thank you.

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Rat Scabies

Punk Icon Rat Scabies Releases Remix Of 1981 Track By Hawkwind's Robert Calvert.

When two rebellious, boundary-pushing artistic minds come together, sparks will definitely fly. And if those two minds happen to belong to two of Britain's most creative experimentalists, namely, punk musician/raconteur Rat Scabies and the enigmatic poet/visionary Robert Calvert, then you can guarantee the result will be utterly unique.

Although Calvert shed his mortal coil in 1988, after an astounding career as the lyricist and vocalist for the legendary Hawkwind, multiple solo albums and collaborations with the likes of Brian Eno, Arthur Brown, and Motörhead's Lemmy, his music continues to inspire and Scabies' remix of Calvert's watershed track "Lord Of The Hornets" will most certainly keep the flame burning bright. The track originally appeared on Calvert's 1981 solo album *Hype*, an ahead-of-its-time masterpiece that has received renewed attention in recent years.

Absolute Underground: Good morning, is this Mr. Rat Scabies?

Rat Scabies: I'm afraid it is.

AU: What would you say you are most infamous for?

RS: I'm probably most infamous for being the drummer in a punk rock group called The Damned.

AU: What other bands have you been involved with over the years?

RS: A lot of different things. It's always difficult because apart from The Damned, a lot of the things I did were sort of one-off things, which ranged really from Donovan to Robert Calvert, or Eagles of Death Metal. Lots of different things come my way and I just sort of get involved for one album and then move on to something new.

AU: You're a jack of all bands.

RS: I don't know, I suspect I always play the same tune but just with a different guitar player. Haha

AU: Tell us about your latest project.

RS: The Robert Calvert remix is one of them. During lockdown Cleopatra Records asked me to mix a Bob Calvert track, he was in Hawkwind. I used to be quite friendly with Bob back in the day before he passed away, and so it's always a bit weird when you're hearing someone you know who is no longer with us. And then you have this very sort of intimate relationship with their voice where it's a bit strange because you're kind of hearing them breathing. I also had to do another mix, which was Lemmy singing a Metallica song. And so there was quite an uncanny coincidence going on remixing two former members of Hawkwind that I knew quite well. And just sort of having to work on their voices and hearing their voices. I wouldn't say I got hugely emotional, but you do kind of think, Wow, this is probably the last person to hear Lemmy breathe.

AU: What was Robert Calvert like as a person

and describe his importance for younger people who may not know who he was?

RS: Well, he was really a pioneer who is absolutely brilliant with lyrics and the way he viewed the world. For example the song "Silver Machine," he used to have a bicycle that he rode home from school. With his vivid imagination, he used to pretend it was this spaceship and a time machine. He had this absolute ability to make very normal,

almost mundane things come alive. He was like that as a person as well, he was always fun and open to ideas.

AU: What first got you into music?

RS: I was quite young when I started. So a lot of the things that turned me on to the drums were jazz things that I've heard on the radio. Then I was probably more influenced by the noisier drummers. It didn't take long before The Who and Cream arrived and I started listening to them. But really people like Sandy Nelson, and The Dave Clark Five, anything with a lot of drums in it.

AU: How was The Damned able to release the first punk record before anyone else?

RS: Really that was about Stiff Records and Jake Riviera. Stiff Records were very vibrant and about doing things then, not behaving like the major labels where if they plan to record to come out, it would be a three months plan. They were small and able to do things much faster. So I think when Jake decided he wanted us to do the record with him it didn't really make sense to wait.

AU: It seemed that the Sex Pistols or whoever, were all waiting for these these big record deals, but The Damned had a record out and had already been touring. It was like they needed you to draw the fans on their tours. Is that correct?

RS: I think so, yeah. We'd been out on the road for a while and touring around England. The Pistols hadn't really been doing much of that. When it came to the Anarchy tour I think they put us on the bill to sell more tickets and that's why we were the second on the bill.

AU: The Damned were the first UK punk band to tour America. How were you able to get over across the pond to tour?

RS: It was the first time that any of us had ever been on an airplane. It was quite weird. Again, Jake Riviera thought we should get to America first. So we went out and did the CBGBs after having read all about the New York music scene. It wasn't the same kind of punk scene as it was in England. In England we lived and breathed it and you were a punk or you weren't. In America people went to CBGBs to eat dinner and watch a band. It wasn't really like everybody pogoing and causing trouble. So we thought it was a bit strange because it didn't seem to have that same kind of commitment. Bands like the Ramones

and Blondie absolutely did have that kind of commitment, but the audience really didn't.

AU: I would be scared to eat at CBGBs.

RS: I didn't eat much there, no.

AU: What cities did you play on the first tour?

RS: The first time we went all we played was New York, Boston, San Francisco and Los Angeles. There weren't very many punk venues or people that were prepared to take a chance on booking us.

AU: How was it received? Was Dave Vanian's corpse paint weird for people?

RS: Yeah, it was. It was the brilliant thing about punk just by your appearance you could stop traffic, people would stand and stare at you. It was quite an amazing phenomena. The power that a leather jacket and a bad haircut have.

AU: What was your feeling about The Damned documentary that was released?

RS: Well that's the thing is when they ring you up and say they're going to make a movie about the band. You think, at last our story is going to be told truthfully, but actually you realize that it's really down to the director of the film to interpret the story. So though I thought the movie was very good, I didn't think it was necessarily 100% accurate or certainly didn't tell the whole story. But Wes Orshoski decided to make the film, if I wanted to see a different version of what he sees, then maybe I should make my own film.

AU: I felt like they played up the animosity between the band members too much for dramatic effect.

RS: You don't always get to tell the whole version of your story, or you do but it ends up on the editing room floor because it doesn't join with what the director thinks is the strongest storyline.

AU: Have you and Captain Sensible made peace?

RS: I haven't spoken to him for a long time, but careful what you wish for.

AU: What do you think is the solution to getting live music happening again with this current pandemic situation? I feel like all the bands are gonna have to play behind a Plexiglas drum dampener.

RS: Until the virus has dropped to a manageable point I can't see how venues are going to be able to survive and function. The fun that you have at a gig is about the heaving room and a great band playing. You're there with a lot of your friends and you drink too much, that's kind of what makes a good night out. I'm afraid that the social distance at live events is certainly going to kill that sense of fun. I'm just really hoping that people get smart about this. Then hopefully, in the not too distant future, we can maybe start seeing a return to normal gigs. Certainly live venues are feeling the

crunch, as is every musician.

AU: Do you think that you'd be able to perform this Robert Calvert song live one day with another vocalist?

RS: When I was doing the remix, listening to his voice, his phrasing, his tuning and his pronunciation, he was a consummate professional. So I really couldn't do anything to it. The thought of maybe doing that song with somebody else singing? I hadn't really applied much thought to it to be honest with you. At the moment, I probably wouldn't say yes.

AU: Where can people listen to the song?

RS: It's up on the usual platforms, Spotify, iTunes and the rest of it.

AU: Anything else to tell us about?

RS: The Sinclairs' record *Sparkle*, which is also out on Cleopatra Records. I kind of like the record, and we've been working it pretty hard. We've done some quite cool videos, so be nice if anybody wants to check that out.

AU: What kind of music is it?

RS: The description is easy listening made more difficult. So it's kind of surfy with a fair amount of twangy guitars and a certain amount of unnerving synthesizers, and theremins and things like that. It's not a surf tribute album but it says this is a style that we enjoy very much.

AU: Any final words for Canadian fans?

RS: I really liked Canada when I went there, I thought it was the coolest places I'd ever been. I just like the relaxed thing that it had. But I guess it gets unbearably cold. I'm not sure how well I'd do with that. I'd have to go chainsaw down a tree to stay warm.

Stream the single: orcd.co/robert_calvert_rat_scabies

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The Damned

The Damned

The Rockfield Files

Interview with bassist Paul Gray

By Ira "Phantasmagoria" Hunter

Photo by Amanda Lawrence

Transcribed by Amanda Lawrence

In 1980/1981, The Damned went to Rockfield for a series of sessions that eventually became *The Black Album*, *The Friday 13th EP*, & *Strawberries*. Their time there produced some of The Damned's greatest musical moments and memorable stories of horses, cows, vampires, rifles and Lemmy.

In 2019, The Damned returned to Rockfield studios to record the first new music since 2018's *Evil Spirits* album. The new *Rockfield Files* EP will be released on October 16 via Search And Destroy Records/Spinefarm/UMG.

AU: Who are we talking to today?

Paul Gray: Well, Paul Gray - bass player for *The Damned*. I also do some stuff with Captain, *The Sensible Gray Cells* and with a couple of guys from California and Rat (Scabies) on drums, called *Professor and the Madman*. I joined my first band as a bass player when I was a week shy of my 17th birthday - *Eddie and the Hot Rods*, I haven't really stopped much since. I've had a very lucky ride being at the right place at the right time and being lucky enough to play with one of my all time favourite bands, which was *The Damned*. I began to see them when they played The Roxie back in '76 and became good friends with Captain and Rat. Then four or five years later there I am on stage playing with them. It was pretty fantastic.

AU: What first got you into music?



PG: Watching *Top of the Pops*, I think it was all the glam rock lot: T. Rex, Slade, and Sweet. Then Deep Purple, Paul Quinn, and Black Sabbath. It was always the bass player that I thought was the coolest, the most mysterious person in the band. They weren't gurning at the camera like most of the singers were. There was something slightly dark and mysterious about them and they had the guitar with the longest headstock, which looks pretty cool. It looked like a pretty fun thing to do, so I badgered my dad to buy me a bass guitar, which he did for £10. I plunked along to T. Rex records in front of the mirror, I was a bedroom bass player for like four years. All my school books were covered in band logos and designs of bass guitars, I had a pretty one-track mind.

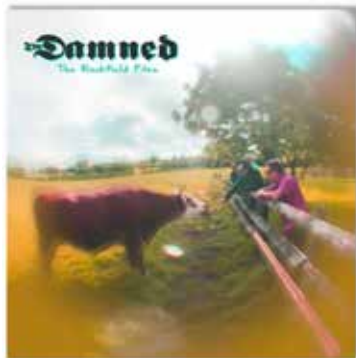
AU: Building up your calluses before girls?

PG: It would seem so yeah, girls weren't quite on the horizon yet. I didn't do it to get the girls like a lot of people did, I didn't even think about it. I just did it because it was better than stacking shelves in a grocery store.

AU: What was going on around you when punk first started in Britain?

PG: Well, I joined a band called *Eddie and the Hot Rods* in the summer of '75 and there was this big movement that the press coined 'pub rock'. It was bands like *Dr. Feelgood* and Ducks Deluxe taking really raw R&B rock and roll back

to the small venues. It started because so many bands had become dinosaur groups like Yes, and *Emerson, Lake & Palmer*, there was not a whole lot of excitement about it. These pub rock bands brought all that excitement and energy back and punk came in on the coattails of that. Well, it wasn't really called punk. The Stranglers had been going for a couple of years, The Damned started off not really knowing the term, it was coined by a journalist, I think, Caroline Coon back in the day. But my knowledge of punk was all those wonderful, 2 1/2 minute 60s bands, like The Seeds, Chocolate Watchband and all the stuff on the Nuggets Albums, and Pebbles album. That was what punk music was to me and then The Doors got bought into that, Television and the Ramones. I was just bemused by it all. It was all high energy, three, four chord, rock & roll stuff. When I was in the middle of it, I didn't really notice too much what was going on, because it was like my day job. So it was quite difficult to sit back and realize what a massive change there was going on around music at that time. It's only in hindsight, a couple of years later, you thought back, "We were part of that." There was this tsunami of new bands, The Dead Boys and Ramones from America. One of my favourite bands ever was MC5, that was real high energy punk rock and roll. So, this term punk was really just being appropriated for new wave of bands that we're getting back to that kind of excitement. I remember with *Eddie and*



the Hotrods when we did our first tour of America in '77, we were out with the *Ramones* and *Talking Heads*. Obviously *Ramones* were very different from *Talking Heads* and the *Hot Rods* were very different from both of them, but it all came under this term, punk or new wave. To me, it's kind of all rock and roll, you like it or you don't.

AU: That sounds like

a really cool tour.

PG: We did 56 gigs in 52 days. We did three nights at Max's and I think we did three nights at CBGBs. Eddie said, "You're drinking more than you're being paid." We were drinking brown cows, and at the end of the three nights there our bar tab was loads more than the fee for the gig. Things carried on a bit like that for about the next 10 years. I was 17 or 18, it was a bit of an eye-opener for me.

AU: The Damned just did an album called The Rockfield Files. What can you tell us about it?

PG: Rockfield studios is this wonderful, tumble down studio in the depths of the Welsh countryside. In 1980 we did *The Black Album* there. It's got this absolutely wonderfully laid back bucolic vibe to it. The people that run the studio are cool as fuck they don't care what you get up to, they've seen it all. It's impossible to shock them. So we were kind of used to getting turfed out of all sorts of studios and Rockfield didn't bat an eye. Not only that, the gear was great, the engineers were great. There was no distractions apart from the pub about two miles away. We just got into a vibe of working really, really quickly. Rat and I would tend to work during the daytime, put backing tracks down and work stuff out, and Captain and Vanian would then take over and work until dawn. We went back there the next year to do *Strawberries* and an EP, *Friday 13th*.



So, we ended back there last year. You know, I've been out of The Damned for a long time. I came back for the *Evil Spirits* album in 2017. After that was done and there was some more songs floating about we thought well let's go back to Rockfield, see if it's still the same. And it was. Rooms are the same, the beds were the same, the food was the same. The gear was the same, the vibe was the same. It just works for us. The EP will be out on October 16th.

AU: Can you tell us about the songs on the EP?

PG: Yeah, there's an extended version of "Blackest Night," with a really nice kind of long, psychedelic bit. We did a fantastic psychedelic video to go with "Keep 'em Alive". It's a song about saving the bees really, we mustn't take our eye off nature and the importance of things that keep us alive.

There's two other songs on there. One of them is called "Manipulator." The last one is kind of a rework of a song that I came up with a long time ago, the mid 90s. It just kind of sat there. So I played it for Captain, we reworked it, and Dave did his magic on it. So it's a nice little package. The one thing about The Damned is people never really know what to expect and neither do we.

AU: The Damned were one of the very first punk bands in Britain. What is the secret to the longevity that keeps you going today?

PG: Sheer bloody mindedness. Don't let the bastards grind you down. The Damned have always been underdogs and probably always will be underdogs. Maybe in 50 years when we're dead and gone we'll be feted as the band that should have been bigger. I think The Damned have always come up with new songs, different songs. They've always been out there, chugging away, no matter who's been in the lineup. It's always sounded like The Damned in one way or another and it continues to sound like The Damned, it always will. Mr. Vanian's kind of iconic vocal delivery is obviously an absolutely intrinsic massive part of that. .

AU: Is Mr. Vanian the only one in the band who is into horror? Or is everyone?

PG: I mean, everybody's very different characters, but the one thing that bonds us together is that we love all those kinds of 1950's black and white movies and the Hammer horror stuff or the wonderful Vincent Price movies and we love the 60s psychedelia. And that's been the kind of musical and visual thread that is the constant throughout the band's career, I think. A lot of it is rooted in the 60s because maybe that's when the best music was made. It certainly was for me, I just love all that psychedelic garage type stuff, which still manifests itself in The Damned's music.

AU: You were also in the band UFO for a while. What albums are you involved with?

PG: I was yeah, I did the tour with them and that was recorded for a live album called *Headstone*. I did an album called *Misdemeanour* and then the follow up album called *Ain't Misbehavin'*. I joined them right after The Damned. Funny choice, some might think, but it's all rock and roll, innit?

AU: What do you miss most about playing live?

PG: Everything. I feel alive when I'm touring. Well actually I feel half dead most of the time, but I feel alive when I'm on stage. There's not one song of

The Damned that I don't love playing. It's just an absolute joy. I consider myself immensely lucky to have had another crack of the whip at it. I don't intend to play with anybody else, so I've kind of come full circle with them. I'm still a fan of the band. I've never stopped being a fan of the band. I think that's one of the key reasons I love playing with The Damned so much. I'm still a fan.

AU: The Damned isn't an overtly political band, but tell us about some of the political tracks?

PG: There are some anti-war songs. I mean, why wouldn't there be? You know what I mean? Who's pro war? The Damned have always written songs about subjects that are close to their heart, even though they're not overly in-your-face political like The Clash, for example. Gun Fury is a fantastic song, musically and lyrically. It's equally prescient, today with what's going on, especially in America, it's all pretty scary stuff. Those lyrics are absolutely as applicable right now as they were back in the early 80s when they were written.

AU: You survived throat cancer. Was there anything you learned that you could share with people?

PG: I read everything I could about it. I kind of refused to let it faze me. Thankfully it wasn't hugely advanced. But I bought a whole bunch of books on cancer, most of which were hysterical crap that I binned. But there were two books that I thought made absolute sense. They were basically centered on diet and de-stressing. I've been a vegetarian for a long, since the early 1980s. But I ate more of the really high anti-cancer foods like mushrooms, broccoli, kale and greens, and every night, vast amounts of turmeric with black pepper. That's a real strong magic cancer compound. It pushes cancer cells dead in their tracks. So I take supplements every day. I kind of like de-stressed a fair bit. Positive thinking has a lot to do with it as well. I thought "It ain't gonna beat me, I'm gonna beat this sucker."

AU: Tell us about Paul Gray Bass Online and any advice for people starting out?

PG: Oh, yeah. Well, nowadays, we've all got computers and laptops with which we can record with. A lot of stuff that I've been doing with Captain Sensible, we just ping song files to and fro and when lockdown came that was how quite a lot of songs were written. With the guys that I play with in Southern California, we send sound files to and fro. So when everything was put on hold, and really the only money that comes in is from touring, I thought I'll try and get a bit more session work in, there's bound to be some great songs out there that might need my kind of bass style on it. So I knocked up a website, and a Facebook page for that and I've had a few interesting things come in. As for advice, I've always done music for the love of it. In this day and age it's pretty hard to get a traditional record deal. You have to do it all yourself and it's difficult, it's tough, but it's entirely possible. You just gotta have faith in it. You just gotta keep plugging away and you got to enjoy it, forget doing it for the money. You just got to enjoy it. If something good comes out of other people liking it, then bingo!

AU: Final words for Canadian punk rock fans?

PG: Yeah, people keep making the music. That's all I can say. More the merrier.

www.officialdamned.com

www.paulgraybassonline.com



Bay Area Godfathers The True Story Of Bay Area Metal

Interview with Writer/Director Bob Nalbandian
by Ira "Metal For Breakfast" Hunter
Transcribed by Erik Lindholm



Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with today?

BN: This is Bob Nalbandian. I am the director of the "Inside Metal" titles. We just put out a brand new movie called *Bay Area Godfathers*, this is part one of a two part movie. I've got a pretty extensive background in metal since the early 80s. I started a fanzine, I managed a few bands, worked on a couple of record labels, did some publicity work, mostly for a lot of different

publications, and did podcasts. Then I got into the filmmaking gig with the "Inside Metal" titles around 2011.

AU: What was your zine called?

BN: It was called "The Headbanger." It was started in 1982. And I think my last issue was '85. And it was a underground metal fanzine. I was based in Los Angeles. I was fortunate to be there during the rising metal scene of the early 80s.

And did one of the first features on Metallica, and also Slayer and Armored Saint. It was a pretty groundbreaking fanzine. It was similar to other fanzines, Brian Slagel had his "New Heavy Metal Review," before he started Metal Blade Records and Ron Quintana in the Bay Area had "Metal Mania," he's interviewed in this movie. Also John Strednansky, co-producer in this movie, had a fanzine in the Bay Area called "Metal Rendezvous" that started in '82.

AU: So that established a relationship with the bands you are now featuring in your documentaries?

BN: Yeah, that started an early relationship. I did a lot of early interviews in "The Headbanger." I did a "LA Metal" special, which at the time, had some of the hottest bands in LA, that were gigging around. WASP, Armored Saint and Megadeth. The very first article of Megadeth was in "The Headbanger." Gene Hoglan, from Dark Angel, and now Testament, used to write for me, he was like 14. So it was a cool little metal community with "The Headbanger" and that definitely got my start in journalism which led to doing this documentary, and got me these interviews. Some of the people I've interviewed, they remember me from way back when I interviewed them 30 years ago. They all go, "Wow, I remember that fanzine!"

AU: What are the other movies in the "Inside Metal" series?

BN: This is the fourth title, and each movie has two volumes. The first one we did in 2012 is called *The Pioneers of L.A. Hard Rock and Metal*

featuring Van Halen and Quiet Riot when Randy Rhoads was in the band.

This was just prior to MTV, so we really get into what started the metal scene in not just LA, but all around California. The second one is *The L.A. Metal Scene Explodes!* which is from '81 to '86. That's when the scene exploded with bands like Ratt and Mötley Crüe. The first wave of the bands that got signed like Armored Saint, Warrior, Malice Dealer. The third is *The Rise of L.A. Thrash Metal*. I wanted to do that because I thought the thrash bands in L.A. got neglected because they were overshadowed by the hair metal bands. Now this fourth title *Bay Area Godfathers* covers the San Francisco metal scene.

AU: San Francisco and the Bay Area are all combined?

BN: Yeah, San Francisco, East Bay, San Jose, that whole region.

AU: I know that San Francisco was really welcoming to L.A. bands like Metallica. But the Bay Area bands also sort of set Slayer straight when Slayer showed up wearing makeup the first time around, do you know that story?

BN: Yeah, I was dealing with the band pretty closely when they were going up to San Francisco on those first shows. And they were telling me when they wore makeup, people were saying, "Dude, you guys don't need the makeup, ditch the makeup, you sound so much better without the makeup." That's what they did. San Francisco was definitely good to a lot of those bands. Dark Angel, Abattoir, and Hirax went up there a few times. And of course, Metallica, ended up moving out there because I think the clubs, promoters, and the people there were definitely more acceptable to the thrash scene. Because in Hollywood, you couldn't really play that style of music. They didn't want slam dancing or stage diving. So yeah, the bands loved going up to San Francisco, and of course Megadeth did their very first four or five shows in San Francisco when Dave Mustaine first formed the band. When I was doing interviews for *Rise of L.A. Thrash Metal*, all the guys from Megadeth and Slayer and Lars from Metallica, they were all talking about going up to the Bay Area.

AU: There was just a documentary called *Turn It Around* that was about the East Bay punk rock scene. So it had quite a famous punk scene going, but this documentary mostly deals with hard rock, metal, and thrash?

BN: Yeah. We wanted to get to all aspects of the hard rock metal scene in the Bay Area in the 80s. Most documentaries about the Bay Area all have to do with thrash. Thrash was a thriving movement in the Bay Area. It started with Metallica, Exodus and Testament, who were originally called Legacy, also Death Angel, Violence, Possessed. All these bands are well known in the Bay Area. But there were a lot of really big bands like Laaz Rockit, that played traditional metal or power metal like Vicious Rumors, and Jet Boy. You also had glam bands like Head On or the rarely talked about RoadRunner, and Vain. We wanted to cover the whole scene. That's what we do with the "Inside Metal" titles. We try to capture all the genres of hard rock and metal.

AU: Was there something about the punk scene melding with the metal scene that created crossover and thrash in your opinion?

BN: Definitely in L.A. I saw that, but I really think it was more the New Wave of British Heavy Metal. You talk to the young thrash bands, they were all influenced by them. Everyone that wanted

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something a little bit heavier was influenced by the more underground bands like Motörhead, Iron Maiden, Angel Witch, Diamond Head, and Tygers of Pan Tang, so I credit more of that but definitely the punk scene also. I think in L.A. it really crossed over, especially when you have bands like Slayer playing with D.R.I. on the same bill.

AU: What will the second part of *Bay Area Godfathers* focus on?

BN: Part two basically continues where part one left off and it gets a little bit more into the craziness and the debauchery of the scene, it gets a little bit more gritty. We get into a lot of the individual bands, there's chapters on Metallica, Exodus, and Death Angel. We get more detail about these bands. Part two will definitely be even more exciting movie, I think. If you dig part one, you'll really dig part two.

AU: In your opinion what set the Bay Area music scene apart from others?

BN: I think their openness, especially the nightclubs and the people. It goes back to the 60s and the "Summer of Love". It was a very open environment and I just think it was a freer environment in the Bay Area. Where bands like Metallica could play some of the big clubs and do well, and create this thrash metal scene, that a lot of people say started in the Bay Area. Metallica, Megadeth, and Slayer were originally L.A. bands, but they really did thrive in the Bay Area.



AU: Who are some wicked bands from back in the day that may have been overlooked?

BN: Laaz Rockit were one of the biggest live draws in the Bay Area, but never really garnered the success. Also Vicious Rumors, and Stone Vengeance, a great all black hard rock metal band. Brocas Helm, Griffin, Violation, and Heathen were some other bands that didn't really get the recognition they deserved.

AU: How do people check out the movie?

BN: On October 6th, it will be out on DVD and also out on digital. It will be on Amazon Prime and on a lot of digital platforms.

AU: Anything else you want to promote?

BN: Yeah, all the Inside Metal titles are available on DVD and digital. And definitely check out *Bay Area Godfathers*. And part two should be coming out the beginning of the new year. I also do a podcast called "Shock Wave Skull Sessions."

AU: Final words for Canadians?

BN: Thanks for keeping the metal alive and stay warm this winter!

metalrockfilms.com

shockwavesradio.com

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Clive Barker

Fear Eternal

The following Q&A with Clive Barker was conducted on Reddit as an “Ask Me Anything” event on Oct 12th, 2020.

Intro: I’m Clive Barker, an author, artist and imaginer. My series include *Hellraiser*, *Candyman*, *Abarat* and *Books of Blood*. The new film adaptation of *Books of Blood* just premiered on Hulu last week, so I hope you’ve seen it by now. I’m really proud of the way Brannon Braga brought my words to life. I also have a new novel, *Deep Hill*, a large collection of out-of-print short stories, new short stories and a novella called *Mercy and the Jackal*, with the collection to be called *Fear Eternal*.

Absolute Underground: What are your three all-time favourite horror movies?

Clive Barker: It’s very hard to answer the question about favourite things, because they always change. But right now, I suppose my favourite three horror movies would be a French movie, *Eyes without a Face (Les Yeux sans Visage)* - which is bloody scary. I have to put *The Exorcist* in there, because it remains an immensely powerful picture. And my third... I think it’s John Carpenter’s *The Thing* (1982). John’s version was made back in the day; there has been a more recent version, which is good, but John’s version is superior, I think.

AU: What is your writing process?

CB: Great question and easily answered because I’m in the middle of a novel right now. I handwrite everything on a college-ruled paper with a black Pentel pen. I’ve always done this. All my books are handwritten, which adds up to a large number of hand-written pages, like *Imajica*. My working day is consistent. At the moment, every day is the same because I’m in lockdown. I begin between 9:30 and 10 in the morning and write through the day until 9 or 10 at night. On days when I’m also painting, I’ll use the period between 6 o’clock at night and 10 to paint.

AU: Which of your worlds was the hardest to fully realize? All of them, from Quiddity to the dominions of Imajica and others are all so detailed and feel so real. Which one gave you the most work to figure out how to convey?

CB: I suppose that the most difficult of worlds, literary worlds, that I’ve created so far, is Abarat. There are two more volumes of Abarat still to come. And a huge portion of it has not yet been revealed by me. The complexity of Abarat (25 islands, each one a different time of the day) is very complicated and quite challenging. I’m finishing off on book four of *Abarat* now, still have some paintings to make to illustrate it. And then I will go straight on to the final book, *Quintet*. This has been the most lengthy and complex of

the projects that I’ve attempted and I’m excited to revisit the world for the last two volumes.

AU: What horror media did you consume when you were younger that created that spark of love for the macabre?

CB: I was only able to read horror as a kid because there was no horror on television in Britain, back in the day. Nor was I allowed as a kid to see horror movies at the cinema. So my exposure to horror was purely through the word. The books I read, which “created the spark” were the great classics: Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Machen, Stephen King (of course), Shirley Jackson (of course), the list goes on and on...

AU: Have you ever experienced writer’s block, and if so, how did you combat it?

CB: OHHH YES. I don’t think there is a writer on the planet who hasn’t experienced the cycles of despair and hope. I only know of one way to break that cycle, and it’s hard to do. You just have to get up one morning and say, “To hell with my doubts. To hell with my anxieties. I want to do this. I was born to do this.” Passion is the thing which will make the difference. Sit down and do it. Write. Don’t be afraid of having faith in yourself.

AU: What inspired you most to write Candyman?

CB: I had an Irish grandmother, my father’s mother, who had an endless supply of scary stories up her sleeve. She always claimed these stories were true. One of them concerned a little boy who wandered into a public toilet in my native city, Liverpool, and there encountered somebody who cut his penis off. I was perhaps six when my grandmother told me this story. And it remained with me until I started to write the *Books of Blood*, and that story became part of the mythology behind the story of *Candyman*. The original story is called “The Forbidden,” and it’s in one of the *Books of Blood* (Volume 5).

AU: Tell us about your upcoming poetry book.

CB: The book of poems, which is called *The Presence of This Breath*, contains about 280 poems, and they range in tone and style, and length across the board. A few of them you may recognize from the *Abarat* books, but the bulk of the poems will be new to most readers. In subject matter, let me say this: they visit many of the subjects that I deal with in my novels and short fiction but often take paths that only a poem can take.

AU: Which of the Books of Blood short stories are you most proud of?

CB: Choosing your favourite story from a collection of 30 stories is difficult. But, if I had to choose one, I think it would be, “In the Hills, The Cities.” I was advised very strongly by my editor and my literary agent not to publish the story. This was 1984, and I was new to the writing business. My agent/editor thought I would do my career immeasurable damage by publishing a book in which the two main characters were male lovers. I published it anyway, and the story won both the British and World Fantasy Awards. So editors don’t know everything!

AU: What scares you?

CB: I’m going to set aside any political answer, because it’s too damn obvious. I will, however, say that the very real prospect of our species being diminished by this virus is genuinely terrifying. And the idea that we, in our turn, are kind of playing upon our planet is just chilling. I know that you are aware of our jeopardy as a species, purely through our own greed, carelessness, and egotism. We owe the world the greatest love and care that we can bestow upon it. We are its children.

AU: You’ve worked through so many mediums from novels, short stories, video games, poetry and art. Do you have any plans to explore any more mediums?

CB: I think I’m too old to learn tap dancing. I would like, however, to go back to my first love, which is puppet theater. That’s something I’m thinking about, even now.

AU: Do you have any memorable stories about coming up with the Books of Blood?

CB: I have one story about the *Books of Blood*, which may entertain you. I was struggling to find the titles for the stories, until one night, at a party, I was offered some brownies. I like brownies. I ate three. Only then was I told they were laced with weed, which I was not familiar with as an experience. I didn’t smoke it, eat it. My mind went gonzo for a while, and I titled several of the stories. I suppose the marijuana liberated some part of my brain that provided answers which must’ve been somewhere hiding between my ears. It was an extraordinary experience. And I still laugh about it.

AU: Who is your favourite poet?

CB: If I had to elect one poet, above all others, who I revere, it would be W. B. Yeats.

AU: Is there a project that never got off the ground that you’d jump at the chance of doing if money or studios weren’t an object? Or is there a project that you did a long time ago that you’d revisit?

CB: In the last month or so, several projects that I’ve always wanted to see as films or television series have been pursued by producers and will be turned into events for television or cinema in the next few years. They include: *Imajica*, *Weaveworld*, *Nightbreed*, more tales from the *Books of Blood*, and also a television series based upon the comic called *Ectokid*. There are others in the works, but all of those are moving along nicely.

AU: What is something you envy in horror today as opposed to 20 years ago?

CB: Let’s talk about the technical revolutions which have made cinema capable of creating just about anything. Are the horror films we see scarier, more stylish, and more revolutionary than they were before the CGI revolution?

I have to admit that the old ways of doing things still enthralls and pleases me more than the slick and faintly artificial effects that we see in just about any movie now. I’m old-fashioned in my tastes, I think.

AU: When coming up with the concept for a story, do you begin with real world experiences or is it more cerebral?

CB: My creative processes remain, after four decades of writing, largely a mystery to me. Where do stories come from, I have no clue. How do I develop them? Once again, I don’t have a clue. I have always told stories. I have a younger brother, to whom I would tell stories when we were both kids, and I think perhaps that’s where I learned how to do it, if you will. It was instinctive. It was natural to me. And I always felt like an outsider amongst my contemporaries at school, but telling stories was a way to make people feel warmer towards me. I was always the weird one who could tell you a scary story if you were in the mood. It’s a strange skill, but the urge to capture people’s attention with tales of terror has always come naturally to me.

AU: What was your inspiration for your short story The Midnight Meat Train, and what is the best advice you’ve gotten about writing?

CB: *The Midnight Meat Train* originates in a journey I took on the New York subway when I first visited that city. I got lost. By some means, I ended up in a stop called Far Rockaway, which I think was the end of the line, so to speak. From that, I cooked up the tale.

The best advice? It came from a playwright called John Patrick, who upon hearing I wanted to be a writer told me, “All you need is the three T’s. Taste, Talent, and Tenacity.” It’s 40 years since Pat gave me that advice. But I think it’s true.

AU: Do you remember the genesis of the story, In the Hills, the Cities?

CB: As to its origins, there is an etching by the Spanish painter Goya called “Collosus.” It depicts a giant consumed by his own melancholy, sitting on the edge of a mountain while tiny, panicked human beings run past him in terror. While

looking for a way to incorporate that vision into a story, I came up with the plot for *In the Hills, the Cities*.

AU: What is the most fun you’ve had while working on a project?

CB: They’re all fun in their different ways. Indeed, if they weren’t fun, I probably wouldn’t do them. I’ve abandoned books when I wasn’t enjoying the process. But, overall, the opportunity to get up in the morning and go to my desk to do the things that I like most in the world is such a genuine source of joy to me that even a bad day is good.

AU: Is there anyone still lurking in your head that you have yet to capture on the page? Anyone we should be worried about?

CB: Oh yes. There’s a couple of forces of darkness that are coming up in my next novel, *Deep Hill*, and in my new collection of short fiction, which is called *Fear Eternal*. Both those books will be delivered to my publisher in the next few months.

AU: What has been your favourite part of seeing the Books of Blood stories come to life on-screen?

CB: When I’m directing a picture, as I directed *Hellraiser*, *Nightbreed*, and *Lord of Illusions*, I have a certain kind of fun, which is a very different kind of fun in designing a movie or producing a movie. I love the process of turning paper and pen or creating narratives with actors into finished experiences. It’s a rare opportunity that destiny has given me to be able to do the thing I love most every day of my life.

AU: What sort of music and bands have you been listening to lately?

CB: It’s been a year of listening to my favourites – songs and symphonies that I’ve played for the last 30 years or so. Why am I casting a backward glance at music I used to play a long while ago? I think it’s reassuring me at a time when so many things that are going on in our public and private lives are dark and dangerous.

So, what have I been playing? Well, Sibelius, Bach, Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, the Stones, Johnny Mathis – really my tastes are chaotic. I like good tunes, clever lyrics, and a sexy voice, but don’t we all?

AU: How do you feel about the ways in which the horror genre has developed over the past few decades? And where do you think it is heading for the next few years?

CB: I have no idea where horror is going to go in the near future, but I think we will see a great diversification of opportunities because the proliferation of media allows for all sorts of new forms of storytelling

AU: As an author who sees their work translated to film, is there any part of the experience of a book you wish could be translated better to the screen? Is there a part of the film experience you wish could be better felt through a book?

CB: The most significant difference between a written story and a film story is being able to enter the minds of characters when you’re describing a narrative in words. By contrast, the cinematic experience gives you the surface of the world, but doesn’t allow you to penetrate as deeply into the psychic/psychological world which we contain. There’s losses and gains on both sides. That’s why, I suppose, I’ve always enjoyed doing both.

AU: What was it like being a first time director on Hellraiser? Were you knowledgeable on how to conduct a crew on a film set, or did you have guidance from someone?

CB: Neither. I had no clue as to how to work with a film crew, because I had never directed a movie before, and it was done with such speed and such a low budget I didn’t even think about the problems that I’m sure I should’ve been concerned with. I just did it. And I suspect that if you look back over some of the questions that I’ve answered today, you’ll find that theme of just doing it appearing more than once. It’s the cornerstone of my creative skills, if you will – that the worst thing I can do is think too hard about what I’m doing and not trust my instincts. Your heart knows better than your head.

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Doug Bradley The Hellpriest Speaks

Interview by Ira “Hellborn” Hunter and Chad
“Cuttin In” Persley

Absolute Underground: How did you get into acting and how did you first meet Clive Barker?

Doug Bradley: How I got into acting? I have no idea really. I've never taken an acting class in my life, and some would say it shows, but I was always doing acting. I never missed an opportunity. In high school in Liverpool in the late 1960s, I got myself cast in the school play and met my fellow cast members, one of whom was Clive Barker. He was then already writing, directing, starring in and drawing the posters for his own plays which were being put on in the school which had titles like “Voodoo” and “Inferno.” As a teenager, he was a remarkable individual. Larger than life in every conceivable way. Very funny, he's very witty, has a great sense of the ridiculous and the more stupid it is, the more he loves it. And it was a meeting that changed my life. The head teacher at the school had recognized a talent, a difficult talent, but he used to give Clive free rein of the school hall for a week to put on his plays, and that was where I kind of got to know Clive better. There was a wonderful English teacher named Norman Russell who was hugely influential for Clive. Norman had studied at Oxford under Tolkien and had set homework for Clive's class which was a piece of original composition. When he got his homework back, his teacher said, “I'm not qualified to mark this. It's too good.” He had spotted a talent in Clive which he carefully nurtured.

After school in university, we carried on crazy experimental theatre, the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool let us have the theatre to put productions on. We created these ourselves from the ground up, pieces that we spent a year putting together and then rehearsing that

we performed once and never again. We then moved to London and formed the “Dog Company,” put on plays like “The History Of The Devil,” in which I played the Devil, “Frankenstein In London,” which I played Dr. Frankenstein, and “The Secret Life Of Cartoons,” in which I played a giant rabbit. The Dog Company

came to a natural end around 1982. Then in 1985, I was at a party that Clive was also at and in conversation, he said to me, “Oh by the way, I'm trying to put together a low-budget, British independent horror film and I think there's a part in there that might be right for you.” That was October 1985, that was the first time that

Hellraiser appeared in my life though I may have already read *The Hellbound Heart*. And a year later we were in Cricklewood Production Village, doing it.

AU: When you were first getting the makeup applied, were there any other variations to the look of Pinhead?

DB: I believe there were a couple of different designs. Geoff Portass who was my make up artist on the first movie, working with Clive, he is really responsible for producing the Pinhead make-up as we know it. There was one other design

which was rather more tribal in it's appearance, kind of pierced earlobes. A much rougher image but Geoff has said that they played around with other ideas but Clive always wanted to bring it back to this very neat, ordered, controlled piece of self-mutilation. He's basically a guy with a bunch of nails banged into his head, and as a way of presenting that image that obviously is visually a turn-off. There would just be a mess, very unaesthetic and nasty. It's a deeply nasty idea, there's no getting around it but that's never people's response. And it was never people's response when I walked on set. It was, “Oh! Wow... WOW!” But that's important 'cause the way the image is presented draws you in rather than pushing you out.

AU: What was the vibe on set of *Hellraiser*?

DB: *Hellraiser* was my first movie. So I'm making my debut in this strange world that I really don't know anything about, wearing a skirt, covered in latex, with black contact lenses. But any movie set needs to be light and happy and funny but when the cameras roll, very serious, which it always was. Clive brings that energy and the humour, and the comedy is all part of the process but it's intense when it needs to be.

AU: Was there anything different when you were in the pillar of souls in *Hellraiser III*?

DB: It was a different version of the make-up that

wasn't glued onto my head. This bit went on to my face and the rest went onto the pillar. So until we were done I couldn't move.

AU: What was your impression of Clive's latest novel *The Scarlet Gospels* and the fate of Pinhead?

DB: I loved *The Scarlet Gospels*, loved what he did with Pinhead now that he's called the “Hellpriest.” He never was called Pinhead, strictly speaking. He's anonymous. All the Cenobites are anonymous in the *Hellbound Heart*, anonymous in *Hellraiser*. The Cenobite names arrived purely because while the Bob Keen Image Special Effects crew were working on the make-ups, they had to call us something. They couldn't keep calling us Lead Cenobite, Cenobite Number 1, etc., so they gave us the names. Pinhead, Chatterer, Butterball and Deep Throat... which is why she continued to be credited as the Female Cenobite.

AU: What is the future of *Hellraiser*? Will there be another film that you'll be involved with?

DB: I assume you're aware of *Hellraiser: Revelations*. I was offered *Revelations* back in 2010. The movie was being made for all the wrong reasons. Basically Dimension was in danger of losing the rights to the franchise. So I get a phone call, not from anyone at Dimension Films but from Gary Tunnicliffe, my make-up artist on the last five *Hellraiser* films, trying to persuade me to do this thing. This was the middle of July, they needed film in front of the cameras by September the 3rd. They have no script, no cast, no crew, no nothing. They are spending \$150,000 on it, total. I did ask to see the script which Gary had written, which I read and was awful so I said, “No.” At the beginning of last year, I finally got around to seeing the film. having read the screenplay, I knew it was going to be bad. In all honestly, I didn't think it was conceivably possible that it could be quite that bad. *Hellraiser: Revelations* is so damn awful, Pinhead's scenes look like they had been shot in the garage next door rather than in Hell. I said it looked like the Lifetime Channel made a *Hellraiser* movie. Clive called it a “dumpster abortion movie.”

AU: What was your favourite *Hellraiser* movie to work on?

DB: I didn't really have a bad experience on any of them, other than stressed out. *Inferno* story-wise is my least favourite. I only worked on it for two days and I didn't like the kind of moralistic tone that Scott Derrickson who directed it had given to Pinhead. *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* is certainly a favourite for me in a lot of ways. It was my first experience working in the United States. I got to play the dual role of Pinhead and Captain Elliot Spencer which was great. It is a challenge that not many actors will find in their career. The original *Hellraiser* will always be my favourite movie of the series and is always going to hold that special

place for me because it was where we started. If you had told me then, when I was sitting in Cricklewood Production Village at 6 o'clock on a damp Tuesday morning, playing a character with no name covered in latex, being paid union minimum rates to do it and on screen for barely 10 minutes. If you had told me then that over 30

years down the line that I would still be talking about this movie, I would have thought you were mad.

AU: What was it like on the set with Motörhead for the *Hellraiser* music video?

DB: It was interesting. We shot it in a condemned old movie theatre. Here's Lemmy out on the sidewalk having a cigarette. And I smoked then, so I bummed a cigarette from him, then I went and got into make- up. The band were always very close to turning into Spinal Tap, but never quite... So Lemmy and I next encountered each other sitting across

the card table to play the game of cards that Pinhead loses because Lemmy plays the Ace of Spades. He wins the card game, loses his soul. Clever plot twist.

AU: How did you prepare to portray Pinhead on screen?

DB: I read *The Hellbound Heart*, I read the screenplay again and again. Clive said he's a cross between a monk and a butcher, a surgeon who works in a hospital in which there are no wards only operating theatres. You're also the guy in charge of the administration, responsible for making sure everything runs on time. Clive gave me copies of *Piercing Fans International Quarterly*, which was filled with images of people slicing and dicing every inch and available corner of their body. Body piercing and body modification was not as widespread then. We had the punks with their safety pins and so forth. I had my ears pierced. But not to the extent that we are familiar with now. So I decided not to take the Robert De Niro route and try doing some of these things to myself or my private parts. I decided to just look at the pictures and let my imagination do the work. The obvious questions that you'll ask yourself as a an actor about a character clearly don't apply here. What car do you drive? Or what do you eat for breakfast? Not applicable here. Nor was there anywhere that I could go to watch Cenobites at work for a few days to take notes. So then the answer is, I have no idea. It's imagination and it's acting. You read the screenplay and then you get the make-up on and you sit in front of the mirror going, “I'll tear your soul apart.” Then you get on your marks, you do it, and apparently I did something right.

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Hellraiser / Nightbreed

Interview with Simon Bamford, the actor who played the Butterball Cenobite in Hellraiser and Hellbound, plus Ohnaka in Nightbreed.
by Ira "Cabal" Hunter

AU: Please introduce yourself?

SB: I'm Simon Bamford, known for playing the Butterball Cenobite in the Hellraiser franchise. Also for two other Clive Barker movies: Ohnaka in Nightbreed and Derek in Book of Blood.

I played Peter Vincent in the Fright Night documentary You're so Cool Brewster wearing a Roddy McDowell prosthetic and have appeared in all of the Dark

Ditties series on Amazon Prime.

AU: How did you first get involved in acting and how did you first meet Clive Barker?

SB: I had a headmaster at primary school who was keen on drama. He first piqued my interest, eventually leading to studying performing arts for three years at college.

It was there; at Mountview Theatre School in North London, that I was seen, in a production of King Lear, by a writer and director who ran a fringe theatre company nearby. This was Clive Barker along with his friends Oliver Parker and Doug Bradley. Clive asked to meet me afterwards and I was invited to join his company.

AU: For your role as the Cenobite known as Butterball in the first two Hellraiser films, how did you get the part originally?

SB: After a few years of working with The Dog Company (Clive's theatre group) we realised that profit share productions don't put

food on the table or pay the rent. So sadly it was disbanded and we all went our separate ways

into more mainstream theatre. During that time Clive had honed his skills and found themes that recur constantly in his work. One of the productions had a fully skinned (but alive) man.

We all met up a few times after that. Clive found a publisher who gave him a contract to publish *The Books of Blood* and we all went to his launch party.

I rang him a couple of years later to see how he was doing, he was in the early stages of writing *Hellraiser* and the American studios had agreed to let him also direct. It was to be a small, very low budget film, shot at Cricklewood Production Village in London. While we were chatting he asked if I'd be interested in playing one of the monsters. I said sure, Clive is inspirational and creative and totally unique, but we were all really signing up to get some filming experience. We didn't ever expect to be talking about it 34 years later. There wasn't much discussed beforehand. The script arrived and changed and kept changing, right up to the final wrap.

AU: Did the design of the character change at all during the pre-production stage?

SB: Image Animation were the prosthetics company chosen. Run by Bob Keen with a hugely impressive team of young, artists, sculptors, designers and technicians. I visited them a few times for a life cast and for screen tests once the initial heads were built. The detail increased during early pre-production, blood vessels added just under the skin. The neck folds increased. On the whole it stayed as originally conceived. The original name in the script was Fat Cenobite. We all were given nicknames by the crew and mine was Butterball.

AU: How were you able to bring a unique performance even buried under all the make-up and prosthetics?

SB: With difficulty. I concentrated on walking differently, I studied pregnant women.

The first day on set I worked with Doug Bradley who gave me feedback as to what was moving in the face whilst I moved my own face inside. Basically nothing. The prosthetic was so thick (2" of foam late) that whatever I did inside, even though it was secured to my face with surgical superglue, had no effect on Butterballs face. So I used my tongue to lick his lips.

AU: You're kind of a skinny guy, why were you chosen to portray a much larger character?

SB: Clive wanted the wound inside Butterball's stomach to be deep enough for him to put his whole hand inside. So they needed a skinny actor in a fat suit. The idea was that he could play with his internal organs.

AU: Is Butterball the leader of the Cenobites in the novella, The Hellbound Heart, not Pinhead?

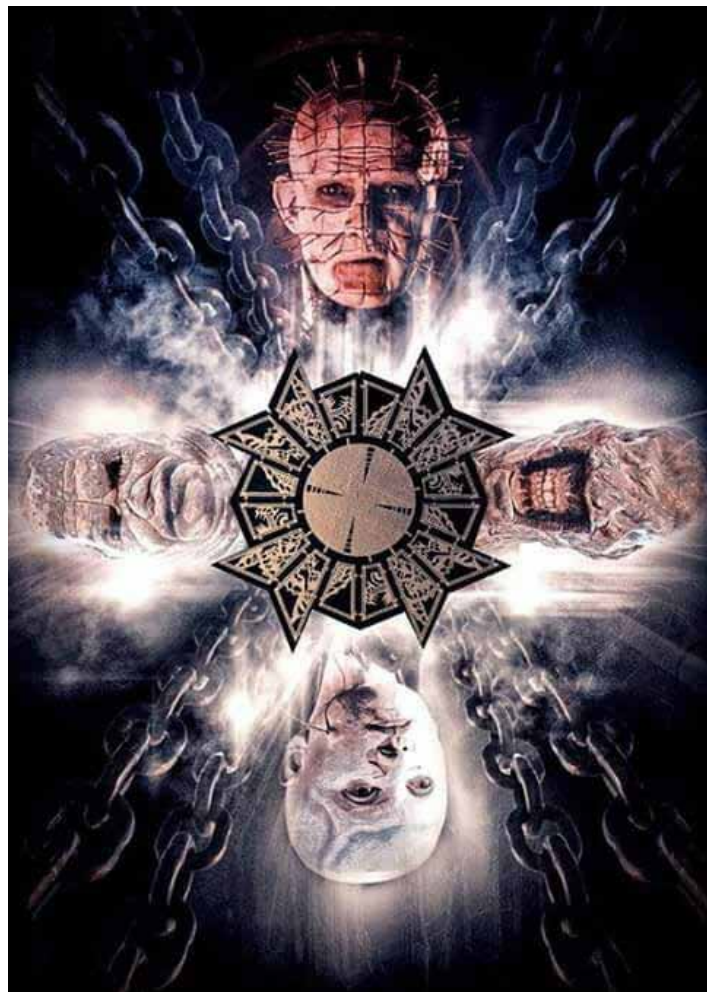


SB: It's been years since I read the source material. He did originally speak in the script. The last piece of makeup applied was a set of disgusting false teeth that made it impossible for me to close my mouth. Because the budget was so low they didn't think they could afford ADR dubbing so the day of shooting my first dialogue they decided to cut all my lines. I was gutted.

AU: Were you blind inside the mask?

SB: There were no ear holes, nose holes or eye holes in the makeup and it was two inches thick. Once sealed inside I was totally blind and virtually deaf. The reason was that his ears had been cut off, he has no nose and when he takes off his dark glasses we see his eyes have been sewn shut.

AU: What sets Clive Barker apart from other



creators/directors you have worked with?

SB: His enthusiasm, joy of life and the creative process is inspiring and brings out the best in everyone. You want to be the best you can possibly be around him and he encourages everyone to go further than they've ever dreamt. His mind is wonderful and it's such an honour to be around him. He is a genius with a totally unique view of the world. He is quite awesome.

AU: What were the differences between working on Hellraiser and Hellraiser 2?

SB: We were a little more comfortable with what





was expected of us. Most of the cast and crew were the same on both films. We had a different director of course and a different actress as 'The Female Cenobite' with Barbie Wilde stepping into Grace Kirby's vivisected neck prosthetic.

AU: What did Christopher Young's soundtrack bring to the first two *Hellraiser* films?

SB: I wasn't there, but I understand that when producer Christopher Figg and Clive first saw a screening of the movie with Christopher Young's soundtrack, they knew they had a hit. It is scary, dramatic, beautiful, and epic in scale. Taking Clive's original idea of *Hellraiser* as the ultimate love story and adding a waltz for the dead and the living to dance to. Inspired and wonderful.

AU: Did you know the Cenobites were going to become part of horror history when filming?

SB: No, we were never seen as the important characters at the time of shooting. Although the makeup, costume design and character props were incredible and unique. Nobody realised that we were to be one of the lasting legacies. It was the studio who first realised their potential. They increased the budget and asked for the ending to be changed opening it up for a sequel.

AU: Tell us about the character you played in *Nightbreed*.

SB: I played the ill fated Ohnaka in *Nightbreed*. He had a necklace of chicken skulls, a set of pantaloons and tattoos. He appears often once the story gets to the underground world of Midian 'where the Monster live'. He rescues the heroine from Berserkers and is a sidekick to Doug Bradley's character who rules the world. I think Clive drew on King Lear where we originally met. Ohnaka is very much The Fool to Lylesberg's King Lear. He is a playful and empathetic character for the audience, which makes his demise all the more powerful. Especially backed up by Danny Elfman's powerful score.

AU: What was the name of your dog in the film?

SB: Frank, which was apt as it was the name of the main character in *Hellraiser* too. He was a Boston Bull Terrier owned by the first assistant director. As he wasn't a trained movie dog, some of the takes took many hours to accomplish. I had marmite

smothered on my legs and sausages in my hands.

AU: Was it strange to watch yourself be blown-up in a massive blast in *Nightbreed*?

SB: I missed it sadly. We spent a day shooting the Ohnaka attack scene. Breaking occasionally so I could have more 'burning' prosthetics added to my face and back. Eventually they finished with me and they sent me away to have the makeup removed (which took an hour) whilst in the chair there was an enormous explosion sound and they told me I'd just been blown up. I would have loved to watch it. It does look amazing on screen. They had a dummy in the foetal position packed with explosives which they showed me prior to my last shot, so I could end in the exact same shape.

AU: Did Clive ever discuss his visions for the proposed sequels to *Nightbreed* with you?

SB: He was very excited about the sequels and the ending is obviously set up for more movies. Sadly it never happened. My character was dust by then so I wasn't expecting to return.

AU: Were you happy to hear

there was going to be a *Director's Cut* for *Nightbreed*?

SB: Clive talks about the *Director's Cut* as being the movie that he always intended to release. A fantastical love story 25 years in the making.

The studio sadly messed with his original vision and tried to make the monsters the villains when they were always intended to be the heroes. In his new version the lead characters are given time to develop and create empathy from the audience.

AU: Were you able to see the *Hellraiser* films and *Nightbreed* in the theatre originally?

SB: I saw the *Hellraiser* movies in my local cinema but *Nightbreed* was given a big launch party at the Odeon in London's Leicester Square. A red carpet event with a pre-party at

Tower Records where dry martinis had lychees painted like eyeballs. I had way too many.

It's hard watching something that you are attached to. You know the story, you know the reality of each scene and the laughter that went on behind scenes. So it's difficult to see it through an audience's eyes. As I remember they were very well received. Especially the original *Hellraiser* as it was so unusual and unique.

AU: What was your role and involvement in 2009's *Book of Blood* movie?

SB: I played Derek, a removal man (another of

Clive's recurring themes). The original story was based around a student called Simon McNeal, played by Jonas Armstrong in the movie. Clive told me years before that he based the character on me. By the time it was filmed though I was far too old to play a 19 year old so they gave me a small cameo instead.

AU: What can you tell us about the series you are involved in called *Dark Ditties*?

SB: It's a dark, anthology series, a mixture of *Black Mirror*, *The Twilight Zone* and *American Horror Story*. Very 1970s British in its styling. Each episode is totally different to the previous and yet they all link up eventually. I have played an Investment Banker, a creepy Groundsman, an Accountant who stole from organized crime, a Father in an apocalyptic Zombie future and a 85 year old woman haunted by the ghost of her abusive husband. I'm also an executive producer. It's currently streaming on Amazon Prime.

AU: What are some of your fondest memories from the sets of *Hellraiser* and *Nightbreed*?

SB: Messing around in the dressing rooms. We had very early 5am call times, so we got increasingly silly as the days went on and the tiredness kicked in. On *Nightbreed* it was the incredible sets they built at Pinewood studios and the rapport I had with both Doug Bradley and Craig Sheffer.

AU: Any past Halloween stories to share?

SB: I got a bank of lights one year and a smoke machine along with a very loud sound system. When the kids knocked, this eerie red pulsating light started along with Chris Young's *Hellraiser* music, the door slowly opened and through a bank of thick smoke I appeared suddenly in full



makeup. The neighbourhood kids were all at the end of the drive, too scared to come near.

AU: Are you still in contact with Clive Barker?

SB: Yes, we've been friends for nearly 40 years. He lives in the Beverly Hills and I live in a village in Lincolnshire, but we talk often and I try to get over to see him every year.

AU: Final words for Canadians horror fans?

SB: Thanks for your support over the years. We'd love to come and meet you at a Canadian convention one day. I have Canadian relatives so I know how fantastic you and your country are.

AU: Where can people find you online?

SB: I'm on Facebook

facebook.com/simon.bamford1

Or Twitter

@simonbamford





Barbie Wilde

Interview with Actress/Writer Barbie Wilde, AKA The Female Cenobite of *Hellraiser II*
By Lacey Paige

Absolute Underground: Your role as the Female Cenobite in Clive Barker's *Hellraiser II* paved the path for beloved female horror villains to come. Was this your first big break in the genre and how did you land that particular role?

Barbie Wilde: Yes, *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* was my first horror role. I think the fact that I was a classically trained mime artist helped. The received wisdom at the time was that mime artists work better with prosthetics than actors who didn't have any

general. However, occasionally strong female characters have come along, like Ripley in *Alien*, Rachel in *The Ring*, and Mary in *American Mary*, so I do feel hopeful that more adventurous filmmakers might take the leap and create more dynamic, challenging roles for women in horror movies in the future. And there are more women now involved in the writing, producing and directing of horror movies, so I'm hoping the roles of women will change accordingly.

AU: What sparked your interest in writing horror fiction; how did that particular endeavour come to fruition?

BW: I think that I've always been interested in the "dark side". Even when I was a kid, it was the criminals' behavior in Sherlock Holmes stories that fascinated me more than the actual solving of the crimes.

Also, my childhood was very much coloured by the movies I watched. My brother always insisted on watching the "Creature Features" on Saturday afternoon (and making me watch the films with him), so at probably too early an age, I was subjected to the exquisite paranoia of such films as *The Thing*, *Invaders From Mars*, and

Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

The real breakthrough for me in horror was attending a class in Gothic Literature in high school when I was 18.

AU: Your first short story was published in the *Hellbound Hearts* anthology. Were you a fan of Clive Barker's work before having been cast in *Hellraiser II*?

BW: I had heard of Clive, of course, as there was quite a fuss when the first *Hellraiser* film came out, but I didn't read *The Hellbound Heart* until I was preparing for my role in *Hellbound*. It was interesting to note that the lead Cenobite in the novella was female. This was obviously changed for the film. It was the novella lead Cenobite that inspired my story, "Sister Cilice", for the *Hellbound Hearts* anthology.

AU: Your stories are outlandishly unique, exceedingly gutsy and downright vulgar. Where do you generally come up with

the ideas for them?

BW: I guess the best answer is that we all have swirling pools of unconscious thoughts, experiences, fears, and paranoias, and sometimes an idea pops up and you think, "Hey, I can write about that one!" However, the idea needs to be strong enough that I can feel inspired to complete the story. Writing isn't an easy process for me, but

when the story works, it's a great feeling.

AU: Let's talk about *The Venus Complex*—a raw, sophisticated, and depraved study of the mind of a serial killer/sexual deviant. The framework is familiar but you've taken the crime fiction tropes that are a mainstay in this sort of material, gutted them and allowed them to rot in the dank, decrepit crawlspace of your imagination until they turned pungently putrid. Tell me more about the spawning of Michael Friday's heinous legacy.

BW: I had been toying with the idea of writing a book about a forensic psychologist on the trail of a serial killer. I'd even started writing it in the third person. But I felt that it was turning out to be like a lot of other serial killer novels out there. I wanted to do something different. I wanted to write a book that I wanted to read.

No matter how many novels and non-fiction books about serial killers I read, I hadn't found one that really told me their true motivations... (Although Thomas Harris' *The Red Dragon* comes close). The other thing that was a catalyst was a friend of mine, who was a notorious dominatrix from New York. She confessed to me that her greatest sexual fantasy was to sleep with a serial killer. Wow! That was shocking, yet, as I was to learn through my research, not an uncommon fantasy.

AU: You currently have several projects in the works. What can you say about them?



BW: I'm writing a screenplay based on my short story, "Zulu Zombies", which appeared in *Gorezone* #29 and the *Bestiarum Vocabulum* anthology (published by Western Legends Press). I'm also working on a play based on my first short horror story, "Sister Cilice". As far as acting goes, I will be appearing in a horror anthology film called *Bad Medicine*, which is one of the most original and visually enthralling scripts I've read in a long time, written by horror author Dave Jeffery and helmed by the Bram Stoker Award-winning director James Hart.

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movement training. Also, I knew what the word "cenobite" meant. Director Tony Randel thought it was a word that Clive made up, but I'd looked it up in the dictionary beforehand.

AU: How do you think the role of women in horror has evolved from the earliest days of cinema up to the current times?

BW: Unfortunately, women have played more than their fair share of victim [roles] in movies in





The Chattering Hour

Interview with actor Nicholas Vince who portrayed Hellraiser's Chatterer Cenobite and Nightbreed's Kinski.

by Ira "Hellbound" Hunter

AU: Please introduce yourself.

Nicholas Vince: My name is Nicholas Vince and I'm best known for playing the Chatterer Cenobite in Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*.

AU: How did you first get involved with acting and when did you first meet Clive Barker?

NV: I was doing amateur dramatics since I was a kid. Then I went to drama school when I was 21. Shortly thereafter, I went to a party, invited by Simon Bamford who plays the Butterball Cenobite in the *Hellraiser* films. Simon was in drama school with me and he'd already started working with Clive Barker. I just met Clive at a party.

AU: I understand that Clive invited you to do some modelling for his artwork? What volumes of the *Books of Blood* was your likeness on?

NV: You can recognize me on the cover of *Volume 4* of the UK hardback versions. You can also definitely kind of recognize me on *Volume 1*. I've got a knife sticking in my head and I'm holding up a photograph of Clive, and in *Volume 4*, I've got my brains all exposed and there are syringes dropping into it and my flesh is all floaty, it's Clive so of course you've got floating melty flesh.

AU: What did you think about Clive Barker's writing when he first read his works?

NV: I loved all of the *Books of Blood*, really it's his imagination - the way he can convey detail. It's the breadth of his imagination as well. "In the Hills, the Cities" is probably my favourite of all of them. I absolutely loved *Weaveworld*. It's his imagination and his ability to create worlds which I really enjoy most.

AU: Did they inspire the books of short stories you wrote later, "What Monsters Do" and "Other People's Darkness"?

NV: Yes, absolutely. I took a long time out of acting, then in 2012 I had the chance to start writing again. I had some short stories published back in the 1990s. So I thought, right, I'm going

to write some more, I'm going to do a collection. The first thing I did was re-read the *Books of Blood*, because I thought who knows how to write short stories? Clive Barker. Let's learn from the best.

AU: How did you get the part for your role in *Hellraiser* as the Chatterer Cenobite?

NV: I'd been modelling for Clive for nearly three years and Clive basically A) wanted people who were actors, and B) wanted his friends on his first movie as director. So he got myself, Doug Bradley, who he's known since they were at school, Simon who he previously worked with in Clive Barker's The Dog Company, then his cousin Grace. He really surrounded himself with his friends.

AU: How did you approach the character? Were you given any Cenobite background info?

NV: *laughs* Not at all, not in the normal way. *Piercing Fans International Quarterly* was a magazine, where there were some fairly extreme images, and from that Clive obviously had gotten some of his inspiration. So no background in terms of history. The movement, sight, and hearing were very restrictive when I was wearing the mask and the costume. So I went back to lessons which I had done at drama school, where we were told to act anger with the tip of your nose, for example. All the emotion can only be expressed in this one place. Then there was another lesson in our mime class, where we had to bring in a cardboard box and we put it over our heads and through using our body and movement we had to convey the character of this creature, so I called on those things.

AU: Did the design of the Chatterer change at all during production?

NV: When we did the makeup test, I originally had sharp pointy teeth, but when Clive saw the tests he thought they looked a bit too fish-like. The teeth you see are replica molds of my real teeth.

AU: Was the Chatterer character featured in the novella "The Hellbound Heart"?

NV: Yes, there is a Cenobite that chatters its teeth. I think that's all you're ever told about it. The fact that it chatters his teeth and that the skin is described as flayed and pulled back from the face. They're very brief descriptions of the Cenobites.

AU: Was his name always Chatterer?

NV: There are various names. At one stage I was known as "poor bastard" because they pointed out I wasn't going to be able to hear, speak or see whilst I was wearing the makeup, which was more or less true. I think in the second film, he's known as the Chattering Cenobite, and then recently, I've never quite understood how or why, he's been referred to by the younger fans as Chatterbox.

AU: What was it like working with Clive Barker?

NV: Oh, he's great. I think

this is something that people perhaps don't think of when they see these films, but honestly, we had so much fun on set and Clive is just really funny, he has a wicked sense of humour and would be cracking jokes. The atmosphere on the

set, all comes from the director. So it was fairly laid back and he got some very clever people around and we had a lot of fun.

AU: When you saw all the cenobites together, did you know that they'd become horror icons?

NV: Well of course I never got to see them until I saw the film, because I couldn't see. I literally couldn't see. I did get to see Grace and Doug when they were being made up so I knew what they looked like. They photographed the four cenobites with Clive sitting on the floor, with the puzzle box in his hands. I think that's probably when I first saw all the four Cenobites together. I just thought, wow, these are absolutely extraordinary.

AU: What were the main differences between working on *Hellraiser* and the sequel?

NV: Basically, it was a much bigger production. For the second one we moved from the very small Cricklewood Studios to Pinewood film studios where they made the *James Bond* films and Tim Burton's *Batman*. Also Clive was just producing at that stage, Tony Randall was directing and Pete Atkins had taken over doing the screenwriting.

AU: Did your prosthetics get an upgrade too?

NV: It did get an upgrade because I got eyes. So that was really nice. Spoilers for anyone who's not seen the film but Chatterer changes from a monster with definitely no eyes to a monster with eyes. It happens completely off camera but we did actually film a transformation sequence.

AU: How would you describe Kinski, the character you played in the film *Nightbreed*?

NV: Well, his face is like a crescent moon basically, I think that's the most notable feature. I got sent to the gym to buff myself up. It's not like I built up huge amounts of muscle but I kind of got a bit toned. I mentioned this because I'm stripped to the waist in the film. I did have to dye my chest hair black, that's any interesting experience that involved a Saran wrap loin cloth.

AU: The *Hellraiser* and *Nightbreed* comic books expanded the worlds of Clive Barker and continued his storylines. What was your involvement with the comic book projects?

NV: I did about half a dozen stories for the original round of the *Hellraiser* *Anthology* stories from Epic Comics. I had great joy working with some really amazing artists like John Bolton. Then I did the *Nightbreed* comics, I did four issues. I was supposed to have six issues but they cancelled it, so I had to cram a bunch of issues into one.

AU: Did Clive Barker ever discuss his visions for the proposed sequels of *Nightbreed* with you?

NV: No, but I'd love to see that. There's been talk of a *Nightbreed* TV series and we've just got the new *Books of Blood* on Hulu.

AU: Any difficult times you remember on set?

NV: When I got told on *Hellbound* that the Cenobites were going to revert back to their human form. I thought great at long last I'm going to be seen out of makeup. I was wrong because they said "Oh no, Nick, you're going to be a child." I was so pissed off. I remember being so upset. It took me a while to get over that.

AU: Did you write the origin story of Chatterer in the recent *Hellraiser* anthology published by

Seraphim Inc?

NV: Yes, I wrote two stories about the backstory of the Chatterer. The one I'm most proud of is *Prayers of Desire*. I really appreciated the idea that this is a child who grows up in hell. Because when he reverted back to a human being, it's a child. So this is a child who grew up in hell. I became fascinated by that idea, what on Earth did he do? So yeah, seek it out. It's not for the faint-hearted, as the editor said when he read my submission.

AU: What are some of your fondest memories from working on *Nightbreed* and *Hellraiser*?

NV: The camaraderie and the friends I've made. You meet people on a film and you become very close and you always say, "We will stay in touch,"



but that very seldom happens. On *Hellraiser* it did, and *Nightbreed* it did, not just with my fellow actors, but with the guys who did the makeup. I've been in touch with them all over the years.

AU: Tell us about your new YouTube channel and podcast that you're currently working on.

NV: It's called "The Chattering Hour." It's produced by Chris Roe Management & Tea Time Productions. I was invited by Chris Roe to create a new YouTube and podcast show. He was very aware of the 140 odd episodes I did of the YouTube show "Chattering" with Nicholas Vince. We talked about and the sort of guests that we'd like me to be chatting with. It goes live on October 8th, the first two guests will be Malcolm McDowell and Kathleen Kinmont (*Bride of Re-Animator*). You can head over to the website, thechatteringhour.com to find out who else is coming on this month. What I like about the show is that I have an hour with people, so that gives me a chance to really delve deep.

AU: What were your thoughts on the *Cabal Cut* and the Director's Cut of *Nightbreed*?

NV: They are absolutely superb. I'm so pleased that they got to be done. I think it is a testament to Clive's work that people are interested enough to find the lost footage. So if you want it as close to what Clive has originally envisioned, go for the Director's Cut, or the *Cabal Cut* is also a really interesting experience. If it had not been for all that work done by Russell Cherrington and everyone who put it together and just going around and banging the drum about it, the footage that had been lost never would have been found and we never would have had Occupy Midian.

AU: Any final words for Canadian horror fans?

NV: I really want to visit you one day, my grandfather fought in the First World War on the side of the Canadians. I would love to come and visit your wonderful country one day.

www.nicholasvince.com

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PD

Interview by Ira "Hosoi" Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

PD: My name is PD and my job is making skateboards and convincing people to dedicate their lives to riding them. Also known to be grumpy and impatient.

AU: When and how did you first discover skateboarding?

PD: Introduced by my older brother in Nanaimo right when the urethane wheels came out in the early 70s.

AU: What was the genesis of the idea to start your own skateboard company?

PD: Rode a bunch of what was being offered at the time and thought we could do better, a striving for improved equipment.

AU: You recently celebrated your 40th anniversary - How did you celebrate?

PD: With a live show in Vancouver featuring may favorite Japanese band Dub4Reason, they came all the way from Gifu, Japan and kicked mucho ass, I saw some dropped jaws in the house for sure.

AU: What is the secret of your longevity in the business?

PD: Having absolutely no plan at all other than getting up every day and maiking it happen.

AU: What is the mission statement of Skull Skates?

PD: No More Bad Future.

AU: Do you still produce snowboards as well?

PD: Nope, but we have made some of the best under the names Skull Skates and also Crystal Ocean.

AU: What bands have you worked with and sponsored in the past?

PD: Lots of good ones, way too many to mention, bands from all over the world and from many different genres. I don't think we were the first to put out boards together with bands but we were definitely early and we have had a fairly prolific output over the years, we are still doing it today.

AU: How did the arrangement with the bands work? Was it a sponsorship or more of a licensing agreement?

PD: It's the same general arrangement as what would be made with pro skaters, I suppose it is both a sponsorship and a licensing agreement.

AU: Who were some of the skaters you produced decks for in the past? Who are the current Skull Skates riders?

PD: Yeah come on now, that's why there are search engines, don't make uncle try to remember all this nonsense.

AU: You were and originator and pioneer of having punk band skate decks. Any crazy stories to share when hanging out with the bands?

PD: Many... but none I would openly share for fear of incrimination. I will say though that the string running through most of this stuff is creativity rather than destruction. Destruction is fun, but it gets boring pretty fast whereas creativity is open-ended and expansive.

AU: My first broad was a Hosoi Hammerhead Mini because I was just a little kid. Was there three different sizes? How did your relationship with Christian Hosoi come about? He must have had the World's record for highest airs back then based on the photos and videos I've seen I always wondered.

PD: Mini, Mid and Max. Christian was a really good skateboarder that needed someone to make boards for him. We met him and his father Ivan and made a bunch of hammerheads for a few years. Amazing talent.

AU: You are known for being experimental with your board designs, like the Mutant and The Dead Guys coffin shaped boards. Any others you have created?

PD: Our real innovations are more subtle in their description but dramatic in their results like the V and TubTech concave skate deck series along with very functional snowboards, bikes and skimboards etc. Being small and close to an activity will spark real functional design change.

SHRED SESSION

Large companies are forced to copy and change nearly the aesthetics of designs but do little in

AU: Do you ever still jump on your board and butt-bomb down massively steep hills?



terms of cutting edge development because of their distance from the activity.

AU: You've have some awesome and interesting family members. What was it like have your brother Richard Ducommun working on big Hollywood pictures like The 'Burbs, Little Monsters, and Groundhog Day?

PD: Rick was a very funny guy and spending time in Hollywood was great. Although my focus was really more skating, I had some brushes with some famous knuckleheads here and there, fond memories of Pinks Hot Dogs in Hollywood at 3am ... good times!

AU: Also I wanted to say how cool your Mom was when she ran the PD's Hot Shop in Nanaimo. All the kids loved her and she used to make us all laugh our asses off when she would crow like a rooster at the top of her lungs in the shop. How were your parent influential and supportive of your endeavors growing up?

PD: Mom was good people and she took shit from no one, yes June-Bug! Very fortunate to have incredible supportive parents that told all their kids basically do whatever you want but just be a good person.

AU: How has skateboarding changed from since you began up until to today and how have you remained true to your old school roots?

PD: Aside from the obvious advances in equipment and riding I don't think the act of skateboarding has changed that much. It's still just as difficult and rewarding as you want to make it. However the industry side has changed dramatically and in this way the style or fashion of skateboarding has been somewhat blown out.

AU: What is it about the Skull Skates logo and brand that has spoken to so many people all over the world?

PD: Dedication is our gimmick. Sincerity is our scam. Devotion is how we draw you deeper into our clutches, resistance is futile you will now all become skateboarders!

I still remember you ended a skate demo in Nanaimo that way after shredding some banks and curbs. You blew all our minds and I remember melting down a brand new pair of shoes in one day butt-boarding down every hill in town after seeing you do it.

PD: Butt-chucking or lay-down runs originally named the luge, harder than it looks and easier than you imagine. Came VERY close to death one time at about 5am doing a lay-down down

Pender street past the old Vancouver Sun building. Narrowly missed being run over, the car driver swerved at the very last second and avoided running me over ...time slowed down and I actually thought, "Crap I guess this is how I die."

AU: Can you please share a few words about SNFU's Mr. Chi Pig who recently passed away. I noticed you were featured in the Open Your Mouth and Say Mr. Chi Pig documentary. Any Chi Pig / Ken Chinn thoughts or memories to share?

PD: Chi was a conduit for creativity that the universe flowed through and I am thankful to have experienced his art. "Dead man about town" -bitterly funny until the bitter end.

AU: Tell us the concept behind the SNFU boards and the Mr. Chi Pig "Have You Seen Him?" boards you put

out. Will they be re-issued at some point?

PD: Can't remember exactly how it all came together but there are def not any plans to reissue.

AU: What sort of bands were you listening to back in the day? And what bands are you listening to these days?

PD: I have and continue to listen to a very wide variety of styles. Always been a big fan of Dub, Punk Rock, Hardcore, OG Ska, Toasting, Rapping, jazz, Blues, Funk, Disco... very few styles I do not listen to.

AU: What is something people might be surprised to discover about you?

PD: Tomatoes I could take 'em or leave em ... cooked or raw just not that into them.

AU: Anything else you want to mention or promote?

PD: Listen to The Mad Professor. And also we have a killer shop in the countryside of central Japan, worth checking if you are in the area.

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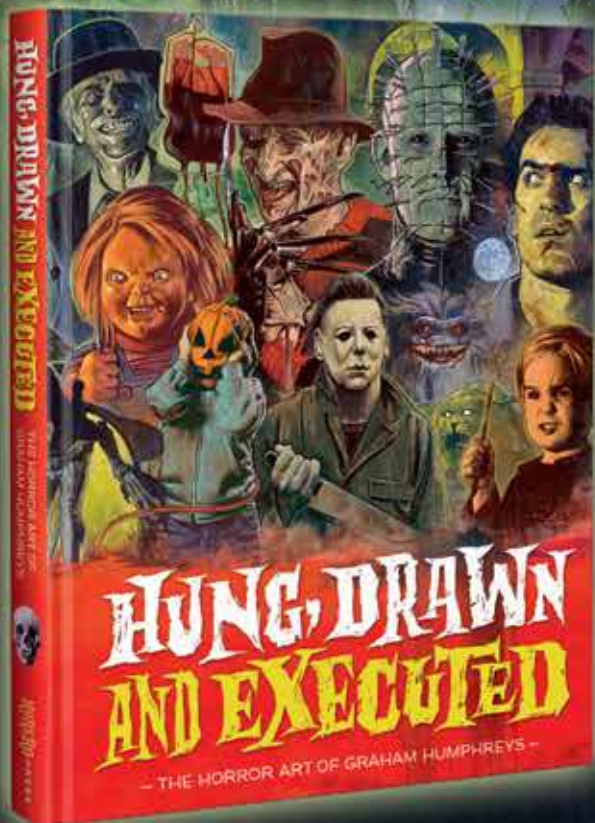
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DRAWING BLOOD
Hung, Drawn, and Executed
The Horror Art of Graham Humphreys

Photo Credit: Ash Holdsworth

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are you most infamous for?

Graham Humphreys: My name is Graham Humphreys, I am a freelance illustrator and designer, best known for the two film posters painted for the 1980s British distribution campaigns for *The Evil Dead* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, then subsequently numerous VHS, DVD and Blu-ray covers plus other



completing four years at art college studying graphic design and illustration. However, my motivation to enter the industry (even if I didn't know such a thing existed!) began in my formative years watching black and white TV. I became hooked on programmes like *Doctor Who*, *The Munsters*, *Lost In Space* and *The Addams Family*... anything with monsters!

Typical of shy children, I found comfort in my imagination and found that I could express my inner world by drawing and painting. I recall seeing lobby cards outside the local cinema for Hammer Horror films, buying the Aurora Monster kits and purchasing the seminal 1973, Dennis Gifford book, *A Pictorial History of Horror Movies*.

Realising that there was a specific lineage of monster history rooted in literature, I began reading classic gothic literature and then discovered Poe and Lovecraft in the school library!

AU: How would you describe the art you create?

GH: The work is entirely built around those formative years described above, but I regard my work as both visual punk rock and Hammer Horror.



is mostly figurative, but painted with the coarse textures and energy of punk rock.

AU: What are some of the major influences on your artistic style?

GH: During the college years I was suddenly exposed to the new and growing scene that punk rock opened up. I was aware of the gothic/horror influences before the term 'Goth' was coined. The Sex Pistols were

work in the horror genre.

AU: How long have you been an artist? What got you started?

GH: I've been a professional artist since 1980, after

driven, in part - I'd argue, by the raw energy of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (the film had just opened in the UK). The Damned, The Banshees, The Stranglers, clearly took their names from

horror culture, so I saw a link that gave me a window into this horror-driven (a least in my mind!) subculture. I took inspiration from the look and colours of the bands... I loved X-Ray Spex, how they embraced the plastic, day-glo aesthetic of suburban rock'n'roll and the consumer dystopia.

The first Stranglers LP cover (*Rattus Norvegicus*) might well have been a poster for *What We Do In The Shadows* (almost 40 years early)!

There was a college trip to an exhibition at the Royal Academy Of Arts in London, 1977, 'Light Fantastic', which explored laser light as an art form with a display of holograms and 'dancing' lasers set to music (Vangelis, I later learned!). I found it magical, but was particularly fascinated by the holograms and the way the laser light created an intense piercing grain in the images. This inspired me to find ways to replicate this extraordinary phenomenon in paint. Naturally, my work has continued to evolve since then, but there is still an element in my current work.

AU: What sort of stuff did you start out doing when you were first getting started?

GH: My first experiments in this style were either representations of classic monsters films (eg. Bela Lugosi's *Dracula*) or attempts to visualise the atmosphere of Joy Division or Siouxsie and The Banshees' music (the LPs *Closer* and *Kaleidoscope* were big influences). These early paintings can be seen as the stylistic template for my *Evil Dead* poster.

AU: How did you get your first break? What was the first professional job you worked on?

GH: In truth, my work has not always been entirely horror themed. As a freelance illustrator I would be obliged to take any paying commission offered. The early years in particular were a financial struggle so no job was turned down. My first professional commission involved a large number of black and white cartoons for a book called *Handling Language*, no horror at all!

My first genuine horror commission was a poster for *The Monster Club*, a painting that still embarrasses me to this day! I prefer to think of *The Evil Dead* as ground zero for my horror career!

AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies? Any obscure ones that some people might not have heard about?

GH: My tastes are constantly in a flux, so I drift from film to film according to influences. I'm sure most of us do the same. Of course there are special films, I have a particular fondness for Hammer's *The Lost Continent*, where else can you find man-eating kelp, rock monsters, political intrigue, high seas drama, heavy drinking and the Spanish Inquisition? A good friend recently introduced me to *Night Train To Terror* as one of the worst films they'd ever seen... naturally it is now near the top of my favourites list!

Two more of the finest Hammer Horror films that do not feature Dracula or Frankenstein are *The Brides Of Dracula* (paradoxically!) and *The Gorgon*. - beautiful colour palettes. Three of the last Hammer films that have found a deserved reappraisal are *Dracula A.D. 1972*, *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* and *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*. I can watch them over and over again.

AU: What are some of your favourite projects you've been involved with?

GH: That's not an easy question to answer as different projects come with different merits, although some recent private commissions have been very satisfying experiences. Without



commercial constraint and corporate direction, it's been fun to create alternative posters for some of the best loved films of the 1980s (an acknowledged golden era for horror). Some examples: *The Thing*, *Dawn Of The Dead* and *Halloween*.

AU: What are some of the vinyl record horror soundtracks you have done the covers for?

GH: In the 1980s I painted a number of LP covers, but it's only recently that my work has appeared on specifically horror themed releases. Death Waltz (now part of Mondo) commissioned a number of covers, including *Zombie Flesh Eaters* and (the as yet unreleased) *The Devil Rides Out*. For Demon Records (here in the UK) I've painted covers for a collection of vinyl LPs *Vault of Horror: The Italian Collection* Vols 1 and 2. Plus a three-LP collection, *The Vault Of Horror: The Lucio Fulci Collection - The Gates Of Hell Trilogy*. Not strictly horror (though peppered with plenty of horror references) are the audio-track LPs for the British TV series *The League Of Gentlemen*, in two separate box sets.

AU: When working on an image from a certain horror film do you immerse yourself in a movie marathon of it as inspiration?

GH: Where possible I try to. It's a great way to reconnect with a film, but important in identifying lesser-known moments to try and create images



that are less familiar and offer fresh insights. Typically, any project involves watching a film at least three times, once to fully understand the narrative, themes and atmosphere, a second time to identify key moments, the third to make screen grabs that will provide my reference.

AU: What mediums do you work in? Is there something new you've always wanted to try?

GH: All my work is painted in gouache. I find it incredibly flexible for a variety of techniques, the very limited colours I use provide the entire spectrum for my work (I use the same eight pigments for everything) and it's fast drying. I've used acrylics on a few projects, but find them less flexible and more wasteful. Oils I wouldn't bother with because of the drying time... not good for deadlines!

AU: Tell us about your book Hung, Drawn and Executed. What can people expect to see when they check it out?

GH: This is the second published book. The first was a more expensive gallery edition that covered my career up until the year it was compiled, just over six years ago. My illustration output increased dramatically after *Drawing Blood*, for a variety of unrelated reasons, allowing me to work with a different publisher to compile this new volume of work, but also including some of the older images to give context to the more recent work. Contributors have also lent additional context, Victoria Price and Sara Karloff, both represent a link to two of the greatest horror stars that I've painted so many times, Dacre Stoker represents the direct lineage to gothic literature and Jeffrey Combs provides the link to the golden era of VHS and 80s horror. Larry Fessenden provides a link to film production and the unseen drivers of contemporary horror cinema. I've also included a section on my working process, which





I hope might encourage people to paint.

AU: Do you prefer older Universal and Hammer style horror films or more modern day monsters and madmen?

GH: Although I love the Hammer Horrors and Universal Monsters, I always enjoy some of the surprises new cinema provides. *What We Do In The Shadows* added a new dimension to the vampire lore - it's such a great film. *Mandy* is extraordinary and I've recently completed an alternative poster for a private group commission.

Horror has really had a renaissance over the last few years and it's interesting to see how older films have inspired new work. *Midsommar* has a clear link to *The Wicker Man*, *Hereditary* re-explores the witch cults that featured so prominently in the 1970s... it's great to see fresh talent reinventing the genre and giving new context.

It's clear that horror, at its best, responds to real world events and calamities... war, religion and political turmoil... these all provide the raw material for exploring fear and it's impact on humanity. It's impossible to divorce the recent and urgent response within the genre to the

dangerous and divisive politics of the last five years. We can see how horror films responded to the two world wars, nuclear proliferation, Vietnam, religious terrorism, fascism, racism etc... with more information and insight, the layers within horror cinema are more complex and interesting than ever.

We are going to see some incredible responses to 2020!

AU: Any other hidden talents unrelated to art?

GH: I once dabbled in ships-in-bottles when I was young - it wasn't a great success! I'd love to have been musically talented, but it's just not my skill set. I'd like to say I'm a filmmaker because I love film so much, but again, it's not my skill set. It would be truthful to say that I've thrown my entire lot into the work I do. Retaining a healthy interest in the world around me keeps things fresh. I'm a political animal, though not involved in politics. Sacred Tibetan iconography fascinates me, because it was hidden for centuries (the celebration of death and mortality resonates with horror cinema). I've enjoyed studies in Tibetan sacred art... the technical disciplines are very useful in focusing my own work.

AU: What music do you listen to when you're working?

GH: When I painted *The Evil Dead* I listened to nothing but The Cramps! My tastes have widened now, but I try and pick music that fits with the themes in the given project.

Currently a lot of Ennio Morricone, Barry Adamson and Killing Joke.

AU: Have you been able to share your artwork with any of the film celebrities you've painted?

GH: In unexpected ways, yes. At conventions I occasionally meet actors I've painted, or musicians I've created covers for.

Then there are people like Victoria Price, who in representing her father's legacy, has become a participant in some of my work. I don't actively seek approval, my work is primarily created to fulfil the client needs, rather than the subjects.

AU: Do you take commissions? What's the strangest thing you've ever been asked to draw?

GH: I take commissions, but on certain terms. I don't take commissions for wall art, there has to be some additional value - eg. print sales.

AU: What are the latest things you have been working on?

GH: I mentioned earlier, an alternative poster for the film *Mandy*, but all the commercial work on my schedule has to remain professionally confidential! There are a couple of Hammer Horror related projects, and the next private commission is an alternative poster for the 1968 *Night Of The Living Dead* - that much I can say!

AU: Have you ever seen your art tattooed on people?

GH: Yes. It's very flattering! An honour that someone has chosen to spend the rest of their life with a bit of me on their body! Weirdly parasitic!

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

GH: Every day is Halloween to me, except the 31st of October, when everyone else can celebrate! It's not a date I plan for. Of course, not much can be planned for this year due to the pandemic - real life horror!

I did manage a Covid-aware trip to Scotland recently, with a small group of friends, specifically to visit locations used in *The Wicker Man* - all still very recognizable.

AU: Dream project you are still dying to do.

GH: Eventually all projects will come my way! I'm just being patient. But some are already on my current schedule!

AU: Any words of wisdom for our readers or aspiring artists?

GH: Don't be afraid. Avoid clients with nefarious intent. Don't limit your aspiration - and don't expect to pick and choose work if you intend to feed yourself - sometimes the most inspiring and rewarding work is completely unexpected and from out of the comfort zone.

AU: Any upcoming projects or exhibits to promote?

GH: Everything is on hold right now, so it's best not to plan without contingency. As soon as circumstances allow, I hope to be back at the horror conventions.

I am also intending to publish a further volume of work within the next two years. Everything else will be unexpected and surprising!

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Wolfman's Got Nards

The Monster Squad Documentary

Interview with actor and director André Gower

By Ira "Monster" Hunter and Lawrence "Bogus" Denvir

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with today and what are you best known for?

André Gower: We are talking with André Gower today, who is well known for a body of work that I did when I was a younger kid, I did a lot of TV, a lot of films and am most known as the leader of the film, *The Monster Squad*.

AU: Did you watch scary movies as a kid?

AG: I did but I didn't grow up a huge horror fan like some of my cast mates or some of the amazing filmmakers in the horror genre. I tap into those resources all the time including the guys that I made the documentary with Henry McComas and Wes Caldwell who are a wealth of horror knowledge. I actually saw a lot of the classic stuff as a kid, my favourite was *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. I also loved *Godzilla*. It was fascinating how they made the movies with

models and puppets and a guy in a Godzilla suit. I was also a little ahead of the game because I was in movies and on TV, so you watch movies from a little bit different perspective.

AU: How did you get the role of Sean in the *Monster Squad* originally?

AG: I was very fortunate enough to be on the upswing of a pretty robust teen acting career, starting when I was five years old and leading up to my teen years. I had a good body of television work and film work that led up to the time that *Monster Squad* was being cast. Ironically I never auditioned one time for the role of Sean Crenshaw in *Monster Squad*. I originally auditioned and screen tested for the role of Rudy. I was a cool kid with great hair, a lot of hair product, cool jacket. And that was just an obvious no brainer to read for that role. I got a phone call from my agent a couple weeks later and they said, "You got cast in that movie that you read for but it's not the role that you read for." And that's usually terrible news because it's usually a smaller role. And I was like, "Okay, that's great,

but I'm disappointed." But they said, "No, you got cast you as the lead character." And I was still disappointed because honestly Rudy's the cool character. But I always say with 100% confidence that everything worked out exactly how it should be. And I'm certainly happy that I got to be Sean Crenshaw, the leader of the *Monster Squad* that pulls this group of misfits together to not only save our town, but to literally save the world from Dracula and his monster minions.

AU: What would it say on the Tinder profiles of the monsters featured in *The Monster Squad*?

AG: Oh, wow. All right...

Dracula, he's an old soul who loves intimacy but can get a little bitey.

Mummy just wants to find someone that's quiet and has good humidity in their house.

Frankenstein is a misunderstood youth. He didn't ask to be Frankenstein's monster so he's just looking for someone to understand him.

Wolfman is a Pisces with a dual personality, and looking for someone who likes the nightlife.

Gillman is interested in someone who's into aquatics, and can deal with him being green. Also looking for a fellow pescatarian.

AU: How did it work getting the rights to use the classic Universal Monsters in the movie?

AG: That was an issue that production had to deal with. Frankenstein and Dracula were public domain via literature, but the actual physical looks of the Universal Monsters that everybody recognizes, with the Jack Pierce makeups, those were still copyrighted. So I think that ended up being one of the things that made *Monster Squad* even better because Stan Winston's special FX crew had to reinvent and recreate ways of representing these classic characters. That sparked the creativity in these wonderful artisans who were all young newbies in the business. They were like, "Hey, we get to do a movie with the monsters we grew up with, but now we've get

to re-imagine them. Now we can put our own stamp on them." And those guys changed the game of creature effects, practical makeup, monster suits. That literally changed the industry going forward, and that's why they're icons today.

AU: *The Monster Squad* was actually a pretty gory and scary movie as far as kids' movies go.

AG: It was, which is probably one half of the reason it bombed at the box office. The other half was probably the rating that it ended up getting tagged with, as a PG-13 in the States. And the fact that a lot of the marketing campaign and the reviews that came out painted the movie with a brush of being a campy kids' movie, which is not going to attract teenagers, because they're not going to go see a campy kids movie, they're going to go see *The Lost Boys*, which opened up two weeks before we did and hammered the box office. But like you said, it's a pretty dark, gory, adventurous, dangerous movie for kids, so a lot of the younger kids are going to be a little too scared. So it put a shackle around the success of the opening of *The Monster Squad* really. So the rating, the contradicting marketing campaign, and the fact that it was a little too kid oriented for the 15 or 16 year old cool kids, and it was a little too dark and scary for the younger kids. So *The Monster Squad* didn't perform and it disappeared quickly from theatres and it was gone for 20 years. Then it eventually found its home. People found it on HBO and at their local video store, they coveted it and loved it and wore that tape out.

AU: I feel like if Steven Spielberg was going to make a special edition of *The Monster Squad* there would be a lot of kids holding guns and dynamite to airbrush out.

AG: You certainly could not remake this movie shot for shot or line for line today. Obviously dialogue for a lot socially conscious reasons. But especially with the kind of content and the action that was happening. You can't make kids movies like that today. You can't have

kids involved with explosions and guns and gore anymore. I think that's another thing that really impacted the fans that saw it and why some kids really loved this movie. Because it was dangerous, it was real, and it was upper level but with kids in the middle of the action. Kids connected to that were like, finally we've got something that's badass and real for us.

AU: Who was the scariest monster on set?

AG: Hands down it was Duncan as Dracula. Tom Noonan, who played Frankenstein's monster, and Duncan Regehr, who played arguably one of the best Dracula's ever on camera, are very skilled trained method actors. They approached the entire production as the kids are never going to see us out of makeup or out of character. So we never did. Tom Noonan took it to another level. Even during breaks, Duncan would leave but Tom Noonan would stay and hang out with us kids, and he would stay in character the entire time. It was incredible, but also insane. But as a presence and as a performance, I think Duncan Regehr's Dracula is by far as scary and menacing and arch as anything could be.

AU: *Monster Squad* is a movie that means a lot to some people and then other people just missed it as a kid or haven't seen it yet.

AG: That's a weird dynamic that comes up a lot. You either know *Monster Squad* and it's very important to you, or you've never heard of it. It really ends up being right down the middle sometimes, and there's very little gray area. That's sort of the story that we cover in the documentary of this weird dynamic of a movie that died in the



box office, how and why it connected with the kids and how they have passed it along.

AU: How did the dog get up in the tree house?

AG: It's a great throwaway line when Rudy says, "How did this dog get up here anyway?" They actually shot a scene where Pete gets pulled up in a dumbwaiter on a rope and a pulley, which was a very awesome throwback to *The Little Rascals*.

AU: Who would play your character in a big budget reboot?

AG: I wish it could be Ryan Gosling but I guess he's a little too old to play me as a kid.

AU: *Monster Squad* would make a really awesome animated series.

AG: Yeah, it would. That's something that I know the director, Fred Dekker, and the writer, Shane Black, had always had in their minds. There's so much more story to tell with graphic novels or novelizations. They were trying to remake the movie for years, Rob Cohen, who's a huge giant studio producer and director now, was actually a young producer on the original *Monster Squad*. And once the DVD finally came out in 2007 and it kind of blew up, he was like, "Hey, we need to remake this movie." and he teamed up with Michael Bay's company, Platinum Dunes, and they



tried to work it out for a number of years. And it just ended up not happening.

AU: Why isn't there any *Monster Squad* merch?

AG: I think it's a weird rights issue. Who owns them? Who doesn't own them? What's available?

AU: What about *Monster Squad* action figures?

AG: If the feature film had been a box office success, they would have launched all that. There probably would have been a Saturday morning cartoon. But when your movie bombs, you don't get any of that. Then you go 20 years into the future and the rights have traded hands half a dozen times over the years. People have to find the piece of paper and find out who owns it. Luckily, that's what happened in 2007 when Lionsgate realized that they have the distribution rights and decided to put out a 20th anniversary DVD and they made millions on it. It was a smash.

AU: Who ended up with the amulet prop?

AG: Fred Dekker kept one after we wrapped and he had it at his house for years. It's an amazing prop piece, it's gorgeous. Fast forward 20 years to 2006 at the original Alamo Drafthouse cast reunion screening that kind of lit the fuse that blew up the the *Monster Squad* resurgence. That night happened all because of one guy named Eric Vespe, who worked for Ain't It Cool News, and he wanted to get everybody together. So it ended up being a phenomenal weekend, and Fred actually brought the amulet to that event and gave it to Eric Vespe.

AU: Your documentary *Wolfman's Got Nards* was recently picked up for distribution?

AG: Yeah. It's been a whirlwind. We had a fantastic



festival run all over the world. It had a great response, won a handful of awards, had great media reaction, and it had an awesome fan reaction to it. We ended up with a great situation with Gravitas Ventures, who does a great job of getting movies out to the VOD world. We're going to have a fantastic video on demand opening on October 27th in the US and Canada. Then there is going to be physical media out too, you can pre-

headings. We also used a great collage of a lot of the fan art during the end credits.

AU: What's the best way to kick a werewolf in the nards?

AG: Very carefully. But you've got to do it and get out because you don't want to stick around.

AU: Did the Special FX crew actually create any Wolfman nards?

AG: I don't know, but a bunch of fans have and



order the Blu-ray as we speak. Then our iTunes pre-order link for digital downloads just went live. I think fans are excited and I always say I will take the *Monster Squad* fan base, any day, anytime, anywhere, because they're gonna have your back.

AU: Tell us about all the *Monster Squad* fan art?

AG: That's one of my favourite things is the fan art that people have created. Most people don't make fan art for something that they don't give a rip about. That's why we really featured it as a main point of the documentary. It was a unique solution to use some select fan art as chapter

some other brands have actually marketed some in a blister pack that say Wolfman's Nards, they're kind of brown and fuzzy. I don't want to make light of Carl Thibault, who was actually in the Wolfman costume getting kicked in the nards on camera, but he did it well. And it became something iconic.

AU: *Monster Squad* seems to have a fan base from all over the world. Does this documentary help broaden that even more?

AG: I think so. Even though it doesn't play like a documentary, it plays like a narrative story,

because we're telling the story of the impact of the fans and the life stories. It's a very interesting other entree into the *Monster Squad* universe. I think documentaries have a worldwide appeal. Genre fans or creature fans that may not know *Monster Squad*, but they may get a hold of the documentary and then there's a reverse process when they go back and visit the source material.

AU: Who are some big names in the business today that were *Monster Squad* fans growing?

AG: We have some of them in the documentary like Seth Green. Adam F. Goldberg, the creator of the TV show *The Goldbergs*. *Monster Squad* was a very impactful element in his childhood and he brings it into just about everything that he creates and produces now, which is awesome. Some other *Monster Squad* fans are people like Kenan Thompson, Bill Hater. My favourite *Monster Squad* fan out there is Ryan Gosling. You don't get any cooler or bigger than that. I actually got to talk to him one day in a diner about it. And it was fascinating to see his face light up mentioning the *Monster Squad*. That's why Ryan Gosling did Shane Black's *The Nice Guys* because he said, "I'm going to do this movie because this guy wrote one of my favourite movies of all time, *Monster Squad*."

AU: Who's on the *Monster Squad* soundtrack?

AG: The score for *Monster Squad* was done by a well known composer named Bruce Broughton. But the actual two songs, "Rock Until You Drop," and the "Monster Squad Rap," we're done by Grammy award winning Michael Sembello.

AU: Any chance the documentary will be released on VHS?

AG: I love that idea. I think the fans would dig it and put it in their collection. So that's definitely something that people have talked about.

AU: What's the legacy of *Monster Squad*?

AG: Why this movie lives is because of all the fans and kids that connected with it, formed their own squads, built tree houses, taped it off HBO and passed it around the cul de sac. That's the legacy. That is the reality of why this movie endures.

AU: I also noticed that you worked on an episode of the *A-Team*.

AG: In my younger days, I was very fortunate to

do a lot of guest spots on awesome shows. And *A-Team* was one of them. The episode was titled "Timber" because the family that the *A-Team* had to help out were lumberjacks. We went up in the mountains of California, and we actually got to log some timber with the *A-Team*. I'm pretty sure that I can say I'm the only one that ever chopped down a tree with Mr. T.

AU: You also acted on an episode of *Knight Rider* with David Hasselhoff. Was he cool?

AG: I had actually met him prior to *Knight Rider* because we were both on *The Young and the Restless*. But just getting to be a guest star on a hit television show like *Knight Rider* was awesome. I had like two or three scenes and they were all with KITT. So I got to do all my stuff with the car.

AU: Would you describe *Monster Squad* as a cult film or a classic film at this point?

AG: I do think it got to the point where it reached cult status. The movie has endured on its own merits. Of the fan base keeping it, number one, but also on the merits of the filmmaking, the writing, the story, the creature effects and the special effects. It is a piece of actually good filmmaking, regardless of box office numbers. I think everybody's recognized that *The Monster Squad* had an impact on the industry. Therefore, it's a classic.

AU: Any final words for Canadian fans up here in our igloos fighting Abominable Snowmen?

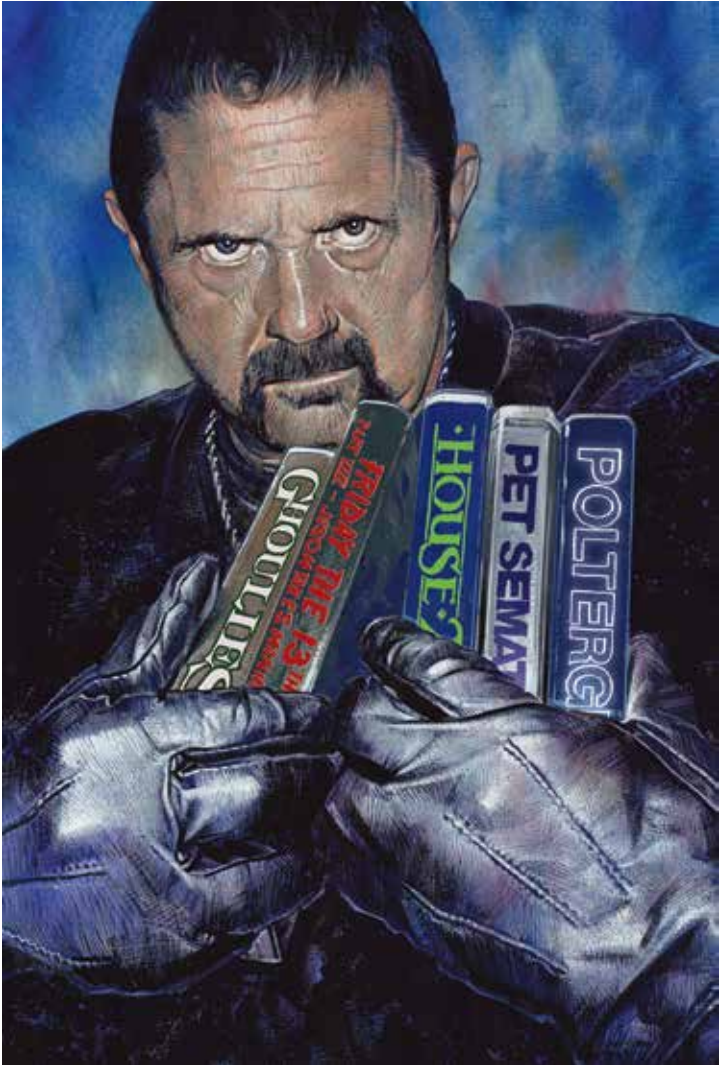
AG: Maybe that's the sequel? I think when something impacts you, and it changes your life, and sticks with you, I don't think it matters who you are, where you live, or what you look like, I think you end up all connecting to the same thing. Which means you're all in the same club. And what's awesome about something like *Monster Squad*. It's all about keeping your squad together.

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AU: What’s your favourite kill of all time?

KH: My very favourite kill is the character called Mrs. Permatteo in the first *Hatchet* film, where she tries to run away from me, which is never a good idea, and I catch her from behind with my hands in her mouth and I rip her head in half by her open jaw. And then my favourite Jason kill, and it used to be my favourite kill for many years, was the sleeping bag in Part 7 where I put the girl in the sleeping bag and slam her against a tree.

AU: Any kills you thought were too extreme?

KH: First of all, in my opinion, no kill is too extreme. The more ridiculous it is, the less scary it is sometimes. It’s just so absurd that it’s almost comical. So I don’t think you could ever go too far. And I don’t think any of them ever got completely cut out because anyone

thought they were too much. When *Friday the 13th Part 7* came out, every kill in the movie was cut down in order to get an R rating. But it wasn’t cut down by the filmmakers, it was cut down by the censors. Which really pissed me off because so many people went through so much work with the make-up effects. In *Victor Crowley*, which is the fourth *Hatchet* movie, Felissa Rose, who I do a podcast together with Tiffany Shepis, anyway, Felissa’s character decides to try to call for help so I rip her arm off that’s holding the phone and I jam it so hard into her vagina that it comes out of her mouth with the arm still holding the phone. So that is so ludicrous and over the top that it’s comical.

AU: What was your reaction when approached by Michael Aloisi to write your biography entitled *Unmasked: The True Life Story of The World’s Most Prolific Cinematic Killer*?

KH: Well, I wasn’t sure anyone would want to read about things that were not career-related. But he felt that people would be interested in personal things, and he was absolutely right. The biggest response I get from telling my story, whether it’s the book or the documentary that was done called *To Hell and Back*, the biggest response is when you have stories that people can relate to personally. So I’m glad I told this story because I’ve been told I’ve helped people overcome certain things in their lives, because someone whose work they admired, they could commiserate with them, and they could think, you know, this person actually knows what I’m going through. So I’m just very happy I did it.

AU: Did it take some time for you to open up and be honest with him?

KH: I think a little bit because I wasn’t sure if people wanted to hear it. But then when he started telling me that he had let people read certain parts before the book was even published, and they were responding well, then it made me more inclined to tell everything and it’s one of those things, once you start telling your story, I just went right with it and told it all.

AU: What made you decide on Derek Dennis Herbert’s crew to film your documentary?

KH: Well, he was a big fan of the book that Mike wrote, and he thought it would be nice to have

the visual story. He had his idea of what he wanted to do, but he was open to my suggestions. After all, it is my story.

AU: Do you like playing Jason Voorhees or Victor Crowley more?

KH: You have to remember, by the time I played Jason, that character was known around the world. There had been six movies with that character in it. And so now I’m stepping into the role. So that’s pretty hard to top. But then when you are offered a new character that you can develop from the ground up and when you can add your own ideas into the character. I still did that with Jason, but I didn’t think it was respectful to play a character that other people have played before, and disregard their performances.

AU: Would you play Jason again if asked?

KH: The next one would be the 13th movie and I’ve always said, what better way to do honour to the 13th movie than to have the only guy that’s played the character more than once do it again? And I would absolutely love to do it again! I could still be pretty fuckin violent, I’ll tell you. And I just always loved the character so much that I would once again feel that it was an honour to come back and put that mask on one more time.

AU: Any interesting stories from working on *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part 3*?

KH: Well, it was fun because I was working with a buddy of mine, R.A.(Mihailoff), and he was playing Leatherface but I was stunt doubling him. And so doing quite a few scenes as Leatherface myself was fun. We just had a great time fucking with people on the set, trying to scare passerbys. Because at times, both of us were dressed like Leatherface.

AU: Do you know the exact number of people that you’ve killed on-screen?

KH: I don’t know the number, but I do believe that no actor in history has murdered more people on film than myself. I don’t think anyone could dispute that. And if they do, I’ll fucking kill them.

AU: How many films you’ve been involved with, either as a stuntman or an actor?

KH: I believe it’s about 170-175.

AU: What goes into being a stunt coordinator?

KH: A stunt coordinator is in charge of the cast and stunt people’s safety. It’s very challenging to make stunts look ridiculously crazy without making them unduly dangerous. Also as stunt



coordinator you get the pick of the litter of all the stunts, then you hire everybody else to do the other stunts. A lot of stunt people don’t care to stunt coordinate because you also have to do budgets. Before a film is ever done you have to come up with a stunt budget, based on what you think it will cost to do all these stunts that are written in the script. That is very tricky to do.

AU: For your role in *Ed Gein: The Butcher of Plainfield*, how did you get into the mindset of one of the most notorious ghouls in history?

KH: Yeah, it was fun because one of my hobbies, even before I started playing these kind of characters, was reading stories of real serial killers. So by the time I played Ed Gein, I knew his whole story. I knew BTK’s story before I played him. I find the psychology that someone’s mind can get that twisted up, that they either enjoy, or it just doesn’t bother them to kill people, I just always found it fascinating, and I still do.

AU: For Adam Green’s comedy horror sitcom, *Holliston*, was it cathartic to play that character to help get over the fact that you weren’t in the *Freddy vs. Jason* movie?

KH: Yeah, for so many years I really had a hard time with that. It was the point that I was told I was doing the movie. I was given the script and told I was doing *Freddy vs. Jason*, then I was replaced. So that’s a lot harder to take than if I

was never even considered, or replaced. Even though I did four movies in a row, it still would have been understandable to be replaced. But after being told I was doing the movie!? That’s why it was so much harder to get over. So Adam talked to me one day, he said, “Look, I was thinking about making this storyline.” and at that point, I figured, it’s about time I do let this go and make fun of it. So yes, it was cathartic.

AU: Oderus Urungus from *GWAR* was also on *Holliston*. Did you do any scenes with him?

KH: Not too much. He was always Adam’s imaginary monster in the closet. So it would almost always be just the two of them on set.

AU: What are some other films you’ve worked on that you’re especially proud of?

KH: Well, *Monster*, Charlize Theron won an Oscar for that performance of a serial killer, Aileen Wuornos. I was the stunt coordinator and also played the police officer that arrested Charlize at the end of the film. So I’m very proud of that. There’s also been a couple





performances shot in the last year, and I'm really excited about. I play myself in one of them called *13: Fanboy*. And it's about a guy that's obsessed with the Jason character. I played myself and I have a really emotional scene. Then something called *The Good Things Devils Do*. I have a three minute long scene with no edits in that movie, which is almost unheard, and I think it's really a powerful scene.

AU: Was it working with *Friday The 13th* creator Sean S. Cunningham on *House* and *House 2* that led you to getting the role of Jason in *Friday The 13th Part 7*?

KH: I don't think it was because I'd worked with Sean necessarily. I always attributed it to director John Buechler. Because I had done the movie *Prison* with John the year before, directed by Renny Harlin and I played a character in makeup. I was also stunt coordinator on it, and played the character, so Buechler was impressed at how I worked in very difficult prosthetic makeup. So when he got the job to direct Part 7 the next year, he was like, "This is the guy I want to play Jason," and everybody's like, "Who? I have never heard of him." Except Sean who did know me from previous things. Sean wasn't too involved directly with parts 7 and 8 of the *Friday* movies, but I'm sure it didn't hurt that I knew him. But basically all the credit goes to John Buechler.

AU: *Hatchet 3* really seemed to tie up the series with your character Victor Crowley dying at the end. What was the premise behind the fourth film entitled *Victor Crowley*?

KH: Just that evil never dies. There's always a way to bring somebody back even though you've finished him off. Just like every *Friday* movie at the end it's like Jason's dead now. And of course he's not. They bring him back another way. So it was more of the ghost of Victor Crowley in a way.

AU: What was the concept behind the movie you were in called *Death House*?

KH: It's about a prison that houses undesirable people. And I'm one of the main guys in there that kind of runs the inmate population.

AU: It's called *The Expendables of Horror*?
KH: There was a lot of horror names in it for sure. I didn't think they should call it that because so many of the horror actors were just in cameos, so I thought it was kind of misleading.

AU: You have the word kill tattooed on your lower lip. Do you have any other tattoos?
KH: Yeah. I have a chalk outline of a dead body on the side of my calf in white. Then I have a large area of flames tattooed over my burn scars. I didn't like how the scars looked so I did flames there. That's what put them there, so why not?

AU: What sort of music do you listen to?
KH: I'm a big *Metallica*, *Rob Zombie* type music fan. I also like *Twisted* actually.

AU: So you're sort of a self professed Juggalo?
KH: I am. Yeah. I think a lot of that music is much better than people ever give it credit for.

AU: What was your involvement with *Ghoulies 3: Ghoulies Go to College*?

KH: That was director John Buechler again of course that brought me in. I was the stunt coordinator on it. I did a comedy scene where I'm playing a janitor and I get stuck in my own mop bucket and stuff. So it was pretty funny.

AU: I guess you can't double a little Ghoulie?

KH: Not really. Haha.

AU: With the original *Hatchet* movie, how was Adam Green able to create a new Horror Icon with Victor Crowley, which so many others had failed at?

KH: I like to think partially because of my participation in it. But a lot of people thought they could create a new character and it never worked out. I think he was smart in incorporating comedy into the film. But not at the killer's expense. Nothing was ever funny about Victor. But the interactions between the other characters were hilarious. There's no reason they couldn't be. So many times, even in some of the *Friday* movies, the scenes drag because Jason's not around so it's boring. Adam figured, let's spice it up a little bit with some comedy. No

reason not to and I think that was a good part of the success.

AU: They almost had another Horror Hero with *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon*.

KH: I agree. I was happy to be a part of it. I think the movie was way better than the fans expected it to be. And Nathan (Baesel) was amazing.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

KH: Because of the COVID situation it's a tough year for horror fans. October's usually so much more fun. Even before I became a stunt man, I used to love Halloween because of mischief night. Doing crazy things, causing all kinds of trouble. Mostly harmless, but not necessarily always.

AU: Other than yourself, who put in the next best Jason performance in your opinion?

KH: Well, I believe it's C.J. (Graham). I think he did a great job in Part 6. Then next to that I enjoyed (Richard) Brooker in Part 3. It's sad that Richard is not around anymore unfortunately. He even died on my birthday, which was odd. But him and C.J. are my favorites besides anything I did.

AU: How many fire burns had you done previous to your accident?

KH: Probably about four or five. Not many.

AU: And you were able to get through that experience and continue to do them today?

KH: Yeah, I've done quite a few since getting burned. So I guess I'm not real smart that way. But I just learned what not to do so much that, and it sounds ridiculous, but I always enjoyed being on fire. Other than the time that it burned me, of course. But it's just such a bizarre feeling to be completely engulfed in flames. And typically, when it's done correctly, not really feeling anything. I always found it meditative and kind of relaxing. Because you can't hear anything other than the fire. It's just a different world.

AU: Which of your movies needs an unrated uncensored version the most?

KH: *Friday the 13th Part 7* by far. Some of the stuff that we put on film in that movie was absolutely incredible and nobody got to see it. And it was cut out of the film so early that it wasn't even color corrected. So it couldn't even be put back in the film nowadays because the quality of the footage is so poor.

AU: There's also a band called Kane Hodder?

KH: Yeah, they contacted me saying they liked my work and could they use my name in the name of their band? I was flattered because I thought wow, that'd be cool. I wonder what they're gonna call it? Kane Hodder Kills or the Kane Hodder band? Then they came out and they just called themselves Kane Hodder. I didn't expect that.

AU: Have you worked with Special FX Master Tom Savini many times?

KH: Well actually, we haven't done too much on the same set together, oddly enough. Because by the time I was playing Jason, he wasn't involved anymore. We've done a couple projects together. He's a good buddy, but it's mainly because of us doing Horror conventions together. He's a fucking nutcase just like myself. So we get along well.

AU: What would it say on the director of your documentary Derek Dennis Herbert's Tinder profile?



do it. It took almost two years of motion capture to do everything we needed but when I watch people play the game it's pretty cool to know that I'm the one doing those kills and movements. Now I've done four films and the video game so I don't know if anybody will ever have more claim to the character than I will.

AU: I think there was a lawsuit that put a hold on the game. Was it just too violent?

KH: No, I think it's just an ownership thing. One person owns the *Friday the 13th* name and one person owns the Jason character. And I don't know if that's accurate but that's how it feels like to me so they can never really agree on projects.

AU: You were originally selected to play Freddy Krueger in the original *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Did you talk to Wes Craven about it?

KH: I was doing a movie called *The Hills Have Eyes* with Wes Craven, and that's where I first worked with Michael Berryman, and Wes told me he was developing a new character that's going to have burn scars and wanted to discuss with me about the possibility of playing a character because I have burn scars. But then he of course decided to go with prosthetic makeup and Robert (Englund). Obviously that was the right choice. So I was never really selected, but I was briefly considered.

AU: Were you able to hang out with Sid Haig at all when working on *Hatchet 3*?

KH: Oh yeah. I've worked with him on *The Devil's Rejects* too because I was stunt coordinator on that. So I had been working with Bill (Moseley) and Sid and spending a lot of time together at conventions. So I got to know Sid really well and it is sad to have him gone. He's a legend.

AU: With the documentary *To Hell And Back*, what's the one thing you want audience members to walk away from the film with?

KH: Just hopefully realizing that I'm just like anybody else. Because of hard work and determination I was fortunate to be in the position to play a character like Jason. I may have more notoriety, but I'm just like anybody else.

AU: Do you miss choking people at Horror conventions?

KH: You know I do. Yeah, that was fun. From what people told me, it became like a rite of passage to come and take a picture with me and I'd choke you a little bit. So yes, I miss choking motherfuckers.

AU: What's something that people might be surprised to learn about you?

KH: That I at one time went through the official process and qualified to join Mensa which is an international high IQ society.

AU: How do people find you online?

KH: Violent. Haha. I have kanehodderkills.com I do like that word, it's on my license plate, it's tattooed in my lip.

AU: What is your podcast called?
KH: It's called "Casualty Friday."

AU: Final words for Canadians up here in our igloos with our ice saws?

KH: I shot two of my *Friday the 13th* movies in your beautiful country. One in Vancouver, and one in Toronto. I've spent a lot of time in those cities and have always loved it up there.

www.kanehodderkills.com



Michael Aloisi: Unmasked

AU: Who are we talking to today?

Michael Aloisi: I am the author of ten books including the biographies of Kane Hodder and Tom Savini, several novels, and short story collection, as well as the *Tales from A Mortician* anthology series.

AU: When did you first start writing?

MA: What I thought I wanted to do was make movies. After my second degree in filmmaking, I sat down to write a screenplay but kept getting stuck. Thinking I needed to flesh it out I started to write it in story form, that turned out to be my first novel, called *Fifty Handfuls*. From that day on, I focused on writing and went back to school to get an MFA in creative writing.

AU: Who were your early inspirations?

MA: Stephen King. As a child of the eighties, he was inescapable, now, as a writer, he is the God we all inspire to even be in the shadow of. I also devoured Richard Laymon novels, he truly cemented my love for horror. Dean Koontz, Bentley Little, and others as well.

AU: What initially drew you towards horror?

MA: Growing up I was terrified to see a horror movie, I would cover my eyes in the video store when I walked by the section and would freak if one was on television. Then when I was thirteen I was forced to watch *Friday the 13th Part 3* at a friend's house and instantly fell madly in love with horror movies. By the time I was sixteen my entire room was covered in horror movie posters, masks and toys. *Friday the 13th* will always be my favourite, but I love all the big horror monsters, Freddy, Michael, Chucky and the like. There is just something about a monster you can't kill.

AU: How did you first meet Kane Hodder who played Jason in *Friday the 13th* parts 7-10?

MA: When I went to my first horror convention, I was freaking out to meet all the stars of the movies I loved. I got to meet four actors who played Jason! I turned to my wife and said, "If I could just meet Kane Hodder... I can die happy." Amazingly, I never met Kane until we had a book contract and we met for our first writing session.

AU: What made you decide to write the book *Unmasked (True Life Story of The World's Most Prolific Cinematic Killer Kane Hodder)*?

MA: I was watching *Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield*. In it, there is a scene where Kane has his shirt off. It was the first time I ever really saw his burn scars. I recalled reading stories about how he got them online, but I wanted to know the full story, so I decided I wanted to write his story. Of course I had no clue it would actually happen, it

was just a pipe dream. On a whim, I wrote him a proposal, thinking I would never hear anything again. Then one night, he called. I was in such shock, I thought it was a prank.

AU: Were you scared to approach Kane at the beginning of the project? Did it take a while for him to open up with you?

MA: I was terrified. It was KANE HODDER. I was a huge fan of his and had never met him before and while I had written a few books, I was a nobody in the grand scheme of things. On day one, Kane played a huge prank on me that really relaxed my mood and helped break the

ice. When it came to opening up about his life, I feel like he was ready to tell the truth behind his accident. It had been a secret he kept so long he no longer wanted to hide it. Once he started to trust me, the flood gates opened and he told me everything.

AU: What is Kane Hodder's official on screen kill number? Is it a world's record?

MA: At the time we did a lot of research and feel confident he has the record. However, it is a very debatable thing. Do you count kills on screen and by hand only? Do you count things like when he kills an entire ship and planet in *Jason X*? Our definition was kills on screen by him.

AU: Tell us about the journal you published about the making of the *Unmasked* biography.

MA: Kane and I are an Odd Couple, I'm scared of everything and he is scared of nothing. As we were writing the book, Kane got me in so much trouble and put me in situations that freaked me out daily. They were so insane I started to write a blog about the things we did, it ended up being read in over fifty countries

a week! When *Unmasked* was done we decided to take the blogs and turn it into a book and called it, *The Killer & I*. The book was so popular it got turned into a web series, which you can now watch on Amazon.

AU: Tell us your thoughts on the documentary *To Hell And Back: The Kane Hodder Story*.

MA: The book is very important to me, so at

first, I was nervous when I found out they were making a documentary. Thankfully, Derek and his crew did an amazing job and I'm honored to have been a part of the film. The movie really captures the essence of the book and Kane's life. It is one of those surreal things seeing myself on a big screen next to all the legends that are in the film!

AU: What other books have you written?

MA: I have ten books out now, the last one I did was *Pieces*, a dark thriller I co-wrote with Rebecca Rowland, it is probably my best writing as Rebecca really helped elevate my work. Coming up next year I have a new book in my *Tales from a Mortician* series, called *Halloween Tales*, which is so dark and twisted I write under my pen name, Michael Gore.

2021 will also see a special ten year anniversary of *Unmasked*, we will be releasing an amazing collectors edition of the book.

AU: Any plans for Halloween?

MA: Honestly, I feel like I live Halloween all year round, so I never have many crazy adventures on the actual day! To me, it is about Trick or Treating and horror movies. Especially now that I have kids.

AU: What makes Kane's story so unique?

MA: A lot of celebrities have some struggles, but most just want to be actors and then become them. That is not the case with Kane, he didn't even want to be an actor, just a stunt guy, then he suffered unbelievable trauma with his burns. It is such a gut wrenching story. Most people would have given up, yet Kane overcame it and became a film legend. It is like its own Hollywood story. What is amazing is that the book and his story has touched so many people in so many ways that ten years later we still get emails and fans telling us that it changed their lives. We have even had over half a dozen people tell us that the book saved their life when they were in a dark place. I never once thought something I wrote could do that, and it's only because Kane's story is so powerful.

AU: What would it say on Kane Hodder's Tinder profile if he wasn't already married?

MA: "Just looking for a Killer time!"

AU: What was it about Kane's portrayal of Jason that was so iconic and that allowed him to return to the role over and over again?

MA: Up until that point, Jason came off as a man, a scary, deformed one, but just a man. Kane added something that made Jason feel more like a monster, one that is completely

unstoppable. He took him from scary, to terrifying. I feel I might have a chance to survive against Jason in 2-6, but Kane, no way, I'd just give up and let him kill me.

AU: Any other favourite Kane performances?

MA: Kane is great in the *Hatchet* series, but I love seeing him out of the make up in films like *Ed Gein* and *BTK*. They might not be the best movies, but they are a showcase of Kane and his acting.

AU: What can you tell us about working with horror FX master Tom Savini on his book?

MA: Working with Tom was amazing, sitting in his house, which is like a museum of film, talking and hanging out is one of the most amazing experiences of my life. We worked on his book for over seven years, I wrote entire drafts that read just like Kane's biography, but in the end we decided to release it as more of a journal with most of the writing done by Tom. But sitting with Tom, going through his personal pictures, seeing his passion was fantastic.

AU: Can you share any Savini stories?

MA: The thing I love most about Tom is that he is madly, madly in love with film and magic and anything that can bring wonder to you. Almost

every time I see him he gets excited like a little kid to show me a new magic trick he learned, and he is in his seventies!

AU: Any advice for novice writers?

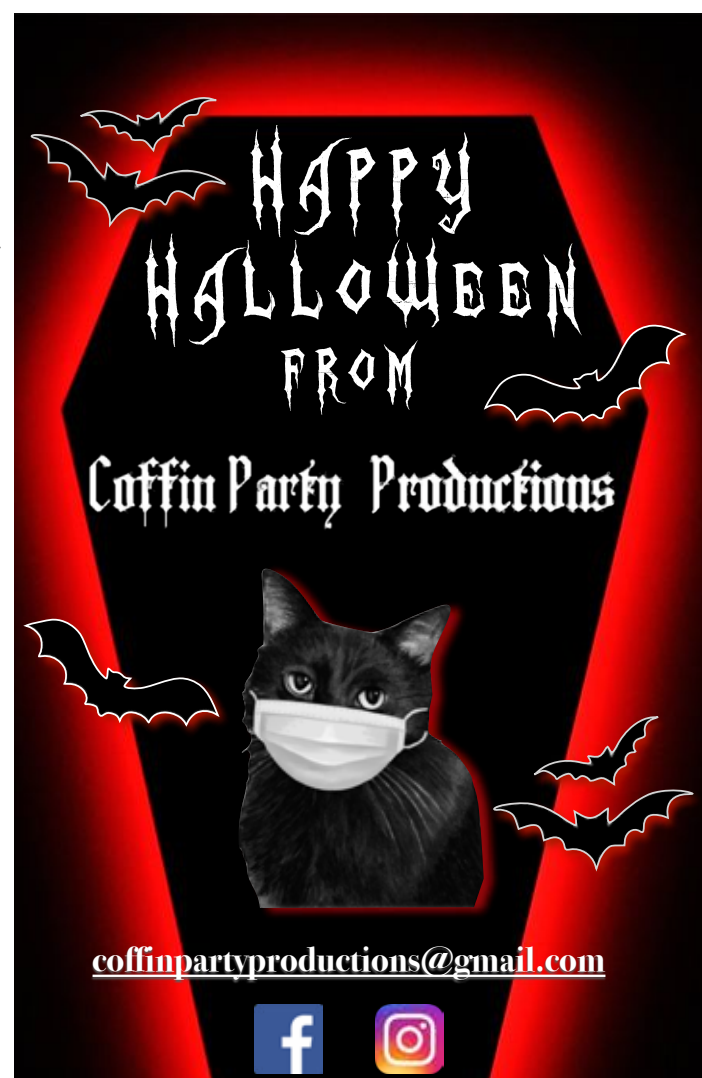
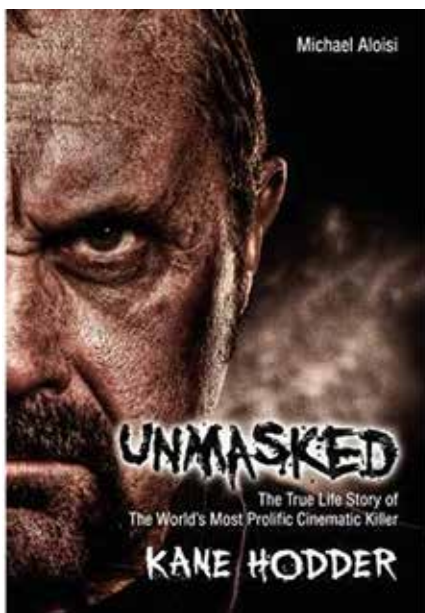
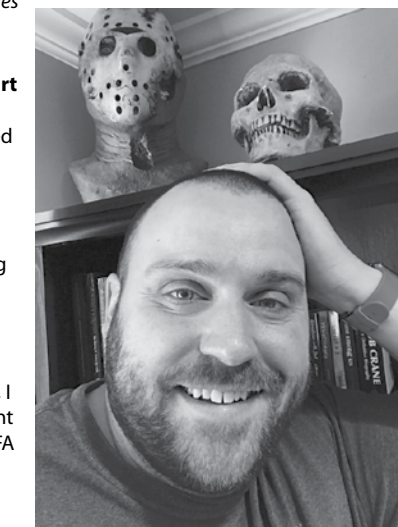
MA: The biggest thing I say all the time is that in order to become a writer, you need to read and write... a lot. If you are not a reader, you will have a hard time writing and really, if you are not in love with books and reading, why do you want to write? And not writing constantly is like not practicing a sport.

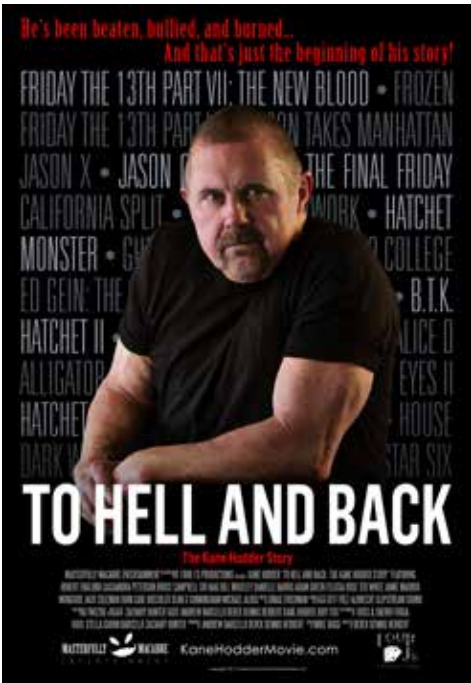
AU: Where can people find you online?

MA: All my books are available in print, eBook and audiobook formats

anywhere books are sold, of course Amazon is the easiest, just search for Michael Aloisi and Michael Gore.

AuthorMike.com





To Hell And Back:

The Kane Hodder Story

Interview with director Derek Dennis Herbert

by Ira "Hatchet" Hunter

Transcribed by Trevor Lawrence Reid

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

DDH: I'm Derek Dennis Herbert and I'm most infamous for directing *To Hell And Back: The Kane Hodder Story*.

AU: What had you worked on previous?

DDH: Previous to that I directed a short film called *The Toy*. I had worked on film documentaries, such as *Holy Rollers: The True Story of Card Counting Christians*, and *GLOW: The Story Of The Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling*. I've also made *They're Inside* which is a found footage, horror/thriller.

AU: Were you always a big horror fan? What was the genesis of doing this documentary on actor/stuntman Kane Hodder?

DDH: Yes, I've always loved horror. And I'll be honest, when I was a kid I was scared of *Beetlejuice*. [laughs] Ever since I was in high school I really got into horror. I had been going gung-ho with it and when my cinematographer, Zach Hunter, actually showed me the *Hatchet* series, that's what really made me excited about Kane. My first big exposure to him was *Hatchet* not *Jason Voorhees*. It was after watching *Hatchet* that I ended up watching the *Friday the 13th* movies, and then looking up his history, and reading the books that Kane co-wrote with Michael Aloisi. When I read it, I didn't even put it down, I started reading it a second time. And I went to my best friend, who's also my entertainment attorney, and said I have to make this movie. Because there's something about his story. It's not just something that will appeal to the horror crowd. There's a very human element to it, and I knew if it was done the right way we would be able to achieve that.

AU: Is the film you set out to make the same as the film you ended up with?

DDH: I'll say that overall, yes. But we got a lot of extra stuff of Kane and other people. So even though we based the concept of the movie on his book, I think it became bigger than we were thinking it would but in all the right ways. I wanted to make a documentary that really would tell the story in Kane's words, and I know we accomplished that. We used the ten-minute rule. Every ten minutes, we would have something for the people who like human interest stories, and then back to horror. That's why we jump around Kane's timeline a lot. If you know nothing about

horror films going into this, you'll still be pulled in. And I think by the end of it, we made a lot of horror fans out of non-horror people.

AU: Any surprises you were able to capture?

DDH: Getting to film at the Bothin Burn Center, where they saved his life in San Francisco, was a huge win. Typically, in an active burn unit you're not allowed in.

AU: How was your first time meeting Kane Hodder in person? Were you intimidated?

DDH: A little bit. [laughs] Yeah. I was a little nervous because I didn't have a whole lot of credits to my name. I was afraid that he was going to see that and be like, "No, I don't want to work with this guy." Instead, he walked in, this big, intimidating-type guy, sat down and was all eager to talk. And within that conversation, we knew that we wanted to make this project.

AU: Michael Aloisi says that when working on the book it was difficult to get Kane to open up at the beginning. Did you find that as well?

DDH: Not as much as you would think, and I believe only because of the book. It was very difficult to open up for the book because he had never said it before. We gave him final cut approval of the movie. Whenever he was hesitant about opening up, we always would tell him, if you don't like it later, we'll cut it. And when he viewed it later he never once used that final cut.

AU: So for people that don't know, it was a fire stunt gone wrong that caused Kane's burns. And originally he just told some different stories about what had happened to him?

DDH: He would usually say that he was on the set of a movie that was never released and the fire stunt went wrong and he was burned and kind of left it at that. The actual story of him going out for this news reporter and trying it once by a lake and the wind was blowing, and he didn't like the flames, so he tried again at a different place that wasn't near water and he was given a different brand of rubber cement as the fuel and it didn't

have the same flammable levels of what he was used to. He lit himself on fire and BOOM, went up.

That's bad enough, but throw in the malpractice on top of it that he encountered at that first hospital and you know it was a clusterfuck of a situation. But he wouldn't be

the person he is today in any respect, without having gone through all that. He's one of the nicest people and definitely learned a lot from that ordeal. He really values life and everything he still has.

AU: Kane mentions that he had some suicidal thoughts in the burn hospital but he powered through and lived and then went on to have this legendary career.

DDH: Between both careers and his family, as he's a stunt man and stunt coordinator who's revered as being one of the top people of all time. Then he moves on and has a career as an actor, at first with masks and now he's doing many projects every year without them.

AU: Kane is known as a practical joker on sets. Did he ever play any tricks on you?

DDH: I was terrified he was going to scare me, especially the first day of filming. I read the book so many times I knew of his reputation. So I was terrified every time I went in the bathroom on set that he'd be standing outside the door. And then on the second day of filming, he finally did it. He definitely likes to play jokes. We saw it first hand at conventions. Him and Felissa Rose, Danielle Harris, etc., would definitely joke with each other.

AU: Any advice for aspiring filmmakers?

DDH: I would say make sure to do your due diligence as far as the pre-production phase goes. That's the biggest lesson I've learned, to make sure everything's planned. Your first film is a learning ground and you have to really trust the people you work with, so hire good people. What you should be focusing on is directing and producing. Try to aim high but within your reach and give it a shot several times. Kane was a "shoot for the stars and hope" kind of guy.

AU: What sets Kane Hodder apart from the other actors who have played Jason Voorhees?

DDH: For me, I think it was that he was very dedicated to the role. The fact that he came up with the breathing thing, where when he breathed in, his whole head and chest would heave in and out. And when Jason's head would turn before he would walk. It was actually a practical thing with the costume because he couldn't see out of the sides and had to turn and look where he was going. But it's just him looking in the mirror and coming up with that stuff so he didn't seem like a mannequin, and making sure the walk works with his character. A lot of people will approach it, and they'll even admit it, that they approached it as this is a stunt job, or that this is a job I'm going to do once and that's it. Kane was eager to do whatever it took to pay homage to the other people but also make it his own. By the seventh movie when he started, Jason was known worldwide but he brought his own elements to it and returned to play him three more times after plus again in the video game. My fingers are crossed because I would love to see Kane back as Jason at least one more time. The next movie is the 13th movie and I think it would be wonderful to see Kane jump back into it. He would love it and is more than ready physically to assume the role at least once more.

AU: Is it true Kane has the most on-screen kills?

DDH: To our knowledge it is true that he's killed more people without using guns than anyone else in movie history. I make that difference because you have someone like Rambo who kills a lot of people, but big chunks of those kills are with machine guns and Kane very rarely uses a gun. If you know B.T.K., if you know Ed Gein, those are the only times that he would ever have had a gun really. The majority of his kills are with his bare hands or with a machete or with an object he found, not with a gun. So to the best of our knowledge, that is true. And as Kane said, if anyone disputes it, he'll kill them. [laughs]

AU: What has the response to the movie been?

DDH: The fans love it, the critics seem to enjoy it and the most important thing to me is how many people it's actually helped. I've heard through Kane, or personally at screenings, that people who were really contemplating suicide, somehow read the book or watched this movie, and then decided that they weren't going to do it and went to get some help. And Kane's story having that much impact, I know it means the world to him to be able to help people. He's so thankful to be able to have that effect on other people.

AU: What would it say on Kane Hodder's Tinder profile, if he wasn't already married?

DDH: Has a Killer Personality.

AU: Do you have a bunch of pigeons there with you? I hear a lot of cooing in the background.

DDH: It's funny, but a little before quarantine I started studying magic. And then all of a sudden I got stuck here. My day job hasn't had me come in since March 12, so I've been here at my house now, over six months. I started studying magic in February, so now I'm



actually a trained magician as well as a filmmaker. I do a full magic show. I have doves, I have rabbits, a bunch of tricks, illusions, and fire. So it's the doves, that's what you're hearing. [laughs]

AU: Any Halloween stories to share?

DDH: My favourite Halloween of the last couple years was in Atlanta with Kane in 2015. When we were shooting the documentary, we did Walker Stalker Con and one of the days was Halloween. We went to a Halloween party and celebrated with a bunch of people from the horror world. Kane, Robert Englund and Zach Galligan from *Gremlins* and a whole bunch of other guests too.

AU: Any final words for Canadian horror fans?

DDH: Well, I appreciate all of our fans in Canada. I would love to come visit you guys and promote the film up there with Kane when the craziness of the world comes back to a better place.

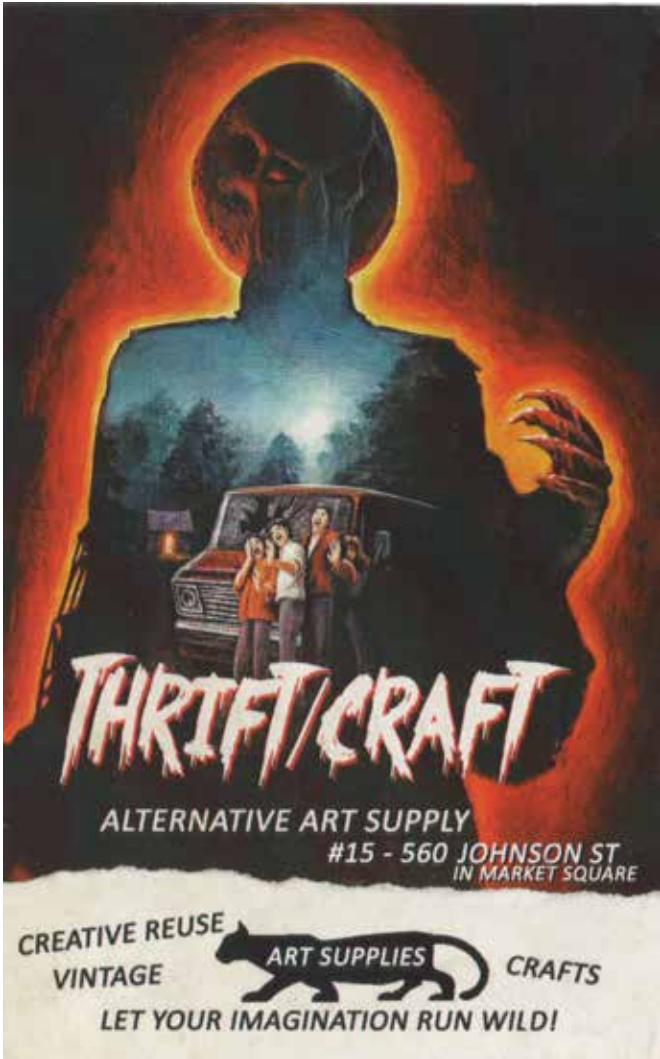
AU: Where can people find you online?

DDH: KaneHodderMovie.com is the website where you can see the trailer, learn a little bit about the film and then jump to where you can buy it. It's available through dreadcentral.com and epic-pictures.com. It's on a Blu-ray/DVD combo pack, which is my favourite way to enjoy it. It's also available on Shudder and Amazon Prime.

For me, I'm DerekDHerbert on Instagram and Twitter and Derek Dennis Herbert over on Facebook.

Masterfully Macabre Entertainment has a Facebook page, Twitter which is MasterfullyM and @MasterfullyMacabre on Instagram.

www.KaneHodderMovie.com





Ghoulies

Interview with Luca Bercovici
By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what are you most famous or infamous for?

LB: My name is Luca Bercovici, and whatever fame or infamy I have, if any, is purely subjective and entirely accidental. I've managed to carve a career out of this crazy, mercurial industry, and am entirely grateful for it.

AU: Please let us know how you got your start working in film?

LB: Through the back door, so to speak. I come from a long line of writers and directors, and I had been writing my entire life, so it was in the genes, but I had never seriously considered following in my father, Eric Bercovici's, footsteps. I started off in college thinking that I would become a musician, or an anthropologist, like my mother. But I had a crush on this girl – and she was in a play, "The Crucible" – so I auditioned, and landed the part of Ezekiel Cheever. That was it, the fulcrum upon which the rest of my life hinged. I began a career as an actor, and then a secondary career as a writer, which led to a tertiary career as a director, and so on. The rest, as they say, is history.

AU: You directed one of my favourite movies from the 80s called Ghoulies, what was the genesis of that project?

LB: I had worked for Charlie Band as an actor on *Parasite* and had hit it off with him. We had a shared history; we both grew up in Rome at the same time and had gone to the same school, so there was something of a kinship there, so when Jefery Levy and I came up with this idea for a one-location horror movie, I said, "Let's take it to Charlie!" Charlie immediately bit, we negotiated a deal, and Jefery and I wrote the script in ten days.

Ghoulies was originally intended to be a much darker piece as witnessed by some of the themes involved, infanticide, patricide, satanic rituals, etc. It was some time in the middle of pre-production when we saw John Buechler's (RIP) creatures for the first time, and we realized, these creatures aren't really scary, they're kinda goofy – and funny, actually. It was then that we changed horses mid-stream and injected the film with a lot of quirky comedy – which accounts for the "unevenness" of *Ghoulies* – but also it's weird charm. Complimentary to that was Johanna Ray's casting, Michael Des Barres, Keith Joe Dick, Lisa Pelikan, Mariska Hargitay, Scott Thomson (who I had worked with before), Tamara De Treaux (RIP), all brilliant wacky geniuses in their own right. There are stories upon stories about *Ghoulies*. Somebody should write a book.

AU: Who did the special FX for Ghoulies? Were you happy with how the creatures turned out?

LB: As I said, the *Ghoulies* creatures were John Buechler's children, so to speak. And while they were certainly not what I had originally imagined, we all rolled with it and adapted the tone of the

film to match the goofy aesthetic of John's little creations. And yes, I'm happy with the way everything turned out.

AU: Ghoulies was released by Charles Band at Empire pictures. Any Charles Band stories to share?

LB: The one story about Charlie worth telling is one that Charlie told me himself. Brilliant and very revealing.

As I mentioned, Charlie and I both grew up in Rome in the 60s. In Italy at that time, there was not very much access to the things that American kids had, specifically movies, and American candy, like Fizzies, and Lemonheads, SweetTarts, \$100,000 bars, Almond Joy, Peppermint Patties, etc. Charlie astutely recognized a need, and figured out how to fill it – and make some money in the process. Somehow, he managed to get

16mm or 8mm prints of films from the U.S. and a projector, and tons of candy from the US from the US Embassy. He would invite all the neighborhood kids to come watch the movies for free – but he charged them an arm and a leg for the candy! Brilliant. Charlie knew exactly what he was doing.

AU: Was the Ghoulie in the toilet scene in the original script or was that added later?

LB: We had come up with all sorts of non-scripted fun gags that the *Ghoulies* could do, vomit vegetable soup, play the piano, etc. Coming up out of the toilet was one of them, I believe.

AU: How would you describe writer/producer Jefery Levy – did you get along well with him?

LB: Jefery and I were partners for years, and had a fantastic run together. For years, we were joined at the hip. I loved working with Jefery and have many fond memories of our time together.

We did a lot; a house-keeping deal with MGM developing TV concepts, culminating in a pilot script for CBS, *Ghoulies*, *Rockula*, a script that we sold to 20th Century Fox, and more – and on top of which, we were in a band together, Fela Johnson & the Johnsons. We gigged all around Los Angeles; we were contemporaries of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and the Minutemen. We opened for Thompson Twins at the Roxy and the Palace. Those were the halcyon days. Jefery was an "idea guy"; still is. Jefery always amazed me with his crazy, inspired ideas. Love Jefery.

AU: Any funny stories or anecdotes you remember from the creation of the Ghoulies movie?

LB: I remember when we shut down about three-quarters of the way through production. We were shooting at Roger Corman's place in Venice, filming the big showdown between Wolfgang and Malcolm. It was lunch; I was talking to Michael Des Barres, and somebody came up to me and said, "Luca, your crew is leaving!" I rushed over to where the executive in charge of production,

Peter Manoogian, was addressing the entire crew. Charlie apparently had not met payroll, and Peter had broken the bad news, and was trying to talk the crew off of the ledge.

The crew wasn't having any of it; apparently, this wasn't the first time with Charlie. I stood there, stunned, as the crew filed past me, apologizing, but saying that they had to take a stand.

So we shut down for about a month or so, and then my agent brokered a deal with John Daly at Hemdale for the finishing funds, and we ramped back up and finished the movie. Crazy times.

AU: Did the different Ghoulies have individual

names? If so, what were they?

LB: Yes, there was Fish Ghoulie, and Cat Ghoulie and Bat Ghoulie, etc.

AU: Were you surprised at the huge success of the theatrical release of Ghoulies? It was the top grossing independent film in 1985 and has spawned three sequels.

LB: I don't think any of us were prepared for how well it did. It is really in hindsight that the achievement really reveals itself. The industry on the whole didn't really seem to notice. Our phones were not ringing off the hook with offers. Jefery and I had parted company with Charlie long before the sequels came about. I've never even seen them.

As successful as *Ghoulies* was, the only thing that I can really say is that the sequels – and even the original itself – never achieved the true essence of what *Ghoulies* is truly capable of.

AU: What other film projects have you been involved with since directing Ghoulies?

LB: A whole bunch of them; too many to list. You can't swing a dead cat without hitting at least a dozen or so.

AU: What do you think it is about Ghoulies that made it so successful when it came out and also the legacy it now has as a cult film?

LB: *Ghoulies* certainly capitalized on the *Gremlins*/*Critters* thing that was happening at the time, and there is no question that it resonated with a generation of kids growing up; it was a scary kid's movie; it had a goofy, fun tone but deep down, it had a very dark soul, owing to its' original intention. It became embedded into the memories of all these kids – and the parents who had to convince their children that it was okay to sit on the toilet. Ha!

AU: Has anyone approached you about doing a Ghoulies remake? Is that something you would ever consider?

LB: Jefery and I have been trying to get a *Ghoulies* reboot off the ground for years, decades, really. The issue lies in finding the sequel/remake rights holder. Easier said than done.

AU: Who would win in a fight between a Ghoulie, a Critter, and a Gremlin?

LB: A Gremlin, hands down. Those little fuckers were awesome.

AU: Tell us about the project you worked on after Ghoulies called Rockula.

LB: Yes, *Rockula* was, and is, supremely awesome.



Rockula was originally a dark, pre-Anne Rice, Vampire LeStat, Romeo-and-Juliette-if-Romeo-were-a-vampire type of film. Really dark and sexy; vampires and rock and roll. It hadn't been done. The script was picked up by Cannon and languished in development hell. The major problem was that the title and the material fought each other, and ultimately the title won. When Menachem Golan greenlit the movie, he said to me, and I quote: "You're in pre-production. Make it a comedy". So we did. We took the whole "cool" vampire trope and turned it on its head. Cool was out, loser-dork was in.

Instead of sexy, cool Val (the original name of the vampire), we invented Ralph, the dorkiest loser vampire of all time, who still lives with his mother, can't get a girl, can't turn into a proper bat, and is so much of a loser that not only does he have a reflection, but his reflection actually talks back to him and tells him what a loser he is.

We loved this. We were very proud of our mirror sets allowing Ralph to talk to "himself," in camera no less, no CGI involved. We loved the gags we came up with, and I loved the way all of the actors took the deep dive into our wacky rabbit hole. We had a blast making that film.

AU: Plans for Halloween – Craziest story from a previous Halloween to share?

LB: Thomas Dolby played a full set at the wrap party for *Rockula*, which was held on the Club Hell set. On Halloween. Best. Halloween. Ever.

AU: Any advice for aspiring filmmakers?

LB: This business has to be a calling. It is not easy. You have to want it more than the next guy,

and never give up.

AU: Any other upcoming projects to promote?

LB: Lotsa amazing stuff in the pipeline; 2021 is shaping up to be an amazing year. Stay tuned!

AU: Final words for Canadians up here in our igloos?

LB: Be happy and grateful that you are Canadians, and in your igloos, and not in the godforsaken shitshow dumpster fire that is occurring in your neighbor to the south.

AU: Where can people find you online?

LB: Join the Facebook group, Fans of ROCKULA!!!, and I can be found on Twitter,

@lucabercovici.

Peace!





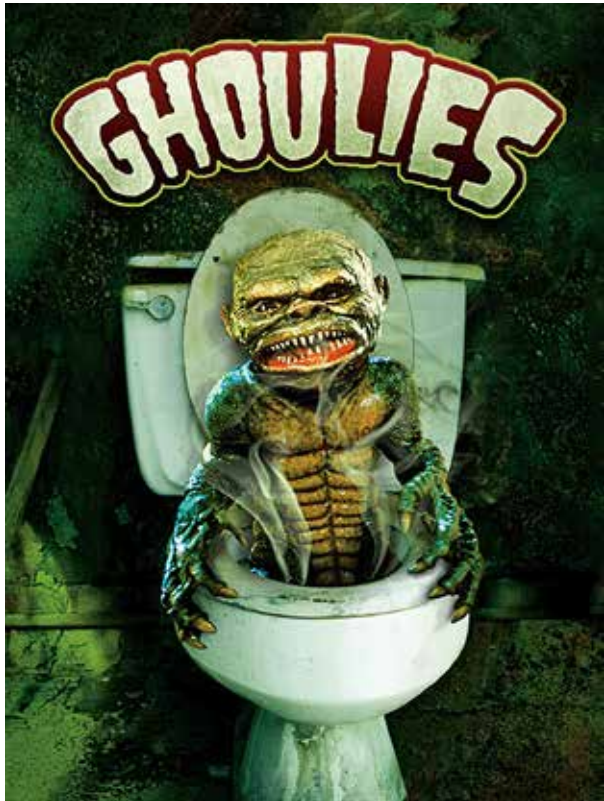
Ghoules

Interview with Jefery Levy
By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground:
Who are you and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Jefery Levy: I am an American writer, director and producer. I am most famous for the six films I have directed (my first film, *Drive* won The Critic's Week {Fipresci} award at the 1991 Venice Film Festival and my second film, *Inside Monkey Zetterland* won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival), and for discovering various actors that went on to be very famous (Heath Ledger, Patricia Arquette, Reese Witherspoon, Nikki Reed, etc.)

AU: Please let us know how you got your start working in film?



JL: While in graduate film school at UCLA (where I was studying critical theory), I began writing scripts with my high school friend, Luca Bercovici.

AU: You wrote and produced one of my favourite movies from the 80 called *Ghoules*, was was the genesis of that project?

JL: Luca had starred in a film called *Parasite* (his co-star was Demi Moore). Luca and I had written and actually sold a few scripts (including a script called *New Deal* about the birth of rap music -- we wrote this in 1980 and sold it to 20th Century Fox -- it was never made). I had access to an old,

broken down mansion. Luca and I came up with the idea to do a horror film in the mansion and we pitched it to Charles Band, who ran the studio (Empire) that made *Parasite*. We made a deal with empire to do the film -- Luca and I would co-write, I would produce and Luca would direct.

AU: Was there drugs and occult rituals involved when you wrote the script originally?

JL: No more than usual.

AU: Were the Ghoules puppets or were there little people involved as well?

JL: The Ghoules were mainly puppets. There were two little people in the film that played characters.

AU: *Ghoules* was released by Charles Band at Empire Pictures -- was *Ghoules* one of the projects that had the poster art first and then the script was written based on that or was *Ghoules* your original concept?

JL: *Ghoules* was our original script. While we were in production, Steven Spielberg was making a top secret project which was later revealed to be *Gremlins* -- both films were released at the same time. I am not sure who came up with the poster concept for *Ghoules* ("They'll get you in the end") -- probably Charles Band.

AU: Any Charles Band stories to share? What was his role as far as *Ghoules* was concerned?



JL: He was very nice and supportive. He took Luca and I out for a fantastic dinner the night before we started shooting and said, "Good luck." His company, Empire, did a great publicity job and theatrical release of the film (it was a huge

theatrical hit).

AU: Was the Ghoule in the toilet scene in your original script or was that added later?

JL: That was added later, based on the poster art (which was really brilliant).

AU: Were you protective of your script and story or were you OK with others making changes?

JL: Luca and I were pretty open -- someone gave us a little money to make a movie and we were just happy to be able to do it. Luca, having acted in a number of films, knew a lot more about the nuts and bolts of making a film than I did -- my knowledge was completely theoretical, based on watching and writing about thousands of films in school.

AU: How would you describe director Luca Bercovici -- did you get along well with him?

JL: We had a fantastic partnership -- we were very close friends as well as collaborators. We had a blast doing everything we did.

AU: Were you on set for the shooting of *Ghoules*?

JL: During the day I was going back and forth from UCLA (where I was in grad school) and the set

(which was in Hollywood). Most nights I was hanging around the set.

AU: Any funny stories or anecdotes you remember from the creation of *Ghoules*?

JL: At one point during casting, I was reading the lead part to the casting director, and she said, "You should play the lead in this" -- I should have done it



(but I don't think Luca would have gone for it!).

AU: What other film projects have you been involved with since writing *Ghoules*?

JL: After *Ghoules*, Luca and I made another film called *Rockula* which is a musical comedy. In 1990 I began directing and have directed six films (and a few hundred episodes of TV): my films are:

Drive, *Inside Monkey Zetterland*, *S.F.W.*, *Man Of God*, *Me*, *The Key*

AU: What's a passion project you still want to get off the ground?

JL: I am about to make it (we are casting now): it is called *Ziggy Eisenstein*.

AU: What do you think it is about *Ghoules* that made it so successful when it came out and also the legacy it now has as a cult film?

JL: A critic called it "K-Mart Fellini" -- I always liked that. It has a demented sense of humour.

AU: Were you involved with any of the *Ghoules* sequels? In what capacity and what were the concepts behind the different sequels?

JL: No. After the huge success of *Ghoules*, Luca and I were offered a multi picture deal with Empire. We said we would love to make the deal, but can we please have some money first (we owned 25 percent of *Ghoules* -- we were not paid anything to direct and produce -- instead we were given 25 percent ownership of the film). Empire did not want to pay us anything, so we decided not to work there anymore.

AU: Has anyone approached you about doing a *Ghoules* remake? Is that something you would ever consider?

Luca and I are working on a reboot of the *Ghoules* franchise.

AU: Who would win in a fight between a Ghoulie, a Critter, and a Gremlin?

JL: That's a good one! It is weird that *Ghoules* has become a much bigger cult than *Gremlins*.

AU: Did writing *Ghoules* open doors for you? Or is it a guilty secret.

JL: It helped Luca and I get a deal at Canon Pictures, where we made *Rockula*. It would have been hard to keep a secret because there were

three sequels!

AU: Tell us about the project you worked on after *Ghoules* called *Rockula*.

JL: It was originally called *The Night* -- it was a script Luca and I wrote about a vampire who is also a rock star. It was dark and serious. We sold it to Canon Pictures and Michael Des Barres (who is in *Ghoules*) was going to star in it. Then, Ann Rice released a sequel to her hit novel *Interview with a Vampire* -- the sequel was about a rock star vampire. So *The Night* was canceled. A year or so later, I went into Menachem Golan's office (Head of Canon) and said, "What if we did a vampire comedy -- Woody Allen as a vampire?" And he said, "Go and make it!"

We wrote the new script in like two weeks and went into pre-production immediately.

AU: Do you feel your movie *S.F.W.* starring Stephen Dorff was ahead of its time with the whole reality TV concept that would later explode?

JL: Yes, I knew when I was adapting the novel that I was going to satirize what I saw as the beginning of reality TV -- I changed a number of things in the book (including the ending) to make a film about the cyclical nature of popular culture -- how the media makes "stars" and then destroys them and moves on to the next (President Trump may be the ultimate example of this).

AU: Any advice for aspiring filmmakers?

JL: Make stuff and put it out there!

AU: Plans for Halloween -- Craziest story from a previous Halloween to share?

JL: We usually do a haunted dinner party -- which always includes a few Ghoules. This year Halloween is cancelled.

AU: Final words for Canadians up here in our igloos?

JL: I love Vancouver, have thought about moving there - a lot - I lived there on and off (while directing TV shows) in the latter part of the 90s.

AU: Where can people find you online?

www.jeferylevy.com



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M: The glue that has bound us stylistically have been bands like, Queens of the Stoneage, Ween, McLusky and 90s Top 40 Hits. Lyrically, I drew a lot from Jon Ronson, Leonard Cohen, Fiona Apple and Greg Giraldo. When it came to touring and building a self-sustaining enterprise, we drew inspiration from bands like METZ, The Dirty

Bike Thiefs

Interview by Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

Marko: Marko from Bike Thiefs, hello.

AU: How would you describe your band to a newcomer?

M: A friend told me that our band sounds like someone crying in a parked car, eating a cheeseburger. Which is jarringly accurate. But what I typically tell people is that it's jerky, chatty and sentimental. Equal parts early Talking Heads and Pixies.

AU: You have a brand new full length record entitled *Leaking* coming out October 30th on Stomp Records, how excited are you on a scale of 1-10?

M: 8. We like to temper our expectations.

AU: Any singles or stand out tracks you want to mention?

M: Besides "You're Allowed Your Feelings," which we just released as a single and video, I wanna say "Connie's Got a New Phone." The drums have a lot of meat on them and the characters were really fun to write. And the bass harmonics pull at me like a fever dream.

AU: How did you guys come to be on Stomp Records?

M: I believe they heard our single "Hockey Dad," and our wonderful booking agent Sarah Litt got us in contact with them. We sent over the record and now they own our souls. Forever.

AU: Favourite Stomp band ever? Runner up?

M: Favourite: The Anti-Queens.

Runner Up: The Planet Smashers (a blatant suck-up to Stomp, as it's the founder's band).

AU: Biggest influence on the band? Authors, musicians, parents, whoever you think influenced Bike Thiefs to be Bike Thiefs!



Nil, PUP and PkewX3.

AU: Is there a strong music scene in Toronto these days?

M: Aside from the world being on fire, there is a large group of supportive talented and hardworking musicians, promoters, venues etc that continues to prove its resilience like a temper tantrum outside of a toy store. And home to killer bands like those mentioned above.

AU: Have any of you guys played in previous bands that you would like to mention?

M: I could. I could also call up ex-girlfriends, get back into pro wrestling and bone up on my Sublime campfire covers.

AU: Anything else you want to promote or mention?

M: Check out: Signals Midwest. Nick Pusic. Michael El Crusty. Casper Skulls. Burner. Heart Attack Kids. Life in Vacuum. Nailbiter. Digital Hotdogs. Hype Mom. Black Beach. Deep State.

AU: Final words for our faithful readers?

M: Thank you for your time and stay out of the comment section, we're fragile people.

AU: Where can we find Bike Thiefs online?



M: On the dark web buying ninja stars.

Bikethiefs.com

@bikethiefs : Instagram, Twitter, Facebook

Bike Thiefs: (Spotify, Apple Music)

stomprecords.com/shop/leaking-bike-thiefs/

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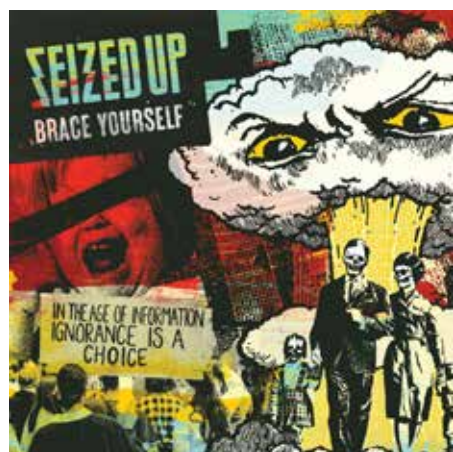


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PIRATES PRESS RECORDS

Seized Up

Interview with Chuck Platt (bassist)

By Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

Chuck Platt: Seized Up

AU: How would you describe your band to a newcomer?

CP: Raging, 80s-influenced hardcore with a post punk twist.

AU: How did the band form? Did you guys meet while touring or playing in your previous bands?

CP: We've known each other for a long time, and I was a big fan of Fast Asleep. On the night of their last show Danny and Chuck told me they were starting a new project and wanted me to sing.

AU: Your debut album, *Brace Yourself*, comes out October 9th on Pirates Press Records. Anything about the writing or recording processes for it that you would like to share?

CP: It was really fun writing this record together and hearing the songs evolve. We did a lot of

pre recording with our friend Jesse Lablanc so there was no second guessing on anything. We practiced really hard and were able to give Paul Miner the songs in advance, so when we got to the studio we were all ready to nail it. We recorded the record in three days. Andy was on tour with the Distillers at the time and did the drum tracks for all 11 songs in one day.

AU: Any singles or stand out tracks you want to mention?

CP: The teaser track, "Manic Decompression," has a really cool feel to it, but I don't really think there's a bad one in the bunch. If you can relate to that song, you'll probably enjoy the whole record.

AU: Biggest recent influences or just new bands you guys love?

CP: No Static, Death Valley Girls meets Hot Snakes.

AU: Older bands that were a big influence on your band?

CP: In my teenage years I was at every hardcore show imaginable. Seeing bands like Black Flag, Minor Threat, DK, Bad Brains, Misfits, Sick Pleasure, Code of Honor, SSD, Crusifix, Minutemen, Stains, Adolescents, China White, etc. And when I was in Bl'ast! Playing with bands like COC, DRI, JFA, Slayer, Cryptic Slaughter, Excel, exploited, all the Oxnard bands, Cro-Mags, etc.... being surrounded by so many great bands and great people definitely had a huge influence on me.

AU: How did you guys come to be on Pirates Press?

CP: Our buddy Brian from Santa Cruz's Enemy of my Enemy knows the Pirates Press crew really well and Chuck was talking with him at The Crepe Place about it and things just fell into place. We are very stoked!

AU: What was the last band you saw live?

CP: Hot Snakes and Shit Coffins

AU: Anything else you want to promote or mention?

CP: We have a three-song 7" coming out on Cursed Blessings Records out of Toronto, Canada.

AU: Final words for our faithful readers?

CP: Vote!

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GWAR

Scumdogs of the Universe

Interview with guitarist Pustulus Maximus
By Ira “Gor-Gor” Hunter
Transcribed by Jarex
Photo by Chadsolute

Fact Sheet:

NAME: Pustulus Maximus

INSTRUMENT: Guitar

HOME PLANET: Crust

HEIGHT: Tall enough

WEIGHT: Titanic

DISEASES CONTRACTED:

All except childhood obesity and bird-flu

LIKES: Being unhappy, ripping guitar, making others miserable, anal

DISLIKES: Having a good time

FAVOURITE PAST-TIME: Killing for spite

HOBBIES: Hoarding guitars, drugs, alcohol, frequent masturbation, non-gender selective rape, turning man against man, searching for the remains of the Ramones to add to his corpse-puppet band

ON DATES I LIKE TO...: Anal

WHEN I GET MAD I: Destroy everything within arms-reach in a blind rage

PHILOSOPHY: Why choose between dicks and cunts when everybody's got an asshole?

GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT: Stole rock and roll and brought it back to the Sulphur Barbarinian galaxy

GREATEST DEFEAT: Eventually those bands turned to Nu-metal.

LIFE GOALS: To be alone by making everything around me die.

QUOTE: “Fuck off”

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what are you most infamous for?

PM: Pustulus Maximus, of intergalactic rock'n'roll band GWAR, and I'm probably most infamous for being able to eat that giant steak at The Big Texan Steak Ranch.

AU: How big is the steak?

PM: Too big for a mortal man, small enough

for Pustulus. The Big Texan steak challenge is 72 ounces.

AU: Do you win a T-shirt if you get through the whole thing?

PM: Yeah, a T-shirt, and you get a little plaque on the wall there. I'm pretty sure

it's a rest stop area, that every band on tour has to stop at. I think it's mandatory. Bands should really be stopping at the Mars Cheese Castle, where you can get drunk and eat a lot of cheese. All of your bandmates will appreciate your scent afterwards.

AU: What does GWAR have planned to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Scumdogs of the Universe?

PM: We're going to do a live stream coming up this month, where we're going to perform the *Scumdogs* record front to back. We've got a lot of really interesting surprises coming in for that, bringing back some old members, it'll be a gay ol' time.

AU: Will Slymenstra Hymen be there?

PM: She will. She's gonna be doing a fire dance, and stuff like that. It's going to be the most GWAR members you've ever seen under one roof at one time, so I definitely wouldn't miss it.

AU: It would be really cool if it was in 3D.

PM: For an extra \$15 I'll come to your house with a water bottle, with a hole in the cap, and I'll squirt you every time we spray blood at the camera.

AU: When is the streaming event, and how do people watch it?

PM: I think it's October 30. Go to GWAR.net for more details. I just want to play music. I don't do it for the money. I do it for the drugs.

AU: What else is new around the GWAR compound?

PM: Other than just trying to find new and mysterious ways to get paid. The lack of touring has certainly hurt everybody, so I've decided to hedge my bets and place most of my spare time into human trafficking. So far that's been working out.

AU: Are you worried that the President's shitty handling of the pandemic will leave you with less humans to kill?

PM: Yeah. I'm not so worried about the amount, I'm really just worried about the money. Humans breed too fast, so there will never be a shortage of them to kill. But we're not allowed to travel abroad if you're an American, you can't really leave the country because of his poor handling of the whole pandemic, so that's kind of a bummer.

AU: Was this current pandemic just a sexually transmitted disease that GWAR created that got out of control?

PM: Well, we cooked it up in a lab, and that's absolutely certain. We did, the five GWAR musicians, we absolutely cooked this thing up.

And we'll release COVID 20 next year. The new models are too expensive, like COVID 2021. You can't just drive a new car off the lot, it loses value immediately, so we're always a year behind. So COVID 20 is coming. I don't know what else to say to fix the problem, other than to quit being a fucking baby and just wear a mask. I want to get back to work too. I want to get back to the unbridled gang bangs in the bath houses that we have all the time.

AU: What's this drive-in show that GWAR is playing in Richmond, Virginia all about?

PM: I'm always ready to play a show, it doesn't matter, just give me 24 hours notice, and I'll learn all the songs all over again. We don't have to play that well anyway, since we're constantly getting sprayed with fucking blood, and semen, and shit.

AU: I guess it'll be kind of like one of those rainbow car washes, with all the different colors going on the windshields when you're spraying the cars down?

PM: Yeah, it's a terrible fucking idea. The cars are gonna get destroyed, and we're gonna get sued, I know it. This might be the end my career. But, there's always human trafficking to go back to.

AU: What is it about GWAR that has allowed it to continue even after losing some key members?

PM: Too foolish to do anything else constructive with our lives, so we must carry on with this mission to erase humanity.

AU: What was the storyline leading up to the death of Oderus Urungus? And what has the storyline been since his departure?

PM: Oderus definitely had left us unexpectedly, and pretty much left us holding the bag, literally and figuratively. So you know, once we obtained help from the Berzerker Blothar, he returned to us as kind of like a soothsayer, to help guide us into the future. Now we're as strong as ever, and continuing to write badass records, and continuing to cultivate sexually transmitted disease, and get people's girlfriends pregnant at shows. That's what we were born to do.

AU: What was the last album you worked on, and released? Is there a new one in the works?

PM: We released *The Blood of Gods* back in 2016. We did a lot of touring to support that. The band just works painfully slow. I've written a bunch of tunes, and I'm hoping that we can just throw all these on the next record, I think we're gonna probably start releasing some singles here soon too. Why wait all this time just to put out a record with twelve shitty songs, when I can just release one shitty song every month.

AU: How do you turn the blood of your victims into a vegan meal, or do you use the remains as compost?

PM: Turn them into a vegan meal? Ugh! I don't know. Flattus Maximus he was, well no, he wasn't a vegetarian. He just ate vegetarians. I, Pustulus Maximus, I eat vegan food on tour, but it's not because I'm a vegan, it's because I like to take it from them. I just like to take the vegan food from the vegans, so they can't have it. I think if it's worth believing in, then it's worth suffering for.

AU: How do people register to vote for who GWAR will kill on stage for the next four years?

PM: Send a prepaid check or money order to P.O. box 5225 for the amount of \$5,000, made out to cash, and put your request in the memo of who you want us to kill, and we'll do it.

AU: What can you tell me about the new “Sick Of You” video that was just released?

PM: I don't know anything about it, I didn't watch it.

AU: Aren't you in it? I think it was a live one.

PM: Probably. I really don't pay attention to that shit. I let everybody else handle it. They do all these Zoom calls, while I go work at Burger King. I focus on the important stuff.

AU: Are you moonlighting in any other bands?

PM: As an intergalactic warlord, I couldn't waste my time in any other bands.

AU: There were some GWAR comic books that came out a little while ago. Did you have any involvement with those?

PM: No, one of our key artists has done most of that. My input is primarily on the music side of things.

AU: I know that GWAR started off as sort of a collective. Is that still the vibe? Is it still a bunch of people, where some people are doing art, some people are doing the music, and some people are doing the props?

PM: Yeah, it's still very much a collective. We're all doing different things to accomplish the same goal, which is to make a meagre living creating art and music. And since we've been too foolish to get real jobs, we continue to conquer the earth one record at a time. And it's a really cool, creative outlet, because I don't see a lot of other bands that are making props, beheading people on stage, making comic books, and all these things. It's what makes GWAR a very unique animal. And people don't realize that we're doing it all under the same budget as a band that's getting up on stage in T-shirts and jeans, and rocking out. So all those guys are buying cars, and we're making giant monster dicks.

AU: Who is on the shortlist of people for GWAR to kill in the near future?

PM: All of them. Everyone. Donald Trump, Joe Biden, all their children. Cops. All cops. I've always wanted to kill the Kardashians. Pretty much anyone on TV.

AU: Any final words for Canadians up here in our blood soaked igloos?

PM: Tell Liam from Cancer Bats that I said hi, because you guys all know each other, right?

AU: Hopefully we'll be able to check out some live GWAR shows again eventually when we open up the borders again. But for now we've gotta keep the riffraff out.

PM: Are you all still closed to everyone, or just Americans?

AU: I think just Americans but I'm not sure about that.

PM: Jesus Christ. Well maybe I'll renounce my citizenship and come over for a beer or something.

AU: Yeah, sounds good. I can arrange for a canoe to pick you up.

PM: Perfect, I'm in. See you soon.

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Deniz Tek

Interview by Dustin Jak

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are you most famous or infamous for?

DT: Deniz Tek. Best known for being a founding member, guitarist and songwriter for the Australian rock and roll band Radio Birdman.

AU: Please tell us all about your latest project with James Williamson from The Stooges. What was the origin of the project?

DT: James and I both had positive prior connections with Cleopatra Records. He had recently been doing some sessions for them, playing guitar on recordings by Cherrie Currie, Mitch Ryder, Robert Gordon and others. James and I had already done an EP together, called *Acoustic KO*, which James released independently. Anyway, Matt Green, the A/R guy from Cleopatra,

called James and asked him if we would want to do a new all original album for them. We talked it over and thought, "Yeah!"

AU: You have always been known to be a massive Stooges fan as well and now you are doing a project with James "The Skull" Williamson, the man behind Raw Power. What can fans expect?

DT: James and I shared the songwriting about 50/50. We took this task very seriously. All the songs are good. Old school stripped down guitar based rock with no frills, except for occasional girl backing vocals. I do all the singing. James and I swap solos. You can tell when it's him - no one else can sound like that. It's unique. Fans of Raw Power and Kill City will be pleased. I think that people familiar with my solo work and with Radio

Birdman will find much that is familiar here also.

AU: How would you describe the musical chemistry you have developed with James Williamson while working on this album?

DT: Our songwriting and guitar styles are very different, yet similar in some ways. I list James's work as one of my main influences, so there is a deep connection under the surface. He is more riff based, I am more into chord progressions. On this recording the styles work well together, and the voice seems to fit. Chemistry is an indefinable quality that you get when the right people come together with the right stuff at the right time. It is a force field that binds elements together to create a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. It's either there or it's not. We are lucky to have it.

AU: What songs have been released as singles so far and why were they chosen? When was the album released?

DT: The singles were "Stable" and "Jet Pack Nightmare." "Stable" has a video shot in the studio. "Jet Pack" is the album opener. Both those songs rock hard and have the impact that you want in

a single. They represent the overall tone of the album in a good way.

The album was released on Sept 18th.

AU: Growing up down under, did you guys listen to a lot of North American acts?

DT: I grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan - home of The Stooges, the MC5 and others. Just around the corner from Detroit and Motown. As a teenager I went out to see bands all the time! I moved to Australia later, when I was 19.

AU: Did you guys all surf? There is a definite surf vibe that set you guys apart from other Pre-Punk bands from that era.

DT: One of the reasons I went to Australia was so I could live near the ocean and surf. I don't think anyone else in my band surfed. Our singer Rob hated being out in the sun. Fair skinned, you know. Can't blame him for that... But we were all into surf music. The Ventures, of course. Dick Dale. Link Wray. The Shadows, from England - they didn't have hits in America, and I only found out about them after I landed in Australia. Jan and Dean. The Beach Boys. And the great Australian surf instrumental band, the Atlantics.

AU: Who were musical Australian influences that far back? AC/DC were just starting out as well?

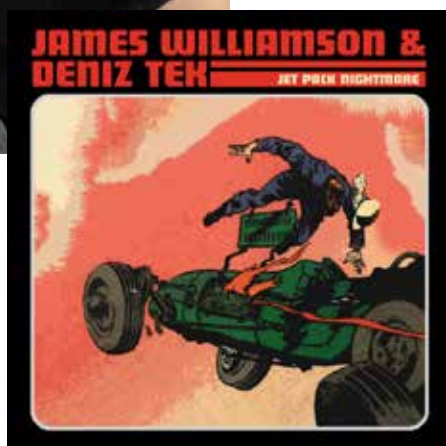
DT: AC/DC were starting out around the same time as we were in Sydney, the early to mid 70s. They were out working all the suburban pubs, while we mainly stayed in the inner city. Different scene altogether. We were into the great Australian beat groups of the 60s: The Loved Ones, The Masters Apprentices, the Purple Hearts, and of course the Easybeats. Many others too. But by the 70s there was very little going on that wasn't boring. Probably Daddy Cool was the one listenable exception by then.

AU: Who were your biggest influences musically and what were your favourite bands growing up??

DT: Early 60s pop, Elvis, Chuck Berry, Motown, surf music. Then, the British Invasion: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Who. This spawned American garage music of the mid sixties, and we all got guitars or drums and started playing, me included. Bob Dylan.

Later on I got into tracing back where the Stones got their stuff from, and I discovered the blues guys: Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and going further back, Lightnin' Hopkins, Mississippi John Hurt, Gary Davis.

By the late sixties I was into the local scene: The Stooges, The MC5, The Amboy Dukes, Frost, SRC, The Rationals, Alice Cooper. When FM radio started, I found out about things like Captain Beefheart, The Velvet Underground, all this non-



commercial music that was fascinating.

AU: Who was your favourite guitar player growing up?

DT: Chuck Berry, Keith Richards and Pete Townshend.

AU: What were the Australian audiences like in 1975? That must have been scary.

DT: In 1975 we were still playing to 70 or 80 people. Most of them were our friends. When we got thrown out of places the bouncers and the police were scary. By the end of 1977 we were playing to big crowds, 1000 or more, and they had just recently discovered punk music and had all this crazy energy and were very wild. It wasn't scary at the time, we loved it, but in retrospect, yeah, we should have been scared. It's amazing no one was seriously hurt or killed.

AU: Who are some of the best bands you guys have shared the stage with?

DT: Bob Dylan. The Who. Mitch Ryder. The Stooges.

AU: Who are some of your favourite Aussie bands?

DT: The ones I mentioned previously, from the 60s. The Seekers. The Lipstick Killers. The Passengers. The Cruel Sea. Tex, Don and Charlie. The Warrumpi Band. Mick Medew and the Mesmerisers. Died Pretty. The Stems, and more.

AU: We are still good friends here with Danny Creadon from Factory 13 Skateboards as well as the Godoy twins... (Deniz played a show in Last Of The Bad Men featuring all three of these maniacs @ Logan's Pub in Victoria 2012 with Keg Killers)... Do you still keep in touch with these guys?

DT: Oh yes. We are all close friends. You probably know that I played on two Bad Men albums. I have toured recently in Europe, the USA and China with Art and Steve Godoy, along with a fourth band member Keith Streng from the Fleshtones. Art and Steve play on my last solo album, *Fast Freight*, released last year on Career Records.

AU: Radio Birdman made a great LP a few years back in Zeno Beach. Can we anticipate a new Radio Birdman LP in the near future?

DT: Thank you.... No plans for that. We've probably come to the end of that road.

AU: Have you guys been finding ways to stay creative and busy during the virus? Your other job must be tricky as well in these crazy times I imagine?

DT: I've been writing and arranging music for the next album, playing guitar and working on developing some new techniques. I'm also working as a coffee grower in Hawaii. We grow 100% Kona coffee, process and roast it in small batches and sell it by mail order. I don't work in hospital emergency rooms any more.

AU: Do you guys still surf?

DT: No, I had a pretty bad surfing accident some years back requiring a multi-level spinal fusion. I was very lucky to survive, and I can't risk re-injury. I still swim in the ocean and body surf a little if it's not big.

AU: What is the last record you can remember buying that you still listen to a lot?

DT: Bob Dylan's *Rough and Rowdy Ways*. Also recently picked up the *Best of Mississippi John Hurt* and *The Stooges Live at Goose Lake*, both on Third Man Records.

AU: Any last words for all of us Birdman/Stooges Junkies?

DT: New, original, real rock and roll is alive and well ... it just gets harder to find.

AU: How do we find you online and how can people get ahold of the new album?

DT: Find me at:

www.deniztek.com

www.radiobirdman.com

www.facebook.com/DenizTekOfficial

www.TekonaCoffee.com

deniztek.rb on instagram

Get the album at your local record store or by mailorder at www.cleorecs.com



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THE SITHFITS

interview with Jimmy Psycho

AU: Who are we talking to?

Jimmy Psycho, the main mind behind the long-running "Horror Rawkillbilly" outfit *Psycho Charger* and the wildly popular "Spooky Sci-Fi Punk Rock Lounge Band" *The Jimmy Psycho Experiment*... and now, *The Sithfits*!!!

AU: Tell us the concept behind *The Sithfits*?

The Sithfits combine classic punk rock songs with Star Wars-inspired parody lyrics resulting in a powerful, yet humorous musical experience.

AU: How would you describe the band's sound?

Not only limited to their fun-filled sonic attack, *The Sithfits* dress the part. Imagine a group of Darth Maul-looking adults playing classic punk tunes. The goal of visually representing a punk rock vision from the Dark Side of The Force!!!

AU: How do you blend Sci-Fi and Horror?

With me, it's always been about finding the balance of horror and humour, probably more so than my other projects. *The Sithfits* bring this concept to the ideal level of those shenanigans.

AU: Have *The Sithfits* released any albums?

We have! The "*Tattooine E.P.*" was recorded in the pandemic era, and released on "Revenge of the Fifth Day" that is, May 5th 2020. We figured since we weren't playing any shows, then we should use the time to record the songs we've been playing live. "*Tattooine E.P.*" came in at 7 songs in total! We didn't want to record any more, as we didn't want to wear the gag out on the first record... hahaha

AU: Who else is in the band?

The latest incarnation is:

Jimmy Psycho-vox

Jeano Roid- guitar

Handsome Jimmy- bass

Jimmy Rocket- bass (yes, TWO Bass players!)

Bo Bo Badinski- Drums

AU: Tell us the names of some of your songs and about the lyrics.

Well, the lyrics are all Star Wars-inspired, whether it be from the films, the comics, the animated shows, etc... If it came from the Star Wars Universe, it's fair game!

Track listing for *Tattooine EP* is as follows:

Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme" is a punk rock instrumental)

Order 66 (to the tune of Last Caress by The Misfits)

C3PO (to the tune of Blitzkrieg Bop by The Ramones)

Chewbacca (to the tune of Vampira by The Misfits)

Tattooine (to the tune of Halloween by The Misfits)

We Don't Need No Jar Jar Binks (to the tune of I Wanna Be Your Dog by the Stooges)

J.E.D.I. (to the tune of Human Fly by The Cramps)

AU: Tell us about the video you made.



Our videos are done on the cheap. Basically, we took a bunch of clips from the movies and edited them to go along with the music. It's all very much a DIY punk rock ethic. Just do it, make it happen, and hope you don't get caught!

AU: Why was 1977 such an important year?

1977 was an amazing year... Punk Rock was born, *Star Wars* was released upon the planet, and *Weird Al Yankovic* recorded his first song in the bathroom of his college radio station. If these three events were to spawn an offspring, it could easily be *THE SITHFITS*!!!

AU: How would you describe your live show?

The live shows really are what *The Sithfits* are all about. We definitely encourage audience participation. It really is like part cosplay, stand-up comedy, and punk rock.

AU: Are *George Lucas*, *Danzig*, or *Weird Al* aware of your existence?

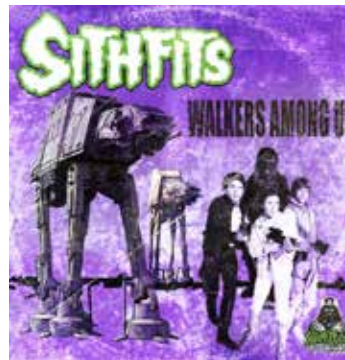
Oh damn, I hope not... I know *Lucas* and *Danzig* like to sue people. *Weird Al* "liked" one of our instagram posts, and then he "unliked" it the same day, so technically, he knows of us.

AU: What are some other Misfits related bands out there that you know about?

There are so many... *The Bitchfits* (all female band), *The Misfits* (all overweight guys), *Ms. Fits* (another all female band), and my recent fave *Walk Among Us* (The Only Punk Rock Piano Tribute to the Misfits)

AU: Are you in any other bands?

Oh yeah, my long-running horror rock band



Psycho Charger and *The Jimmy Psycho Experiment* keep me pretty busy. Jeano Roid has a great band called *The Creeping Cruds*.

AU: Any crazy Halloween stories?

Psycho Charger played a Halloween show down in Miami and rescued, of all things, a goat that was walking down the street when we were loading out at 3am. He rode with us in the van all the way to North Carolina!

AU: Anything else to promote?

I gotta Halloween record coming out this year... *Jimmy Psycho* "Listen...Scream...Shudder...DIE!!!" It's a throwback to those old school horror records of the 70s. I had a bunch of loose tracks of spooky music from various projects and decided to string them all together with spooky sound effects. Should be fun!

AU: Final words for Canadians up here in the snowfields of Hoth.

Thanks for the invite to be a part of the Halloween issue!!! Would love to come back up to Canada and perform. So anyone who can help make it happen, we would be most happy to hear from you!

www.sithfitsband.com

www.jimmyspsycho.com



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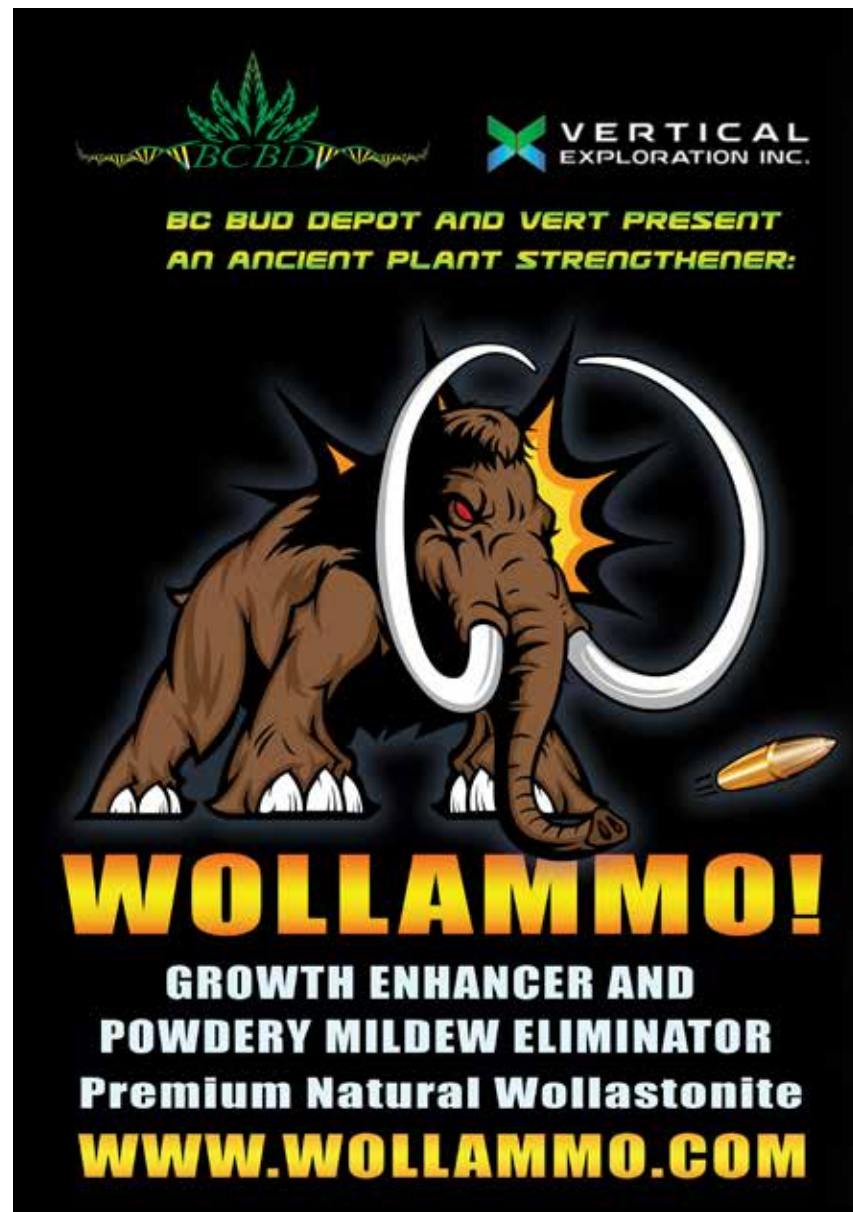
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Kendall “Chi Pig” Chinn

1962-2020

Photo by Jerry Cordeiro

A world renowned punk rock musician, artist and friend, Chi was a fixture in Vancouver’s Gastown and DTES since 1990.

As the front man in the legendary hardcore band SNFU, Chi ignited the hearts and minds of countless people with his own version of electric, groundbreaking music.

Chi was not only a musician, he was a painter, skateboarder, fashion figure and one of the first openly gay Canadian punks in the scene.

Chi was a bright light in a neighborhood riddled with addiction, mental illness, homelessness and poverty. In the streets of the DTES and Gastown Chi fought his own battle with mental illness. Despite his demons, Chi still managed to inspire, empower and create.

He once quoted, “Sometimes I get down and blue, but then I remember I can go to any jukebox in the world drop a coin and hear my music, and that makes me happy.”

One of Chi’s favourite haunts was the Cambie Pub, where he frequented daily. Safe within the

familiar walls of the historic pub the singer/artist continued his prodigious output, creating many imaginative and beautiful works of art.

To celebrate his life, and contributions to the music world a massive portrait of our local icon will be painted on the front of the Cambie Pub. Once the initial funds are raised, all other donations will be sent to the Chi Pig Memorial Foundation in support of mental illness and addiction.

Please open your hearts, wallets and most importantly...

OPEN YOUR MOUTH AND SAY...SNFU!

Project Manager- Jameson Trenholm

Attack! Attack! Productions

Artists- Layla and Lacey

laceyandlaylaart.com

Photo credit- Jerry Cordeiro- The Humans Experience

www.jerrycordeiro.com

Space provided- The Cambie Pub

www.cambiepubs.com

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Keeping up with VCBC

By Julia Veintrop

For over 25 years, the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club has been advocating for the rights of medicinal cannabis patients and filling in the gaps in the system. Despite the ever-changing political landscape, they have always found a way to make sure that their members will have their needs met. Over the years, the VCBC has survived through eight raids, the last two being recent. While they have changed the law as they blaze the trail, the battle has been long and hard. The reality of the situation has been and is that the VCBC is under serious threat. But, there is always a reason to hope if you can hold on long enough...

Thankfully, the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club just got some good news from the Province. Certainly a step in the right direction, here is an outline of the situation and the new details that you need to know.

Why can't the VCBC just comply and 'go legal'?

Currently, we have recreational

cannabis regulations but medical cannabis has yet to be worked out. A huge reason for this is the fact that Health Canada has not completed long-term human studies. Without any

medical backing, the government doesn't know what to do with medical cannabis access. In their ignorance, a licensing system has been created that favours money, not experience. Medical patients are expected to register with a single licensed producer or go to a retail store, leaving them without affordable access to any of the following necessities:

High dose edibles and variety - something critical when dealing with dietary conditions

Cannabis suppositories

Higher dose cannabis products such as capsules

Cannabis concentrates and topicals
Specific strains that their system needs

Who can't go to a Licensed Producer?

From the outside looking in, it's easy to think that someone with a serious medical illness could just go to a licensed producer. However, there are many other factors that can create serious barriers and when it's your medicine, it means your health. Licensed Producers are not accessible for people who:

- Don't have a credit card or the ability

to pay online - This could be due to their medical condition or financial situation.

- Don't have a family doctor or health practitioner willing to sign their cannabis prescription.

- Don't have a secure mailing address.

- Need emergency medicine.

- Can't afford the high costs associated with LPs.

The needs of medical patients cannot be met under the current licensing system. In the meantime, places like the VCBC have defied the law in remaining open. But, when it literally means life or death, it's the only just thing to do.

The last two raids

On November 14th of 2019 and July of 2020, the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club was raided by the Community Safety Unit. During each raid, thousands of dollars worth of cannabis and cannabis products were seized. For a non-profit that makes its own edibles, the raids were devastating. Nevertheless, they persisted. Despite their losses and remaining threats, the VCBC re-opened within 24 hours of each raid.

Mayor Lisa Helps and Victoria City Council

Regardless of the fact that they don't fit into the current model, the VCBC provides an essential service. A sweeping exemption to the Cannabis Act can be granted, if awarded by the Governor General. This is what the VCBC wants, but to obtain an exemption, you need to have a lot of political support. Thankfully, their struggle did not go unnoticed. In January 2020, a letter was sent from Victoria City Council to Minister

Farnworth; after the council voted to support the VCBC unanimously. In it, they expressed their support for the VCBC's exemption request. Even so, the club was raided six months later.

Surprise support from the Province

At the end of August, Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps received a letter from the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Mike Farnsworth. The first thing addressed in the letter is the delay in his response; apparently, there was a misfiling. After, there are a couple paragraphs explaining the provincial position when it comes to Medicinal cannabis. However, it goes on to express support for VCBC.

"That said, I have raised this issue with my federal ministerial counterpart and encouraged exploration of a licence that could allow VCBC to continue providing certain services. The Province has also urged the VCBC to contact Health Canada about licensing and informed them they may want to share their views about enabling medical users to access cannabis through a storefront. The City may also wish to share its support for the VCBC model with Health Canada at: cannabis@canada.ca."

The Current Situation

The Victoria's city council officially received this letter on September 17th. Following that, they unanimously voted to send a new letter to Health Canada, asking for special consideration for the VCBC.

In the meantime, there is no further word from the province or assurance that their operations can continue, without fear of penalty.

The VCBC needs your help!

CANNABIS CORNER

This battle is far from over and The Victoria's Cannabis Buyers Club needs all the help they can get. By the end of next month, a package of documents is intended to be submitted to Health Canada. Right now, the club is collecting:

- letters of support

- medical patient testimonials

- affidavits from professionals

- reports from licensed cannabis companies, describing the difficulties they have had with the current regulations.

To support the VCBC by submitting any of the following documents, please email them to hellowcbc@gmail.com or, contact the club for further information at 250-381-4220.

You would think that living in Canada equates to access to medicine, especially when your life depends on it. However, this is a tragic misconception when it comes to medical cannabis. Even worse, the people who are affected the most are usually too sick to do anything about it. After all, when you're dealing with a critical illness, your body takes priority. If it weren't for medical compassion clubs and the activists behind them, there would be nothing but pharmaceuticals. Still, changing the law has been a long, hard battle and places like the Victoria's Cannabis Buyers Club need all the help they can get. Right now, in the fight for the rights of medical patients, there's at least a bit of good news to report.

vcbc.ca

Delta-8 THC

The world is getting wise to the truth about weed. As we are becoming aware of the benefits of cannabis, smart people are getting curious about it. When you take a plant with so much healing potential and then study its possibilities, you can learn some incredible things. As the research continues, a new cannabinoid is getting noticed and thanks to the progression of extraction technology, Delta-8-THC is becoming available.

Here are the details on Delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol and what it may have to offer the world...

What is Delta-8-THC?

Delta-8-THC is a chemical compound found within the cannabis plant but only in small amounts. According to The National Cancer Institute, "Delta-8-Tetrahydrocannabinol is an analog of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) with antiemetic, anxiolytic, appetite-stimulating, analgesic, and neuroprotective properties. Delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol (Delta-8-THC) binds to the cannabinoid G-protein coupled receptor CB1, located in the central nervous system."

Delta-8 vs Delta-9

In the world of known cannabinoids, Delta-9-THC is a household name but, have you ever heard of Delta-8-THC? The two cannabinoids are very similar in their atomic structure, differing only in a few atomic bonds. Plus, both occur naturally within the plant. However, Delta-8-THC is typically found in small amounts, unlike the abundant Delta-9-THC.

Another notable difference when comparing Delta-8 to Delta-9 is the overall effect. Where Delta-9-THC has a strong, psychoactive effect, Delta-8 feels different. The National Cancer Institute reported strong words to support this; "This agent exhibits a lower psychotropic potency than delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (delta-9-THC), the primary form of THC found in cannabis."

The Benefits

So why bother going to all this trouble to access

Delta-8-THC when you can just use CBD or regular Delta-9? The benefits and when it comes to this particular cannabinoid, it gets very specific. Have you ever wanted to smoke something to soothe your pain, relax your body, and improve your overall mental clarity? Meet Delta-8! On top of those effects, Delta-8 has the ability to reduce nausea and stimulate appetite. For medical patients, Delta-8 might just hold the key to symptom relief and better health.

Accessing Delta-8-THC

In the past, the question seemed impossible to answer... how does one manage to harvest enough Delta-8 to make a product available for the market? As the government relaxes with cannabis extraction, research and development have been in full swing, resulting in new and exciting discoveries. As luck would have it, there is a way to convert Delta-9 into Delta-8. While every product is made differently, the process to acquire this cannabinoid is pretty straightforward. Essentially, Delta-9-THC is first extracted from the flower. The concentrate remaining is then processed and refined to change the atomic make-up, resulting in Delta-8.

Why we need this

While Delta-8 might appeal to the average consumer, medically, it's a necessity. For a cancer patient struggling through chemotherapy, it might make the difference between life and death. What makes Delta-8 so special is the therapeutic properties without the 'high' to accompany it. For medical patients that need cannabis but don't feel comfortable taking it, Delta-8 is a great option. That's an easy sentence to write and an easy sentence to read; but, when you really think about the lives that can be impacted, it's incredible.

Helping sick kids

To truly understand the potential benefits of Delta-8 and the impacts it can have, let's look at an example where kids have been involved. In 1995, a study was conducted on pediatric cancer patients and the published name speaks for itself.

According to An efficient new cannabinoid

antiemetic in pediatric oncology, "Delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol, a cannabinoid with lower psychotropic potency than the main Cannabis constituent, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (delta-9-THC), was administered (18 mg/m² in edible oil, p.o.) to eight children, aged 3-13 years with various hematologic cancers, treated with different antineoplastic drugs for up to 8 months. The total number of treatments with Delta-8-THC so far is 480. The THC treatment started two hours before each antineoplastic treatment and was continued every 6 hours for 24 hours. Vomiting was completely prevented. The side effects observed were negligible."

With little access to it, Delta-8-THC has not

gotten much public attention. Still, as products are beginning to emerge, this is beginning to change. With such specific benefits, Delta-8-THC will market itself to the cannabis community, providing relief without the 'stone'. But for those with a critical illness, Delta-8-THC might be the key to a new and improved, quality of life. One thing is certain, there is a lot of hope for the future. What we learn about this incredible plant is improving our application of it, untapping the potential to heal ourselves, inside and out.

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Why Horror?

Interview with Tal Zimmerman
By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Tal Zimmerman: Oh hey, didn't see you there! I'm Tal Zimmerman and most of my infamy comes from a documentary released in 2014 called *Why Horror?* I've written reviews and articles in *Rue Morgue Magazine* since 2010, in addition to working on TV as an actor for the last 15 years.

AU: When, why, and how did you first become obsessed with horror movies?

TZ: My obsession with horror movies began at the age of 12, seeing *Summer School* with my cousin, and buying a *Fangoria* magazine at the mall right after. That flipped the switch. But had been primed for it for as long as I can remember. I always thought monsters, dinosaurs, predatory creatures, and cartoon violence were cool, but actual horror movies were too intense. And then they weren't. And a dam broke and I was obsessed.

AU: What was the genesis of your documentary called *Why Horror?*

TZ: I approached a production company that I had just worked on two seasons of a web series with. My ideas was to explore Toronto's local horror mojo, and why it had become such a hotbed for cool horror events and culture. Between all the movies shot here, the fact that, at the time the two biggest horror mags were being produced here, and the city's abundance of film festivals, the idea seemed to make a lot of sense. If it took off, we could profile other cities or regions in the same way. However, in trying to explain why horror was so profoundly important to me and to other people, we came across the idea we eventually pursued. We wrote two pages, made a few flyers, shopped it, and got a green light really quickly.

AU: What were the main themes the movie explored?

TZ: The main themes explored in *Why Horror?* range from violent imagery in culture and the purpose of myths to identity, self-discovery, and how we process our fears through art and media, individually and as a society.

AU: What sets it apart from other horror related documentaries?

TZ: What sets *Why Horror?* apart from other related docs is that it casts a really wide net as far its themes go. We asked a lot of questions to a lot of people in a very diverse collection of careers and regions. We didn't just talk to filmmakers

or authors. We spoke to art historians, experts on gothic literature, psychologists, comic book writers, illustrators, actors, journalists, and so forth. We went looking for ideas that intersected and would hopefully brings us to a better understanding of our interest in horror. So, it's really about the philosophy of being a horror fan.

AU: How has the popularity of horror films grown over the years, what do you attribute it to?

TZ: All at around the same time, just after the end of the last century, the videostore and zine kids started making movies, horror games on consoles exploded in popularity, and the internet helped like-minded fans mobilize and organize a culture.

AU: What do you see as the direction horror will take in the next few years?

TZ: I think most horror in the next few years will have the long shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic over it, both in terms of themes in stories, but also in terms of number of productions we're seeing. Less things are being made and with more reliance on post-production. Personally, I want to see more witch shit. More fantasy horror.

AU: What are some of your favourite obscure horror films you can recommend to people?



TZ: I think putting a clip from *Burial Ground* (1981) in my movie answers that in part. I also think people should see *Jigoku* (1960), Sydney

Lumet's TV movie *The Dybbuk* (1960), *Encounters Of A Spooky Kind* (1980), *Threads* (1984), and *The Loved Ones* (2009). I could go on!

AU: There were some funny moments like when you were forcing your Mom to watch

gory horror movies while hooked up to an EKG machine. Was bringing that personal and family aspect into the movie important to you?

TZ: At first, no. I didn't even want to be in it, or at least not the focus of it. But once I was convinced to filter the themes through the eyes of a horror fan, and be that horror fan, it became obvious that their contributions to my life as a fan should be noted.

AU: Who were some of the better known horror celebrities you featured in the film? Or was it more psychologists, academics, and experts?

TZ: Having George Romero and John Carpenter speak in your movie is as good as it gets, I think. But having someone like Noel Carroll, whose 1990 academic work "Paradoxes of the Heart" contains a chapter called "Why Horror," was a pretty good get, too. He really gets to the meat of it.

AU: What was it like hanging out with George A. Romero during his interview for the movie? Any Romero tidbits you learned?

TZ: Hanging out with George Romero for the half hour or so I did was an event I'll treasure as long as I live. The challenge was being professional and not overly emotional. I think I mostly did OK, but at one point, I found myself trying to explain how much I love *Dawn Of The Dead* (1978) and coming off a bit overzealous. I'm sure he's seen worse. I didn't really learn any tidbits, other than his fears were very practical, rational, and revolved round his health. Normal person stuff.

AU: You seemed to be very influenced early on

by a certain high school horror movie. What was it called and what was it about it that affected you so deeply?

TZ: *Summer School* gave us Chainsaw and Dave, who easily had the most fun in what is a very fun movie. They had their fun by talking about *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, pranking people with gore effects, and mocking normal, well-mannered behaviour. I also think seeing the climax of *Texas Chainsaw* as a projection on a classroom wall in a movie was a turning point. If I could easily withstand that, I could watch more horror movies. And with Chainsaw and Dave as my inspiration, that's exactly what I did.

AU: Are there things you still wanted to explore deeper about horror?

TZ: Every sub-topic in *Why Horror?* could use its own documentary. But I wanted a heavier focus on older relatives or friends or neighborhood kids inspiring some of us to be horror fans. I'm interested in the ways we inherit or discover horror and I love stories about that moment when we know we're in it for life.

AU: Had you worked on any other films previous to *Why Horror?* or were you more of a journalist and writer?

TZ: I worked on two shorts and a feature with *Rue Morgue* in a variety of capacities, and had done some writing, but I made my living as an actor. *Why Horror?* came more from my experience in horror that as an actor.

AU: Any good Jesus Maggot or Dave Alexander stories to share?

TZ: I think I've known Jesus since the first Festival Of Fear (2004) or somewhere around there, and I've know Dave for about that long as well. And yet, I don't have any super juicy stories! I will say that Dave is one of my best friends and has been my biggest supporter in terms of writing and pushing *Why Horror?*. We've done a bunch of fests and conventions together, and were watching movies pretty much every week before the pandemic went nuts.

AU: Was the John Carpenter interview in the movie from *Rue Morgue's* Festival of Fear in Toronto? I was at that convention and during his panel John Carpenter kept saying that he had to meet his drug dealer after the panel. Was it you? or do you know what kind of drug dealer he was waiting for? I assume it was a weed dealer but curious if you have the actual facts of the situation?

TZ: HA! I wish I sold John Carpenter weed. I get good shit. The actual facts are that we ambushed him and he begrudgingly agreed to step away from his table and be interviewed on the convention floor. His handler was Erin Grey, from *Buck Rogers* and *Silver Spoons*. Someone recognized her and asked for her autograph. When she tried to charge him \$20, he said no thanks and took off. It was so funny. But once the interview with Carpenter was rolling, things were great. He's so funny and smart as hell. And he's pretty irritable, so keeping the interview going, being clear and concise, was the goal.

AU: Any upcoming or projects planned for the future you can talk about?

TZ: I currently host a trivia night I'm quite proud of. On the last Wednesday of every month, a co-host and I run 40 questions of horror trivia over Instagram. I've been doing it since summer of last

year, at first live at Storm Crow Manor in Toronto, and now remotely. Co-hosts have included Steve Kostanski, Mick Garris, and Darren Lynn Bousman. Anything TV related is on hold for now, thanks to the pandemic.

AU: What would people be surprised to learn about you? Any hidden talents?

TZ: I cook a lot. I recently got into smoking meat. And my heritage, on my mother's side, is Transylvanian. I'm shit at golf, but the fact that I play throws some people for a loop.

AU: What are some of the crowning jewels of your horror memorabilia collection?

TZ: I have some really rare posters, including an American insert for Fulci's *Zombie* (1979), a French billboard, measuring about 15 by 11 feet, for *Return Of The Living Dead* (1984), and also Don Calfa's personal one-sheet from that title I bought from his estate after he passed away. But my favourite piece is a small chunk of the famous elevator in *Dawn Of The Dead*. It has that orange-ass Savini blood on it and everything.

AU: Is there an item you are still desperately trying to find for your collection?

TZ: A poster collector is never done. I had a handful of all-time wants, I'm happy to say. But there are a few others there I could easily add to the collection.

AU: VHS, DVD, or Blu-ray?

TZ: They all have their place and deserve respect for their contributions, but give me the latest technology. I collect tapes, but I watch Blu-rays.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year or any crazy stories you can share from a past Halloweens?

TZ: I don't have any specific Halloween plans but it's going to be with my kids, their cousins, and no trick or treating. I'm lucky to have them, because they don't feel like they're missing out on anything. Halloween is whatever we're going to make it. I can't wait. No crazy stories, I'm afraid. I went as the head-explodey guy from *Scanners* one year. That was cool.

AU: How can people buy or watch your film *Why Horror?*

TZ: It's currently streaming on Shudder.

AU: How do people find you online?

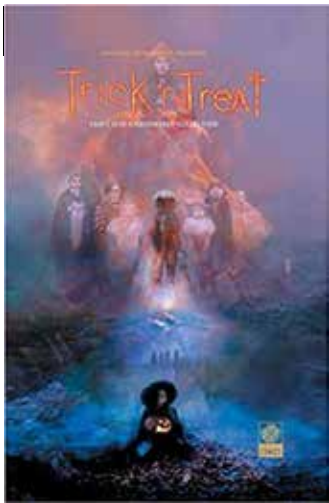
TZ: I actively post on @whyhorror on Instagram.

AU: Were you able to answer the question you set out to explore with *Why Horror?* What is the answer? *Why Horror?*

TZ: I think we definitely shed some light on the heart and soul of the modern horror movie fan, but the answer is really personal for everyone who loves this stuff. It's not easy to encapsulate, but I'll try; we love horror because we're fascinated by darkness, evil, and weirdness, and horror is the best place to explore those things. How those things become the focus of our fascinations is directly related to how we, as people, present them. Many of us feel that religion and many aspects of culture have a dishonest and unhealthy attitude towards mortality. Horror media is an antidote to that.

www.shudder.com › [movies](#) › [watch](#) › [why-horror](#)





COMIC-GEDDON

Halloween Picks to Eat, er, Read

By Ed Sum

All Hallows Eve will soon be upon us, and with Covid-19 putting up enough scares for those thinking about going out to trick or treat, perhaps nestling by the fire for a good spooky tale is a better idea. The following are my top picks in what to pick up at your local comic book store to get that spook on. Half of these titles are now available for purchase online or at your favourite comic book store. The other part will soon grace the dusty shelves, and yes, you can horde all that candy for yourself!

Legendary Comics – Trick 'r Treat, the Omnibus Collection.

This includes the adaptation of the film and *Days of the Dead*, where franchise icon Sam takes readers on a journey back through Halloween history with four chilling tales. Discover old-world lovers whose romance takes a chilling turn and Western pioneers who discover the dark side of the frontier. Travel to 1950s Los Angeles for a tale of pure horror noir and into the heart of small-town America to see some pranksters taught a lesson they'll

never forget. Across centuries of Halloween horror, wherever fear lies, Sam will wait...

Dynamite – Vampirella: Trial of the Soul

Does Vampirella have a soul? That is the question being asked by an immortal wizard-king who has come to determine her fate. If she does, she will be spared. If not, he must destroy her. No matter how charming he finds her...

This can't-miss standalone tale introduces the

latest member of Vampi's spine-tingling rogues' gallery! Eisner Award-winning fantasy maestro Bill Willingham (*Fables*, *Robin*) brings this fable to the page with a haunting cover by Bart Sears (*Turok*, *Blade*) and interiors by Giuseppe Cafaro (*Justice League vs. Suicide Squad*).

Vault Comics – The Picture of Everything Else

As the 20th century dawns, art promises to change the world...and steep it in blood. A rash of impossible killings sweep through Paris

When the Treats Stack Up, It's Easy to Binge!

Not every comic book publisher can guarantee an authentic Halloween day narrative every year, but when they can deliver, it'll be hard to top Legendary Comics' *Trick 'r Treat* omnibus! Mike Dougherty (writer and director of *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* and *Krampus*) crafted this cult hit before making it big with the aforementioned blockbusters. This new celebratory edition—uniting the past two previously released graphic novels for the first time and featuring a new special introduction from this

filmmaker and other cool extras—is available for purchase in stores and online.

I'm particularly fond of the material offered in the second anthology, created by the top talents in the comic book industry. The list includes writers Zach Shields (*Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, *Krampus*) and Todd Casey (*Krampus*); Eisner Award-winning writer Marc Andreyko (*Batwoman*); Eisner Award-winning artist Fiona Staples (*SAGA*); ZID (*Lost in Space: Countdown To Danger*); Stuart Sayger (Bram Stoker's *Death Ship*); Stephen Byrne (*Green*

Arrow); Grant Bond (*Supernatural*); Mike Huddleston (*Man Bat*); and Christopher Gugliotti (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*).

Trick 'r Treat: Days of the Dead takes readers on a trip through time. The origins of the day are beautifully recounted in "Seed" and we have a haunting indigenous interpretation with "Corn Maiden."

"Echoes," The third tale, changes things around by giving readers a hard-boiled detective story. Zid had fun with "Monster Mash." Not every artist can have the chance to draw iconic movie monsters and

nearly every other entity associated with the season. The tale about two boys fleeing from an oppressive orphanage run by a cruel headmaster is classic, and it's something Tobe Hooper is likely to pen. Just where they go, and the Halloween costumes they wear to hide, is scary enough.

Depending on how readers want to celebrate this day, I'd love to hear if anyone can summon the spirit of Samhain by saying his name 31 times over the fading flame of a pumpkin's candlelight. Maybe Sam will appear before you, and wouldn't that be grande?



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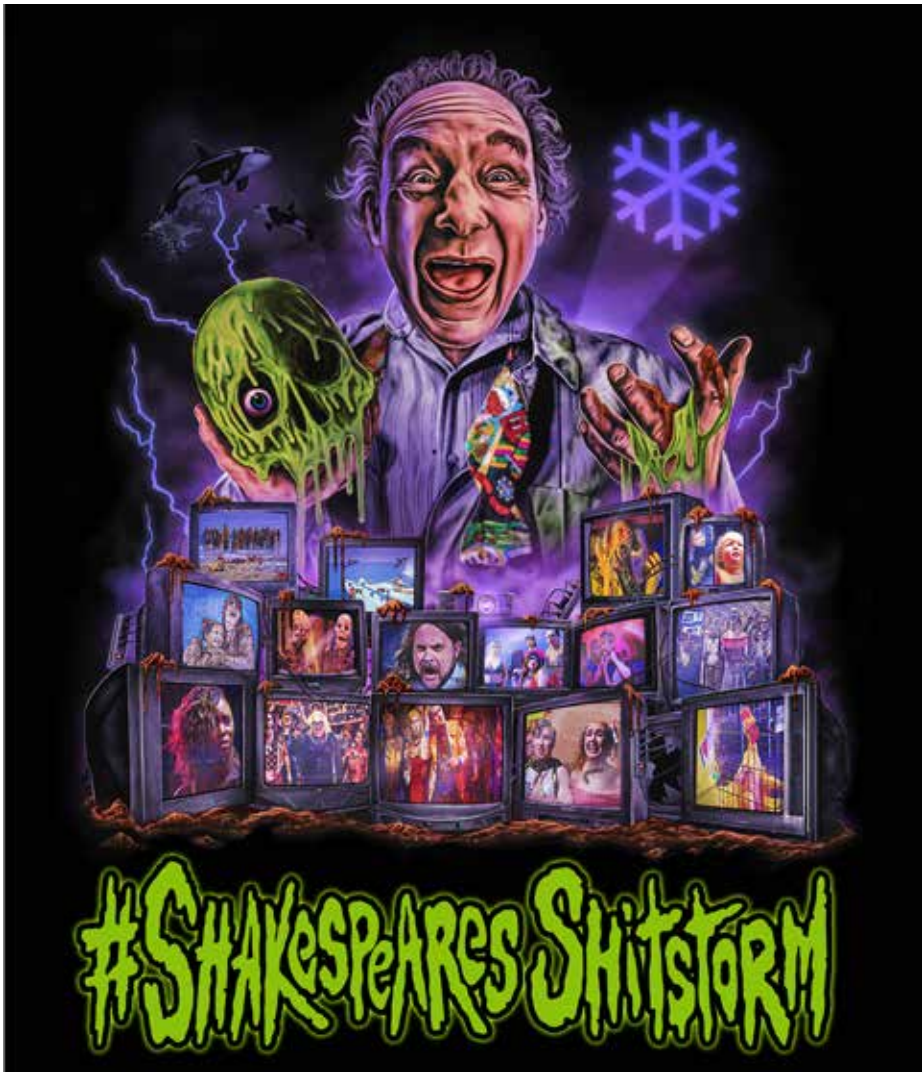
BC GOD BUD 75% INDICA 8-9 WEEKS 12-SEED PACK \$90 FEMINIZED \$150	THE PURPS HYBRID 7-8 WEEKS 12-SEED PACK \$90 FEMINIZED \$150	BLUEBERRY 80% INDICA 8 WEEKS 12-SEED PACK \$90 FEMINIZED \$150	GIRL SCOUT-COOKIES HYBRID 9-10 WEEKS 12-SEED PACK \$90 FEMINIZED \$150	NIGHT NURSE 80% INDICA 7-8 WEEKS 12-SEED PACK \$90
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#ShakespearesShitstorm

Interview with Director Lloyd Kaufman
By Ira "Toxic Avenger" Hunter and Ed "Sgt. Kabukiman" Sum

AU: Who are we talking to today?
LK: I'm Lloyd Kaufman, president of Troma Entertainment, creator of The Toxic Avenger. This is my fiftieth year of making feature length movies. Michael Herz, my friend from Yale, and I began Troma Entertainment, the longest running independent movie studio in history, 47 years ago. It's all thanks to our fans that we're still here. Troma: Movies of the Future. 47 years of disrupting media. We've made movies like *Tromeo and Juliet*, *The Toxic Avenger*, *Class of Nuke 'Em High*, *Tales From The Crapper*, and *Poultrygeist: Night of the Chicken Dead*. I could go on forever. We have a collection of about 1000 movies,

shows, and music videos that we've made, helped produce, acquired, or financed. We are the last of the good old independent movie studios.
AU: Tell us about your latest Troma film, #ShakespearesShitstorm?
LK: The movie is my interpretation of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," my favourite Shakespearean play. I would have done it when we filmed *Romeo and Juliet*, but I waited until I was Prospero's age. He's the old man who's been fucked by society and also deals in magic. I studied *The Tempest* twice in school. I think Shakespeare would be delighted with what I did.
AU: When did you first decide to adapt the works of Shakespeare in a Tromatic fashion?
LK: I started to think about it around 1990. I was honoured at the British Film Institute in London and they took me out to Stratford upon Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace, and I was very moved. Shakespeare entered my soul, and the end result was *Tromeo and Juliet*. It took five years to write

that script, and James Gunn helped make it work.
AU: What made you make William Shakespeare the narrator, talking about his own work?
LK: First of all, Shakespeare's scripts have stage directions. He does talk to the audience. And I'm a big fan of the playwright, Birchall Brecht, and Andy Warhol. They were the best at breaking the fourth wall where the actor talks to the audience. More recently Mel Brooks and *Deadpool* did it.
AU: What are some of the themes you explore?
LK: One of the primary themes in *#ShakespearesShitstorm* is about the Twitter hate, the Twitter bait and the nastiness of third-rate critics who lie and do a lot of damage. The hashtag is a big part of the movie and it's my look at what's going on online, the bullshit, the ignorance by the uneducated people trying to make their bones by destroying other people.
The other major theme of *#ShakespearesShitstorm* is that big pharma has basically brainwashed the American public to accept that pharmaceutical drugs are normal. You have a hangnail, you take a drug. Little children take them. Now you have a nation of drug addicts. So the abuses of big pharma is one of the themes of the movie.

AU: What's the drug called in the new movie?
LK: SAFESPACIA.
AU: We really enjoyed all the cameos like Toxie.
LK: Everyone in that movie was there because they wanted to make a good movie and they love Troma. The production designer came from Japan. We had people from England, Canada and Denmark. People came from all over the world to learn, rather than pay \$80,000 for film school. In fact, *Mutant Blast* was directed and written by a guy who came from Portugal on his own steam and slept on the floor. We also had Dr. Chud, the drummer of the Misfits, make an appearance.

AU: What was the budget for this new film?
LK: *#ShakespearesShitstorm* was the same amount as *The Toxic Avenger*, which was maybe about \$500,000. It was the same number as a movie we made 35 years ago. We had CGI people who work on major Hollywood movies, who did it for free just because they love Troma. We had a lot of very good talent who contributed or worked for 10% of what they would normally get paid. It's an opportunity for people to A) make something they believe in B) work with Troma and learn how to do it and C) move up the food chain.

AU: Are there any plans to adapt more Shakespeare stories in the future?
LK: No, I don't have any more planned. I don't know what I'm doing next. My wife and I put up all the money for the new film, except a company called Bad Dragon, who make dragon shaped pleasure toys, put up 10% as a contribution.

AU: What was the inspiration for the Free Willy whale fecal plume scene?
LK: We needed to create a tempest. I didn't want to just do a thunderstorm so Gabriel Friedman, who's worked with Troma for about 10 years, his father said he had read something about that whales get together and create fecal plume, they all shit at the same time. So you know, maybe that's the way the storm works, it's a shit storm.

AU: This film features whale laxatives. Are they also mentioned in the Shakespearean version?
LK: Shakespeare did not use whale laxatives, but I think he did administer human laxatives to Queen Elizabeth though.
AU: How many cans of corn were used in this production to create all the whale poop?
LK: I think it was hilarious that there was corn in the whale shit. Whales don't eat corn, it's ridiculous. We had eight days of filming in Albania so we used Albanian corn.

AU: What bands are on the soundtrack?
LK: Sick On The Bus, Motörhead, The Big Bad, Death Valley Girls.
AU: What's your recipe for peyote fish sticks?

LK: That was only a play on words. I've done peyote, but I'm vegetarian so I don't eat fish sticks.
AU: What is the protocol required to activate the Supersonic Snowflake Beacon?
LK: It's just like the Bat symbol, it just appears from the headquarters of the Snowflakes. The snowflakes see it and they respond to it.
AU: Did you have any involvement with the music and lyrics for #ShakespearesShitstorm?
LK: I wrote at least three of them, but let me tell you something about the song Miranda sings. When we are casting we do an open call initially. It's open to anybody and they can do anything they want for three minutes. So this guy comes in with a mandolin and he played a song. He wasn't an actor but I loved the tune and that was used for Miranda's song. Also Count Smokula wrote the sea shanty that my character, Prospero sings.

AU: We noticed some familiar faces in the new film like Cody "No Teeth" Cook from Calgary. Is it true when they say "No teeth is better?"
LK: I can't comment on that, although I'm fast moving in that direction being 75 years old. In fact, I just came from the dentist. Haha. Cody came all the way from Canada to get green slime thrown all over him in the new movie. Troma doesn't have a lot of fans, we're a classic cult film studio, but the fans we do have love us. They're very loyal, and they'll fight for us and support us.
AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?
LK: All October we're having TromaWeen in Troma-Queens, NY, at the legendary Bel Aire Diner that has erected a drive-in theater. They're showing *Def By Temptation*, *Mother's Day*, *Toxie*, *Cannibal the Musical* and more. The diner is also creating a *Toxic Avenger* drink and some kind of cream pie that looks like green toxic meltdown.

AU: I noticed the movie was dedicated to several people including Stan Lee from Marvel Comics. I know he published The Toxic Avenger comic books. How did you first meet Stan Lee?
LK: Well, I went to Yale University and besides



drugs and movies the only other thing that I discovered was Marvel comic books. This is 1965-66. I just fell in love with the design and the storylines, *Spider-Man* especially. You can see that *The Toxic Avenger* is heavily influenced by *Spider-Man*. Stan Lee wrote an introduction to one of my books, where he says that in the same way that *Spider-Man* put a new face on the comic book superhero, Toxie puts a new face on the movie superhero. What makes them superheroes is not their superpowers. Toxie doesn't have any superpowers, he only has a mop. But he takes care of his mother, he's true to his girlfriend, he has troubles keeping a job, and he has skin problems obviously. So he's human like Spidey and Stan really liked Toxie. I searched him out after college in 1969 or 70 and we really hit it off.
AU: What happened when YouTube tried to take down Troma's free movie channel?
LK: The fans went crazy and started the #FreeTromasFreeMovies campaign. How dare they take down our channel based on "community standards" What community are they talking about? I've been honoured at the British Film Institute, Cinémathèque française, Russian Film Institute in St. Petersburg, Shanghai film festival, Egypt, Canada, Brazil. There's been two or three retrospectives of my work. I've given a 2-day master class at Oxford University, Yale University, and at Cannes Film Festival. So whose community standards? It's absolute bullshit. The fans made a



lot of noise and then mysteriously our YouTube channel was back.

AU: Tell us about Troma Now!

LK: Troma Now is our streaming service we started five years ago. You go to Watch.Troma.com – The first month is free. We’ve been migrating all of our movies off of Evil Amazon and Evil YouTube and onto Troma Now.

AU: What would it say on your Tinder profile, if you weren’t already a happily married man?

LK: Well, gay married man, I guess. Something like that. Mature gay married man. Actually I think my Facebook profile says gay married man. I put that down often when I have to fill stuff out for film festivals and things. In fact for SAG, the screen actors guild, I’m in the union, I went in there as an interpretative dancer.

AU: Any thoughts on the COVID pandemic?



LK: I spent a year in Chad, in central Africa. So I caught every possible disease you could catch. I got Dengue fever. I had walking pneumonia. So I’ve had a lot of diseases, but I haven’t had COVID yet. But I’m prime, I’m 75 years old. At least I’m not obese like Trump.

AU: Have you done any acting recently?

LK: I have a cameo in a movie called *18 1/2*, which is about Watergate. Bruce Campbell plays Nixon.

AU: What sort of things should Troma be in the Guinness Book of World Records for?

LK: The superhero movie in the most mediums. *Toxic Avenger* is the only movie where a young boy’s head is squashed by the wheel of an automobile, that was made into a delightful children’s Saturday morning environmentally correct cartoon TV show. It’s a Marvel comic. Toxie has about 200 toys and products. There’s a Broadway musical. Also *Troma’s War* had more bullet hits than any other movie at the time.

AU: Any Halloween stories you can remember?

LK: I live in New York, the only Halloween I remember is getting beaten up by some street kids. We would walk around the streets in masks and make noise. There was one time I was with Oliver Stone and he got punched around by some girls. We were playing punch ball in the street and these tough girls took the ball and Oliver mouthed off to them. So they came back and beat the crap out of him. And I very much enjoyed it.

AU: What are the Troma rules of filmmaking?

LK: Michael Herz and I believe the first rule of Troma filmmaking is safety to humans. The second rule is safety to people’s property. The

third rule is make a good movie. Since I’m now a vegetarian, I say safety to humans and animals.

AU: What are some hidden Troma gems?

LK: *Cry Uncle!* and *Foreplay* by John G. Avildsen. I love them! They are on Troma Now too. There’s so many movies on Troma Now. The first month is free. You can watch a 1000 different things.

AU: What’s the social commentary and subtext in #ShakespearesShitstorm?

LK: One theme is the ills and sins of the big pharmaceutical companies. The other theme is a satire and the characters are representing stereotypes, they are marred foibles and most of them are naive and have a sense of false righteousness. I guess you can break it down to a satire about corporate greed and white fragility.

AU: Is #ShakespearesShitstorm doing the festival circuit?

other crazy candidates might have been why Trump won. I do think people should vote. That’s my main message, Vote.

AU: Did you create some election PSA videos?

LK: Yes, my daughter wrote a PSA in which I played the main part. Then Double Dementia, a super Tromette, made a sexy get out and vote PSA. I also asked my friends, Megan and Marcus, to make one based on a famous political ad from 1964 featuring their kid @ spaceboycosmo. My kids feel that the election could be determined by a 1000 votes. So Troma fans could make the difference. All the PSAs are on my Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and Troma’s Facebook.

AU: You play multiple roles in your new film. Was it natural for you to play a female role?

LK: I don’t know if I did a good job but I know that I am more attractive as a 75 year old female than as a 75 year old man.

AU: Who did the special effects?

LK: Well, Doug Sakmann has worked on our movies since *Citizen Toxie*. Also another guy who did the sculpting and the animatronics is the guy who did some Sharknado stuff.

AU: Is #ShakespearesShitstorm the movie you’re most proud of at the moment?

LK: Yes, I think it’s my best movie. It’s a great movie, no I’m sorry, it’s a masterpiece!

AU: Has Troma ever been mainstream or has it always been underground?

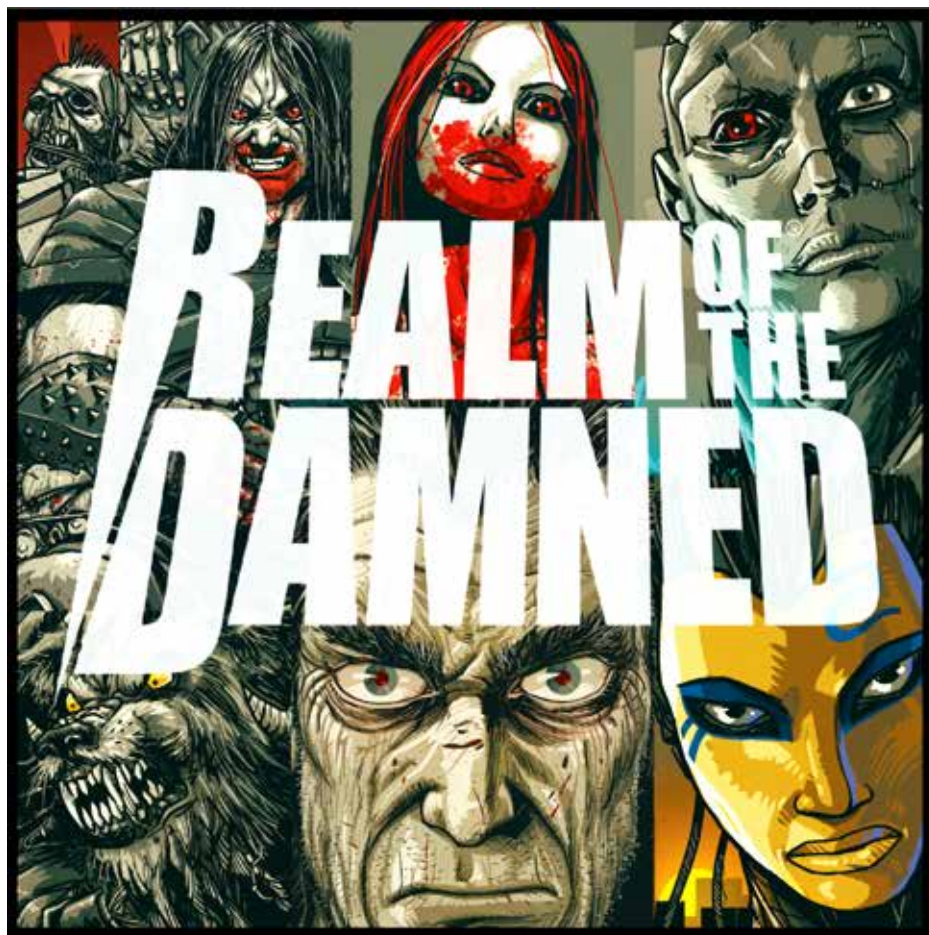
LK: Troma has had its foot in the mainstream when *The Toxic Avenger* became such a hit. And



Class of Nuke ‘Em High and some of our other movies sort of broke above the underground. But now we are deep in the weeds of the underground. I think we’re at the most famous level of the underground, which is not famous at all. In a nutshell, we can go back to Shakespeare “To Thine Own Self Be True.”

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The Devil's Latex

Interview with Steve Bellamy
By Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

SB: Steve Bellamy and I'm most infamous for Halloween masks.

AU: Tell us about how you first became obsessed with horror?

SB: Growing up in the 80s I got my hands on some *Fangoria* magazines and was hooked. I was actually almost suspended for bringing them to school in grade 5. I also got my hands on *Nightmare 3*, *Friday* part 6, and *Halloween* on VHS and watched them about 100 times each that summer.

AU: When did you start doing special effects and creating masks and props? What were some of the first things you created?

SB: It was 2009 and I took some crappy mass produced masks and repainted them. I then found some hockey mask blanks on eBay and started painting them. Eventually I started sculpting six years ago to avoid being called a mask producer - instead of mask maker!

AU: Tell us about your company The Devil's Latex.

SB: We make small handfuls of masks and props for collectors,

artists, athletes and musicians. Everything is made in house (a.k.a. my garage). Right now we are a two-person shop.

AU: What new items have you been working on in 2020?

SB: This year I released a limited run of an infamous serial killer and some new slasher style masks.

AU: What types of things would you say you are best known for?

SB: Slasher masks and my one pack.

AU: How has your style evolved over the years?

SB: I'm sponsored by the devil so I only wear black jeans.

AU: What is something you really want to create but haven't had the chance to yet?

SB: A life sized dinosaur. I'm still working on my sculpting skills. When I feel I'm good enough, I'll attempt it.

AU: Has your work been featured in any film or TV projects?

SB: Yes... I've done stuff for major motion pictures, music videos, commercials - but who really cares?

Making stuff for collectors is cooler, in my opinion. I'd rather know I made someone happy than to see my tiny name speed by at the end of a film.

AU: Are you excited to be involved with the upcoming *Undead Inbreds* feature film? What draws you to a twisted project like that?

SB: Hell ya. I've always loved the

style you guys have did the *Inbreds* in. So def pumped!

AU: What are some examples of your work that you are most proud of.

SB: I make slasher torso busts. They are huge. I'm most proud that I can still walk after casting one. It's like wrestling a small black bear who just stole your last smoke, eh.

AU: Favourite horror movies of all time.

SB: *Halloween 1,2, Friday 3,4,6,7,8,*

Nightmare 1,2,3

And other misc...

AU: Plans for Halloween? Any exclusive Halloween masks in the works?

SB: Halloween is all year for me. But my Halloween rush starts in August so I don't usually leave my garage until November 1st... This year will be interesting with Covid and staying safe. Lindzi and I always give candy out for Halloween. We are already engineering a zip line for candy deposits.

AU: Any advice for mutant children in the basement wanting to get into creature creation?

SB: Sure. Start sculpting. When you can sculpt you can make anything. There's lots of videos and how-tos online that you can learn from.

You don't have to go to a 40k a year art school to be good... work ethic, thick skin and good vibes. If you're not a cunt, you'll do great in this industry.

AU: Where can we find you online?

SB: Instagram @TheDevilsLatex



Beyond Possession

by *The Speed Metal Enforcer*

Where do I even start with this CANUCKLEHEAD CLASSICK band!? From the thrashin' skate parks of Calgary comes Beyond Possession. A rowdy, vicious thrash assault that grips you by the wheels and shatters your helmet and elbow pads instantly. Formed in '85, they put out a demo and then right away an instant clasSICK was made, *Tell Tale Heart*. This EP will rip your face clean off.

They were making waves fast and a little label called Metal Blade Records saw this and got them for an album. This album is an MUST for anyone into real diehard sonic assaults.

Beyond Possession hit the market and people saw what Calgary really could do, thrash like the rest! They would play along side legedary bands like Poison Idea, Dr Know, The Accused and Saint Vitus, among others on shows I can only imagine where totally

mental. The band ceases to exist now and has been forgotten by lots, but is remembered by the people who know the real deal. This band and specifically the full length album are some of



the best thrash crossover to ever be made. If you havent heard them yet, throw this magazine down and find it, immediately!



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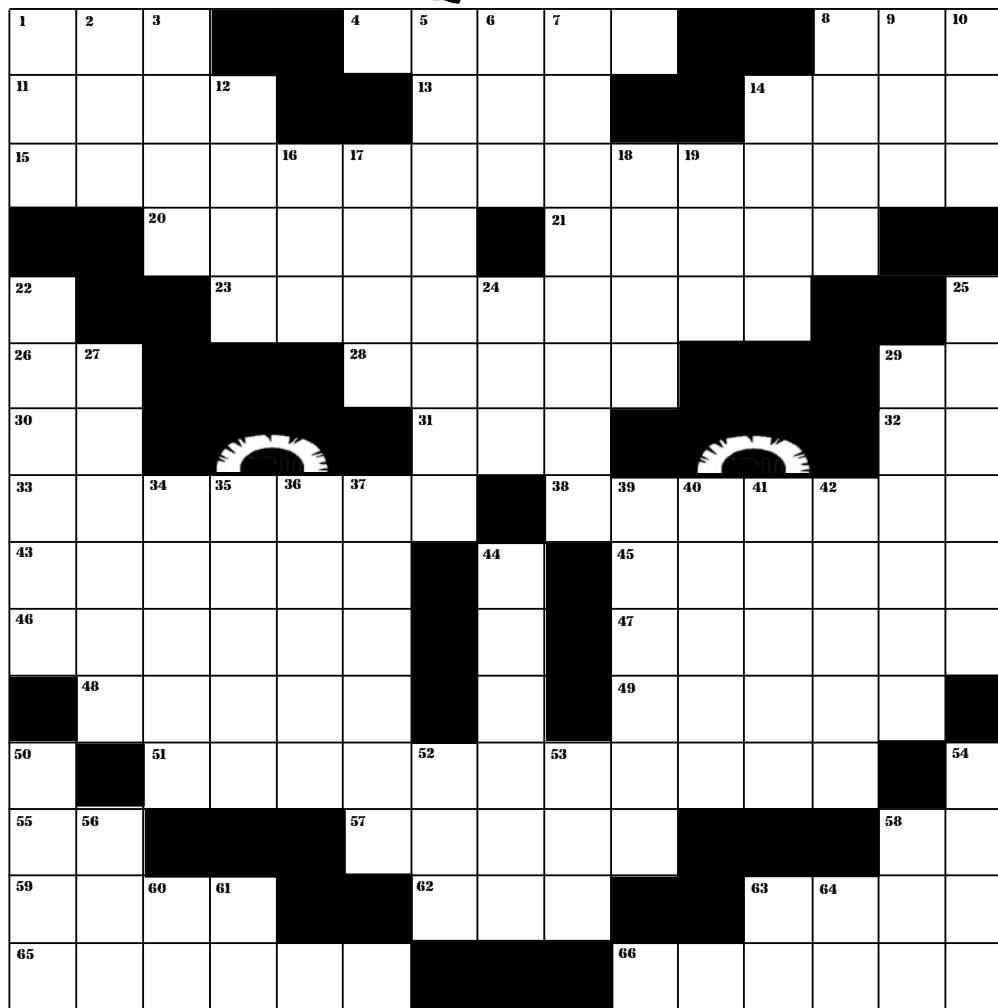
JUST CHILL OUT

ACROSS

- 1, 4, 8. Legendary DC Punk club
11. "Star Trek" bad guy
13. Sort of
14. _____ the Wanderer
15. WHAT YOU DANCE TO
(courtesy of The Stranglers)
20. Cute critter from "Ice Age"
21. Bad place to be a witch
23. WHAT YOU LISTEN TO
(courtesy Jello or Siouxsie)
26. US newswire
28. Corporate guidance
29. You (fr.)
30. Letters before the names of
FBI detectives
31. Biological pouch
32. It runs a Mac
33. Most serious
38. The anti-Claus
43. Apt description for Trump?
45. "Shark Tank" star
46. Earlier
47. Honorifics
48. Wake up
49. Big bang
51. WHAT YOU AVOID (courtesy of
The Ramones)
55. Hairstyle
57. Demand from a waitress?
58. The millenium, in film credits
59. Ford of The Runaways
62. Secretive US agency
63. Trim
65. WHO YOU WORSHIP (courtesy
of Ripcordz)
66. WHAT YOU WALK LIKE
(courtesy of the Horrorpops)

DOWN

1. Bangin' AC/DC song
2. Syllable from an old villain
3. You are (Sp.)
5. "The _____ Hobo"
6. Word to avoid swear word filters
7. Label for The Damned, The
101ers and Motorhead
8. What students do the night
before an exam
9. Rising Democratic star
10. Half a popular app
12. "That hurts!" (var.)



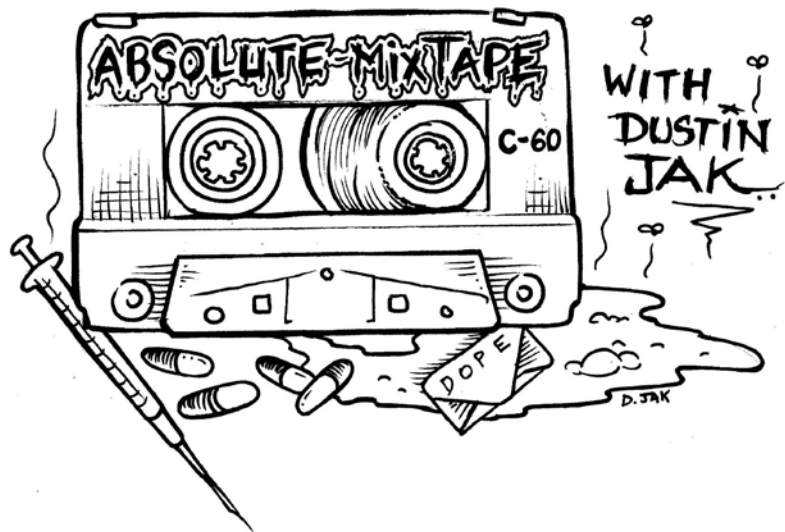
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OCTOBER 31, 2020

14. Matlock of the Pistols
16. _____ Parseghian
17. "_____ Land" that almost won
the best picture Oscar
18. Negative votes
19. Wheat (fr.)
22. Two-thirds of an iconic Rolling
Stones lyric
24. "_____ for _____" (episode of the
Umbrella Academy)
25. What 45-down call their cats
27. Where the spider lives
according to a poem (var.)
29. Small tower in a castle
34. Thrown for _____
35. It can be all-ages
36. Throw up
37. Most painful
39. "Sit on it and _____."
40. "_____": Battle Angel"
41. US spelling for basic measure
not used in the US
42. Medical term for paralysis
44. The ultimate HorrorPunk
band (with 'The')
50. Monty Python's Eric
52. German one
53. US doctors' group
54. Captain Hook's sidekick
56. Midnight _____
58. Sophisticated scan
60. The idiot box
61. Film by Kubrick & Spielberg
63. Afternoon
64. One of a six-pack?

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Absolute Halloween Mixtape By Dustin Jak-O-Lantern

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) GBH - "Necrophilia" | 26) Germs - "Strange Notes" |
| 2) Child Molesters - "Hillside Strangler" | 27) Carnivore - "God is Dead" |
| 3) Peter and the Test Tube Babies - "Maniac" | 28) Metal Church - "Beyond The Black" |
| 4) Iron Maiden - "Prowler" | 29) Death Angel - "Evil Priest" |
| 5) Wolf - "Jekyll & Hyde" | 30) Slaughter - "Incinerator" |
| 6) Ramones - "Pet Sematary" | 31) Hiras - "Demons Evil Forces" |
| 7) Christian Death - "First Communion" | 32) Hellhammer - "Triumph of Death" |
| 8) Celtic Frost - "Danse Macabre" | 33) Social Distortion - "The Creeps" |
| 9) Samhain - "Halloween II" | 34) VKTMS - "The Ballad of Pincushion Smith" |
| 10) Nasty Savage - "The Morgue" | 35) Personality Crisis - "Vampire's Dream" |
| 11) Exodus - "No Love" | 36) SNFU - "The Gravedigger" |
| 12) Judas Priest - "The Ripper" | 37) Blasphemy - "Demoniac" |
| 13) Venom - "Schizo" | 38) Cannibal Corpse - "Decency Defied" |
| 14) The Accused - "Autopsy" | 39) Bowie - "All The Madmen" |
| 15) Corrosion of Conformity - "Kiss of Death" | 40) 45 Grave - "Evil" |
| 16) Death Sentence - "Dawn Of The Dead" | 41) Misfits - "Night of the Living Dead" |
| 17) Necros - "Bad Dream" | 42) Battalion Of Saints - "I Wanna Make You Scream" |
| 18) Angry Samoans - "Haizmans Brain Is Calling" | 43) Slaughter and The Dogs - "Victims Of The Vampire" |
| 19) Mad Parade - "Real Horror Show" | 44) Forgotten Rebels - "3rd Homosexual Murder" |
| 20) D.I. - "Nuclear Funeral" | 45) TSOL - "Code Blue" |
| 21) D.R.I. - "Mad Man" | 46) Mercyful Fate - "Evil" |
| 22) Blood Feast - "Vampire" | 47) The Freeze - "Halloween Night" |
| 23) Death - "Zombie Ritual" | 48) Lizzy Borden - "Psychopath" |
| 24) Slayer - "Piece By Piece" | 49) The Mau Maus - "(I'm) Psychotic" |
| 25) Dead Boys - "Son Of Sam" | 50) Deep Purple - "Bloodsucker" |

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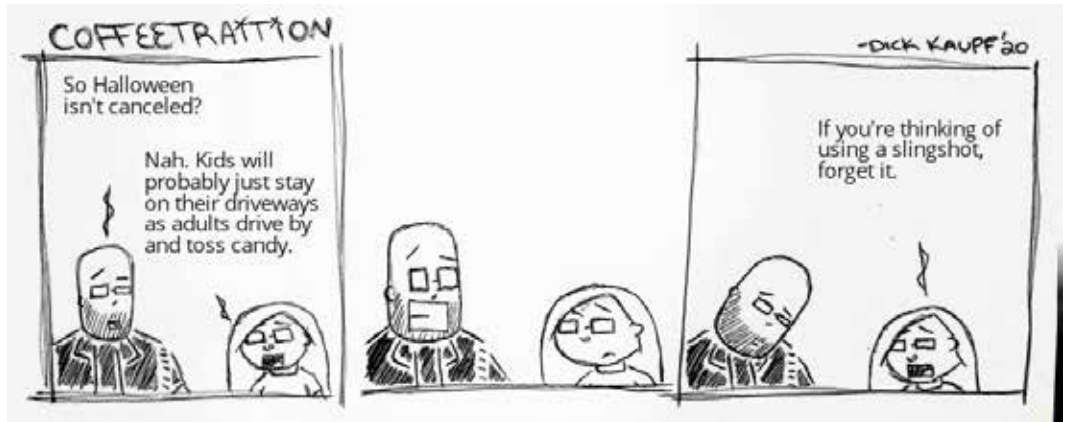
Crossword Answers

JUST CHILL OUT

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Absolute Film Reviews

T+E's *Shock Docs* Debut Doesn't Pay the Devil's Due

T+E (or Travel Channel in the USA) has more *Shock Docs* coming for or after the Halloween season, but *The Devil's Road: The True Story of Ed & Lorraine Warren* hardly feels frightening. Nothing is said about Ed's alleged decades long relationship with a very underage girl, Judith Penney. This skeleton in Warren's closet would have made for a compelling watch—especially when his affair took place with Lorraine's consent. This infidelity would have earned this documentary's name had it delved into the legal declarations made at the time (or even now, since Penney is alive and of sound mind) about the sins of the past.

Instead, this work pays lip service. Jason Hawes of The Atlantic Paranormal Society validates how they are like grandparents to the entire field of paranormal investigative world and nothing is said about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Harry Price, Hans Holzer and Harry Houdini's contributions.

The lack of putting the Warren's involvement in this field into perspective does this trade a huge disservice. After the Amityville House case, they became paranormal pop stars, with an additional duty of spreading their gospel, their beliefs, to the masses. It leaves the question of if they are genuine. Today, they have an equal amount of critics and followers.

The devil is in the details of how their breakout case started to make them celebrities. Reporter Laura Didlo followed the Warren's career. In the case that inspired the Conjuring films, she believes Carolyn Perron is the focal point. Contrary to the movie's hair-raising climax, the seance didn't go as expected. Roger wanted to save his wife from being possessed and punched Ed in the face because he insisted it must run its course. The Warrens were fired. Ed broke a cordial rule all paranormal groups abide by—to help the client—and not make his own goal paramount.

More *Shock Docs* are coming. *The Amityville Horror House* is set for airing Oct 26 and *The Exorcism of Roland Doe* the following day.

-Ed Sum

Alien Addiction

Shae Sterling is a tremendous talent in New Zealand and his debut in the crazy stoner comedy, *Alien Addiction*, shows he's up to the challenge of showing just what more Kiwi humour can do for those who have not seen this film, or is limited to what this country has previously put out, namely *What We Do in Shadows*.

Actor-comedian Jimi Jackson plays Eric, a ne'er-do-well living with his aunt (excellently played by Veronica Edwards) and vagrant who one day meets a pair of aliens who crash landed out in the boonies—a nearby hill by his home. He tries to help them gather the equipment (and fuel) to repair their ship and go home. What we get is a romp of the trio trying to get the job done and avoiding the conspiracy junkies (no pun intended) wanting that evidence to prove aliens exist! There's nothing high tech or truly alien here. Instead, what we have is a road trip movie with heart. Eric has nothing good in his life to fall back to. The aliens help him out in more ways than he realizes. Almost like in *E.T. the Extraterrestrial*, it's sad when it's time to see them phone home.

In this case, take responsibility and realize the ride is over.

As for how this movie came about, Sterling revealed in an interview with me (posted on otakunoculture.com) that he was thinking about a music video with some aliens robbing banks and then realized it could be expanded upon. He came across Jimi Jackson's works on YouTube and from there, pitched the idea and wrote the film knowing what this comedian could do. His vulgar wit was spot on, and this film marked his second time on the big screen.

This director also revealed how he preferred to keep the plot light hearted than deal with real UFO lore. It's meant to be more of a satire than anything else and as much as I wanted to see some connections with real world sightings, namely regarding the Kaikoura lights, I'm okay with it.

-Ed Sum

Nail In the Coffin: The Rise and Fall and Vampiro

According to Vampiro (a.k.a. Ian Richard Hodgkinson), pro wrestling originated in Mexico. A few talents from the WWE got their start there. Lucha Libre, as it's known, in its own unique world and *Nail In The Coffin: The Fall And Rise Of Vampiro* is a very deep, insightful and tear-jerker of a documentary about this wrestler as a family man. This film focuses more about how much he loves Dasha, his daughter, than the craziness which goes on in the ring, to which he is deeply entrenched and knows he can't fully retire from.

In his better years, Vampiro will fly back and forth from Ontario and Mexico City, from his home life to work, just to earn a living so to help his family out. It's not just with his daughter, but also his mom and dad too. This piece doesn't dwell too much on why he left the nest, but instead focuses on those lessons he learned as he navigates the world and prepares his own young little bird for the eventuality. He won't be around forever, especially with the way he's abused his body.

Some of these facts are common knowledge for those who followed his career and kept up with this harsh entertainment industry. This documentary is current. It gives us a bio that very nicely summarizes all the highs and lows of Ian's past life, how he got his stage name, his time as a punk rock musician, bodyguard and talent agent. It's beautiful to see how Ian and Dasha have bonded as the film presents Ian's life in chronological order.

Now he's in the greatest fight for his life. He's diagnosed with early onset Alzheimers' and is living in Nevada seeking treatment. He still makes the odd return to the ring, but that's only if the story needs him for it. Otherwise, his semi-retirement is suiting him quite well.

-Ed Sum

For the Sake of Vicious Latefox Pictures

For the Sake of Vicious had its World Premiere at this year's Fantasia Film Festival. A Canadian film, from filmmakers Gabriel Carrer (*The Demolisher*) and Reese Eveneshen (*Defective*), this indie title brings a biker gang into a tiny kitchen for a vigilante beatdown. Carrer's synth' score helps amplify some of the film's tension. Meanwhile, the pacing only takes off near the final half hour. In the meantime, the film's topic is a bit dire and early scenes are constrained by

the simple setting. *For the Sake of Vicious* will entertain a few patient indie thriller fans out there.

The story could have used a bit more meat on the bone. However, the film is centered on a father's desire for revenge. Chris' wife has been cheating on him and his daughter has suffered unspeakable acts. Now, Chris (Nick Smyth) has his accused where he wants him, tied up in a chair. Unfortunately, Alan (Colin Paradine) won't really move from this position for the next forty-five minutes or so. Accusations go back and forth, with very little being resolved. Then, Alan's rescue team arrives - in the form of the "Splitting Skulls." The violence finally moves out of the kitchen and into the bathroom, with this viewer hoping for a few more surprises.

Still, Carrer's score helps amplify the action on-screen. His synth' sounds are consistent throughout the film and offers a bit of menace. The music is composed in such a way as to synch' with the events happening in the film. But, can a score hoist a film, on its own?

The first forty minutes of *For the Sake of Vicious* is fairly slow. Character development is minimal and there are no real subplots here. Instead, there is this back and forth between Chris and Alan as one character professes his innocence, while the other denies it. If you are going to kidnap and torture someone, you might want to be sure you have the right man. At the forty minute mark, the pacing switches gears with the introduction of the biker gang. The film finishes out with a bit of flourish. But, the payoff might not be enough for some viewers.

The setting is also very constrained - to one room. Almost the entire first half of the film takes place in a tiny kitchen, with three characters. There is really only one series of exterior shots to break up the monotony of the kitchen. This setting gets a bit repetitive as character Romina (Lora Burke) referees the antagonism between Chris and Alan. And, almost the entire feature is shot in one house, so there is no way for the camera to bring many surprises here, in such a small space. Even the finale takes place in a small bathroom. So, there are no real lighting effects that can take place, outside of a string of Halloween lights. Almost everything within *For the Sake of Vicious* comes across as being hemmed in and the opposite of expansive.

For the Sake of Vicious is closed out Fantasia 2020 with a bit of a bang. Filmmakers Carrer and Eveneshen try and push their story with everything they have. But, the film comes across as very indie and there are only a couple of humorous moments, one involving a mid-fight Vodka shot. The plot only moves along by inches, in the first half of the film. The second half offers a flourish of choreographed action and Carrer's musical score resonates well with the film. Still, this viewer was hoping for more from the story and *For the Sake of Vicious* can only cook up so much in its cramped quarters.

-Michael Allen
28DLA.com

The Dark and the Wicked Unbroken Pictures

The Dark and the Wicked had one of its first showings at this year's Fantasia Film Festival. The film is from filmmaker Bryan Bertino (*The Strangers*). His latest was filmed on his own farm. And, this title focuses

on one Devilish character and as the Bible says: "be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (Peter 5:8)." That lion stays just off-screen as *The Dark and the Wicked* stays in very dire and serious territory. A father (Michael Zagst) is dying and much of the film focuses on this patriarch and his fading health. Meanwhile, every characters' beliefs will be challenged in this release and so might the viewer's.

The tone of the film is unusually dark. Much of the film takes place near the dying father, or in a dark ranch house. Meanwhile, a shadowy figure is stalking just outside the home. Somewhat depressing, *The Dark and the Wicked* offers no light moments. The film is basically ninety minutes of punishing darkness (in tone) and seriousness, with many characters led astray. Folks might want to stay away from this release, unless they are seeking out a depressing time.

The story is fairly basic, outside of the supernatural elements. The father is on his deathbed and his son (Michael Abbott Jr.) and daughter (Marin Ireland) have come to pay their respects. However, the father does not go into the great beyond peacefully and instead lingers on and on...In the interim, sheep are being slaughtered, while characters are dying left and right. The Father of Lies uses a series of illusions to get what he wants - more and more death. And, this is one family curse that won't go away - until everyone has paid a full price.

The Dark and the Wicked is full of Christian motifs and symbology. Sheep are often mentioned in the Bible and they are seen here: "the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd (Numbers 27:17)." However, the focus of the film is more on the Devil. Of course, the Devil is shown here as a wolf, who is stalking the many sheep (the characters). Still, not even the Christian characters can find any solace here; one even gets a needle to the eye. Steeped in Christian themes and symbology, Bertino is saying something about Christianity, but that message is not clear.

The Dark and the Wicked had one showing at this year's online Fantasia. One showing is all someone would need as the film is overly dark and sombre. Very punishing in its seriousness and use of violence, *The Dark and the Wicked* will entertain few and disturb even more. Somewhat slow in pace and focused on family drama, this is not going to be a film for everyone and may even feel like a crucifixion to others.

-Michael Allen
28DLA.com

The Oak Room Black Fawn Films

The Oak Room is a co-production between Black Fawn Films and Citizen Skull Productions. Together, these two companies have assembled a great team of filmmakers, including: director Cody Calahan (*Antisocial*) and Peter Genoway. *The Oak Room*'s screenplay was developed by Genoway, who also created the original play, from 2013. This film recently had an appearance at Cannes, before having its public World Premiere at the Fantasia Film Festival. This title is very layered and the story develops much like a Russian doll, in which there are smaller dolls or stories within each larger doll.



Two stories converge thanks to one character. And, this is a small film with a decent payoff. A true mystery with heart, *The Oak Room* takes time to build its complex story.

In the film, there are two competing storylines here. Steve, played by RJ Mitte, wants his father's ashes and things back from bartender Paul (Peter Outerbridge). "A story has a thousand words," says Steve. But, his tale also has a villain or two within. One of the villains is searching for someone who may be a patron. Still, it is best to leave these plot details in the haze. Meanwhile, Paul has a tale to tell of Steve's father, Gord (Nicholas Campbell). However, Gord also has a tale to tell, within this second story string. Viewers will begin to clue in, here, how there is another doll within a doll here, or a tale within a tale. Near the finale, one smaller character links both tales together, but how this is done will be left in mystery.

The Oak Room is a smallish film. When plays are set to film, you will notice how the setting remains static. And though, there are two different settings in the film, both are pubs or bars. And, these two bars look strangely familiar. As well, there are only a few characters here, so the focus is mostly on dialogue and interweaving two apparently separate stories together. The ending is a little too open. But, *The Oak Room* will make most people talk more about the film long after the curtains come down.

Finally, the payoff, or late reveal, for the film is worth the watch. Though, it takes a bit of patience to get to the reveal. There may be a bit of a pacing issue in the first third of the film. However, once the Third Act comes into play, *The Oak Room* kind of zigs when you might expect it to zag. Genoway's writing work is affective here and most viewers will find the film an enjoyable time.

Breakthrough Entertainment is sure to widen the release schedule for this thriller, soon. Full of intriguing plotlines and character development, filmmakers Calahan and Genoway have brought an intriguing title to the screen, here. One character's childhood is grim, while other characters struggle with: remorse or loss. This is a complex film and viewers will have to stay on their toes, to figure out what is coming next.

-Michael Allen
28DLA.com

Body Cam

With America under fire resulting from the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the question of police brutality and the reformation of the inherent system which has instigated such events is in question. The body cam is a key tool which can be used for collecting evidence after such attacks and the officers in question who restrained Floyd will no doubt have theirs thoroughly examined.

With *Body Cam*, director Malik Vitthal has created a topical piece on the state of those in uniform and their arrest procedures. Released only a week before the current riots enveloped the nation, it examines police corruption while throwing in a supernatural element to keep it from being a straight drama.

It stars Oscar nominee Mary J. Blige, who returns to the police force after time away due to a personal tragedy. Unexplained, horrifying events then occur to other members of the force while she and her young partner (Nat Wolff) begin investigating the strange death of a police officer. This officer's body cam footage reveals an unseen force attacking him after he had pulled over a car and aggressively asked the driver to leave the vehicle.

Eventually, the truth is unveiled via Blige watching the body cam records of a corrupt officer, and the real life George Floyd incident as well as countless others are brought to mind. The film taps into outrage over police shootings in the US, specifically blacks, but also tries to convey that not all cops are corrupt. While there are no riots in *Body Cam*, supernatural karma exists in this film and takes its revenge on the officers responsible for covering up a murder and their own asses.

- Ryan Dyer

Darlin'

Catching *The Woman* at a film fest in 2011 was a memorable film going experience. It stirred some deep emotions within the attendees, with a few misinterpreting the message. Director Lucky McKee seemed ready for confrontation in the Q and A afterwards as a man labeled the film as misogynistic when the message of the film and the book by Jack Ketchum was the complete opposite.

The Woman was a powerful look into the dangers of a domineering and violent male influence on his family, and with Pollyanna McIntosh's character, the freedom and total disregard of these societal poisons in the form of a feral, wolf raised anti-heroine.

With *Darlin'*, McIntosh takes the directorial duties while giving her third portrayal of the "Woman" character (2009's *Offspring* being the first) with mixed results. Like feral mother, like feral adopted daughter, *Darlin'*, who joined McIntosh at the end of the last film, is now a teenager who shares the same wolf-like characteristics as her guardian. She is found by a civilization who takes her to a Catholic boarding school, attempting to clean up and normalize her. We find out Darlin' is pregnant and that McIntosh gave her up to deliver the baby safely. McIntosh then searches for Darlin', which leads to some interesting scenes of the feral woman succumbing to her instincts in a hospital or clothing store, however antisocial they may be. She even befriends some homeless prostitutes who become a pseudo-tribe to aid her.

Darlin' isn't nearly a powerful viewing experience as *The Woman*, though the performance of McIntosh is mesmerizing and the bloodbath she unleashes on corrupt individuals is satisfying. If the brutal karma of nature had a face, it would be hers.

- Ryan Dyer

Murder Death Koreatown

The filmmakers of *Murder Death Koreatown* certainly had their inspirations in the right place when penning this found footage odyssey which investigates the murder of a Korean man via his wife. The film plays like an Americanized version of classic Japanese found footage features such as *Marebito*, or the recent *A Record of Sweet Murder*, being based on a real incident which took place in the Koreatown district of Los Angeles, utilizing crime scene photos and information from the case to conduct this story.

Taking from the most effective found footage films, information on the director and actors is nonexistent, making this film seem truly "found." The plot is kept as bare bones as possible too, which includes the backstory for the



Absolute Film Reviews

narrator - being an unemployed man who chose to investigate the strange circumstances around the death in Koreatown because it was “something to do.” What then ensues are scenes of him reading strange graffiti on walls (which is in Korean text, so he has to get these messages transcribed) which warn of “the pastors” and interviewing random inhabitants of Koreatown in an attempt to find clues, which leads to the discovery that there was in fact a third man in the mysterious garage that the murder took place.

It all leads up to an ending which is trying to be mysterious but felt completely predictable. The same type of reveal has been done before in more shocking and thought provoking ways. *Murder Death Koreatown* then remains as another example of a passable found footage film which serves as proof that even you could film your own movie (the budget on IMDB is estimated as \$0), release it and have it reviewed just like this.

- Ryan Dyer

The Mortuary Collection By Ed Sum

From Fantastic Fest 2019 to Fantasia Digital Film Fest. 2020, *The Mortuary Collection* is making its rounds to other celebrations on cinema. Filmmaker Ryan Spindell's work is a retrospective on modern-20th century horror—four tales said in summary to start from the 50s and leap each decade to spotlight a particular style of horror relevant for that time. If further screenings and a home video sell out prove successful enough, I can hope for the making of a second volume where it goes back to the ages I adore—The Wild West, Renaissance and Victorian Age.

This work is a mixed bag of suitably themed pieces about various ways one can meet the Reaper, and one



reused tale. “The Fraternity” piece will certainly have its accolades and “The Babysitter Murders” is a callback to 80s slashers.

Some eras are better than others when reflecting on how we deal with death. That's why I find tales about the fear of death during the Black Plague far more disturbing. The best tale of the lot was about a man who must take care of his nearly petrified wife. She is living and breathing, but he must toil to keep her well being just that. But he's offered a chance at escape (in the form of a pill to allow one to die). But just who bites the dust had me invested!

During Victorian times, it's tough to beat the lasting mystery of who Jack the Ripper is and the emerging revision of the classic vampire as a romantic figure. While these tales here are more like one-offs conveying what Sam expects from a modern tale of terror, a strongly knit thematic arc would make this anthology collection absolutely killer.

-Ed Sum

How to Tackle Halloween 2020 Jason Vorhees-Style!

By Ed Sum

To say All Hallow's Eve 2020 is cancelled because of Covid-19 is a misnomer. We at *Absolute Underground Magazine* recognize that attending crowded events is bad; there are other ways to get our party mood and spook on! Not only are there haunted walks (where limits are put in place) and drive-through haunted attractions happening at your local level but also there's drive-in options for those who insist on not wanting to be confined. We just want to knock this virus out of its proverbial head.

However, organizations hosting raves and huge get-togethers are doing so at their discretion. They have warnings and liability waivers for all to read and sign. This fact is certain to avoid being sued later if anyone falls ill. We can only hope proper face masks made for the occasion are worn, and everyone is practising safe social distancing as best they can.

As for what's available, here's a highlight of what's available from coast to coast in North America!



Slayland at the PNE Vancouver, BC Oct 9-11; 16-18; 22-25; 29-31 from 6-11pm

The haunted houses won't be open, but the park will be possessed with terrifying décor and a horror-themed outdoor walk-thru experience that pays its respects to your favourite haunts of the past. Patrons will have twenty rousing rides—the Atmosfear, Wooden Roller Coaster, and the Beast to name a few. The less scarier include the Scary-Go Round, Murder Hornet Express, and the Skeleton Swinger.

Haunted Calgary: The Devil's DRIVE-IN Halloween Experience Oct 10 to 31st, 2020

More info at www.hauntedcalgary.org

Parkade level, New Horizon Mall,
260300 Writing Creek Crescent

Haunted Calgary is reimagining terror like never before- all from the safety of your vehicle! Calgary's (and possibly Canada's!) first drive-in immersive Halloween experience promises to deliver depending on how easy patrons get freaked out! There are three levels of fear to experience.

Tickets are extremely limited, only available by online presale, and are expected to sell out nightly.

Halloween Nights of Lights



Greater Toronto Area

Oct 1 to Nov 1, 2020: Tickets and information available at www.nightsoflights.ca

This all ages event is aiming to be a LED animated and rock n' roll musical delight for families wanting to stay “isolated” for the season. You'll be given a route to drive and through the radio, there'll be a lot of ghosts, skeletons and zombies to dance the Henry Winkler to. Yes, it's safe to assume Michael Jackson will be back from the grave in this experience.

Part of the proceeds go to support Epilepsy Toronto.



Cirque De Boudoir's Halloween Cabaret Montreal, Quebec

Oct 30 & 31st, 7pm – 11:30pm EDT

Tickets can be purchased at <https://www.eventbrite.ca/o/cirque-de-boudoir-12116654996>

Cirque De Boudoir has not given up on Halloween! This company is changing up their formula in order to bring patrons a safe event and have a very sexy/spooky Cabaret style Halloween event for you! Featuring an awesome lineup of performers, DJs, Visuals, GoGo dancers and more! There will also be a photo booth so that every guest will have their look immortalized.

USA

D23's Virtual Halloween Mousequerade Costume Contest Anaheim, California

Oct 31. Starting 5pm ET / 2 pm PT.

Membership Required. Registration at: [d23.com](https://d23.com/mousequerade-official-rules/)

Anyone who is a member of the Disney Fan Club (D23) can strut their stuff online and participate in a contest for a chance to win a \$500 gift card to use at theme parks or online. Ashley Eckstein (Star Wars: The Clone Wars) and Yvette Nicole Brown (Lady and the Tramp, The Big Fib) are some of the names attached to judge this runway of wonder, and more information can be found at <https://d23.com/mousequerade-official-rules/>

*Open to 50 US/DC; D23 Members; 18+. Photo entry begins at 12:00 AM PT on 9/17/20 and ends at 11:59 PM PT on 10/1/20. If selected as a Semi-Finalist, video entry begins at 9:00 AM PT on 10/13/20 and ends at 9:00 AM PT on 10/20/20. Void where prohibited.

Metropolitan Art Museum's Frightful Tour New York, New York

Oct 31. 11am to 12:15pm (PDT)

Registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/frightful-tour-of-the-metropolitan-museum-tickets-121384856373>

Through the Zoom app, the MET is hosting a look at the most haunted objects from the safety of home! This two hour tour won't deposit you at a tropical island but instead, you may just be a little bit more nervous about what's considered ghastly. Professor Andrew Lear is your tour guide and he's a world-renowned expert on sexuality in art and who knows, maybe a ghost might be seen peering 'round the corner as this location is said to be haunted. We're not talking about its role in the second *Ghostbusters* film either.

Here, viewers will discover what's stored in those Egyptian vases stored next to the mummies, look eye to eye at those shrunken heads and Meet the Met's only painting with two castrati. But in addition to celebrating beauty, art also explores anxiety, death, violence and our darkest fears.

Welcome To Your Nightmare A Virtual Haunted Walk

Sorry Beetlejuice, the Ghost with Most, Vincent Price, will lead this digital experience to wander through the most haunted places around the world. This event tracks your motions through the EverWalk app, and every day you are required to wander your neighbourhood (or elsewhere) so achievements can be unlocked. Each day, an email will be sent to introduce these get up and go'ers a video clip and a locale to explore. Plus, you can chat with fellow fans of the paranormal.

Those who manage to break more than the usual exercise goal will be entered into a raffle, where 10 lucky individuals will get prizes from some of the best vendors around the world of horror themed products.

Absolute Book Reviews

F.T.W. Rise of the Anarchy March

Release Date: November 30, 2020

F.T.W. Rise of the Anarchy March is the type of novel where I wish it was truly set in a high-tech future. The designer drugs put on the market to placate the populace and the implants that are forced upon us to track our activities is merely a part of what I like about this story by Russ Lippitt. It's part cyberpunk.

“For the win”—a slang term which many a gamer nerd will recognize—makes up part of this book's title. I've played Cyberpunk 2020 (now up to 2077) and this RPG world is partially reflected upon in Lippitt's novel. This world shares similar problems—governments and corporations thinking they can control it all—and in both works, illegal broadcasts from outlaw organizations are putting out a call to arms to restore the world to what we know as the 20th Century.

The protagonist, Doyle, takes everything that's happened to him from his youth and makes it his mission to correct. However, he can't do it alone. Along with Darla and Jack, they are out to tear down the establishment—known as the New World Order—and try to, as the sell

sheet states: win back the people's freedom. Are they right? Hell yes! They are members of The Anarchy March, a movement to course correct everything that turned America into a Nazi state.

This author's work of fiction suggests we're not too far from that now. From the press release—this nation is dominated by tyranny, greed and corrupt politics. [It's been] torn apart by wars between the upper and lower classes. In what this country has become is a nation only good for the elite—anyone wealthy—and bad for the outcasts, punks and free minds.

When I've been groomed by Patrick McGoochan's *The Prisoner* with its many pokes at different countercultures, my bar is very high and it's very tough to top that classic. I don't need the cult horror film and zombie references. One book about the Anarchy March by Lippitt is not enough to judge. I hope this author has more planned and if it becomes a made-for-Netflix series, I can binge on that to find all the secret meanings tucked within.

-Ed Sum

Scratching Planet Wax on its Surface

Release Date: Oct 6, 2020

Music editors Aaron Lupton and Jeff Szpirglas are back with a sequel of sorts, *Planet Wax: Sci-Fi/Fantasy Soundtracks on Vinyl!* This volume picks up from where their last work, *Blood on Black Wax: Horror Soundtracks on Vinyl*, left off. This time, they are looking at the many albums from cinema and television which defined last century's best in pop culture.

Just like the first book, interviews from the top talents of the time (like Stu Phillips) and anecdotes from many producers or composers define much of the text. The gorgeous reprints of each album cover (only the front) are perfect so collectors can keep their pristine and



neatly filed away. Well, we still want to pull out that vinyl and play it on our record players.

I'm particularly interested in the musicals of the time. We have “Xanadu” and “Little Shop of Horrors.” At first, I wondered why “Phantom of the Paradise” and “Rocky Horror” weren't here, but I understand they are more about the scares than fantasy—which is why they aren't included. There's no need to reprint entries. Overlap is inevitable, and sometimes it's tough to find something new to say.

Lupton and Szpirglas latest complements their past release. They all make for a nice display on the shelf or tabletop. When people gather for trivial pursuit and are arguing over the year that album from their favourite fantasy movie is released, these books are worth consulting to reminisce over versus a quick search on the Internet.

-Ed Sum



Absolute Album Reviews

Ape War/Needs - Little Shits Independent

'Rot System' is a brutal spanking that enlists crazed noise guitar set to punishing grindcore abused hardcore punk. The drunken riffs shift gear suddenly and without warning so you better get yourself inebriated to dull the whiplash.



Pig squeals and visions of that screaming goat invade the gray matter on the minute long "Poser Choices" as these Vancouver-based shit starters like to keep things primitive because there's nothing more intimidating to the ruling intellectual elite than a bunch of angry cavemen on mushrooms. Needs, also a Vancouver band; brings the damaged art-rock on "Into Ether." Letting loose some college learned dissonance via Sonic Youth inspired chords which pairs nicely with sore throated screaming.

As a split EP, these six tracks, three each between them, its easy to play the compare and contrast game but these songs have a lot in common as they speak nicely to the general rainy back alley venues they were written for.

-Dan Potter

BRIQUEVILLE - Quelle Pelagic Records

Existing largely in anonymity, this secretive band has recorded an excellent testament to creepiness all done in isolation during the onset of the pandemic. The results are both jarring and sedative as crushing psychedelic atmospheres pair up with thunderous instrumental grooves to create ominous movements of contemplation.



Moving at a languid pace elongates the unease as heavy bursts of ambient textures swell around the lockstep riffage that should have a wide load sign hung upon its destructive chassis. Post-metal doomsdances unfurl on "Akte X" a long-playing track that doesn't take peaceful guitar picking for granted as the dream states conjured up go on for ten minutes before dropping sulfuric acid laced bombs of oriental rhythmic sludge.

A thing of twisted beauty, this release offers a tight circle of influences that still make you feel like you have traveled the vast universe of metal potential. After hearing the spine tingling melodies on the track "Akte XII" I would rather stay in their Hitchcockian realm for as long as possible.

-Dan Potter

Devil Driver - Dealing With Demons, Volume I

Dealing with Demons Volume I, is the first work since the 2016 release of *Trust No One*, from Santa Barbara metal specialists Devil Driver. This album hits with ferocious intensity. Opening up with the unrelenting speed of "Keep Away From Me," This track really sets the pace, tone, and mood for the whole album.



They keep up the sensory onslaught with some insane guitar riffs on "Nest of Vipers," opening the door for the monster "Iona." The haunting and melodic vocals of Dez Fafara

on "Wishing" make it one of this old Slayer dude's favourites.

Finishing their latest studio release strong with "Scars Me Forever," this album leaves my metal head crushed and my metal soul obliterated. A solid album with tight riffs, deep grooves, dominating guitars, and Austin D'Amond is an absolute demon on the drums. Devil Driver's *Dealing With Demons, Volume I* will definitely, "Give You A Reason To Drink!"

-Insaniac

Psychosomatic - The Invisible Prison Nefarious Industries

Playing thrash metal in the most rabid way possible this long running California band went in the studio to produce a modern ripper of a crossover album. Wearing punk and death metal on their sleeves on opening track "We Don't Trust You" is an excellent start where Slayer approved guitar riffs punch a hole through the speakers like you owe these guys a couple grand or something.



The ferocious intensity never lets up like on "Riot Squadron" which must be above 200bpm. As a band they attack with precision and really put an inspired performance into it, you can just feel them living every sick turn. "Pandora's Crate" should be opened with caution as the dissonant riffage and massive chugging will tear your world apart if you let it.

Fans of Havok and the now in-limbo Powertrip should herd on over to these wicked riff dealers for their sore neck fix.

-Dan Potter

Lindsay Schoolcraft - Worlds Away Cyber Proxy Records

Canadian multi-instrumentalist Lindsay Schoolcraft has chosen to look back on her gothic metal past and re-imagine it in an entirely new light. Using lush synth tones and calming harp etudes she's created a dreamy present from the darkside.



Subtle electronic beats add a swaying feel to the cinematic vastness of the sound production as plucking strings and Disney like melodies work to chill your inner core with gothic goodness. Her harp playing and soft vocals enchant, concocting a fantasy soundtrack atmosphere not unlike that of Sarah Brightman.

Being forced indoors for the last six months makes you yearn for a soothing voice of the stranger. This album is a great way to reconnect with the unknown and "Fading Star" is that first step away from home.

-Dan Potter

Helion Prime - Question Everything Saibot Reigns

Dark power metal bombast with a cause is what this new release from Helion Prime is all about. Armed with a new vocalist in Mary Zimmer each song revolves around different figures that throughout human history have had the cour-



age to question the status quo of their respective worlds/societies.

The rebellion is melodic and full of classic metal posturing but retains a modern feel throughout that followers of Unleash the Archers will surely enjoy. "The Gadfly" opens up like a ballad before cutting loose with some crushing palm muted riffs and harmony drenched guitar leads. The vocal delivery is very dynamic on this track as powerful yet soft singing adds an undeniable 'womanly' feel which is a nice touch in a metal world where the girls may feel the need to challenge the guys at troll screaming.

On the title track "Question Everything" they light shit up with a great whiplash rhythm and double vocal attack that hits that very memorable melody for a home run.

-Dan Potter

Expander - Neuropunk Boostergang Profound Lore

Synthesis in metal doesn't get much more interesting than this Texas band. Taking blitzes of shrieking noise bombs and dropping them amongst some wicked grindcore riffage is bound to flip your wig. "Megacorp" takes an octave assaulted guitar riff and builds a whole raging inferno around it, at least that's what the lead screamer seems to standing in the middle of judging by his vile distorted howls. Twisted bass lines feature prominently, bringing to mind Botch and even some Trapthem as the tempos go way above the speed limit on "Hyper-Flesh Aedificium." The vocals on this track bring out some black metal to play with the crushing hardcore math rock.



Recorded at GodCity recording studios by Kurt Ballou, this complex pipe bomb is exactly the result you want; crushingly fast and penetratingly thick.

-Dan Potter

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Absolute Live Reviews

One Of Us III - Metal Festival August 29, 66 Livehouse, Tianjin, China

The third annual One Of Us traveling Chinese metal festival comes at the end of a long draught in major shows in the middle kingdom due to the coronavirus pandemic. The few hundred fans who packed into the 66 Livehouse on this day were basically salivating to get into the pit and slam into each other in totally disease free wall of deaths.

This show was sponsored by Monster Energy Drinks, which were given away free of charge before entering the stage area. The energy would be needed, as there were 10 bands here tonight, running from five in the afternoon until after midnight. I just hope someone brought enough drywall for 300 people to punch.

There was no list for bands times throughout the night so the order of the acts was a surprise. First up were Ashes, who played a mix of nu metal and metalcore which was passable in getting the crowd warmed up for what was to come later.

I don't often listen to deathcore, but when I do, I prefer it as brutal as possible. Stabbing, a relatively new band, pulverized the crowd with lower than low, molasses churning slabs that provoked the crowd to look like zombies in slow mo with sludgy headbanging. The other core-centric band of the night, Armed Conflict, wore bright colors and had a floral design on the video screen behind them. A saw blade spun in the middle of these flowers much like their guttural onslaught.

The odd band of the night in terms of visual style was Scarlet Horizon, who in appearance look like a visual kei act, so I assumed they were Japanese. I was wrong - they simply adopted the androgynous, make up wearing and teased hair look. Nevertheless, they had the crowd engaged and had them do a move I hadn't seen before, prancing to the right and then to the left in a kind of mosh sidestep dance.

Local fan favorites The Dark Prison Massacre graced the stage to a heroes' welcome. Funny how the most brutal band in Tianjin is also the most popular. The thing is, their shows are so much fun, so even if you're a softie, you can't help but get caught up in the enthusiasm of the fans, who react amazingly to these savage riffs and start up a circle pit or wall of death every other song. I await the day when they can finally bring their shows abroad. Here is a little Chinese lesson for you - next time you see a band and want to tell them they're fucking awesome, shout "Niu Bi," which means cow vagina, but it's what everyone shouts when the band is sweet as fuck).

The Query were the special invited band. On the poster their name was placed on the bottom beside the sponsors, so it was hard to notice that they were a part of the show and not some clothing or energy drink company. Their music was fairly unmemorable and they just seemed happy to be there. Life Awaits would be what you'd call the most high profile and commercially appealing band here. Their handsome, charismatic singer belted out catchy chorus behind metalcore esque instrumentation. Return to Sender played a similar



style of music, and had a frontman who was even more of a showman. What always impresses me about Chinese metal shows is the stage production - every band usually gets a video screen with graphics, and with Return to Sender, many of their lyrics were flashed up on the screen, synced up to the performance.

The Sweet Escape, or translated through Google - Honey Peach, was one of the more unique sounding bands of the night. Their bass player had a kind of yellow Luigi costume on and their sound has djent and deathcore elements, but there is a heavy dance aesthetic to their songs. The way they are written doesn't seem within the metal book of writing songs, but it works in their favor. After much of the same and since the Monster Energy drinks had run dry, they amped up the crowd before they were dead on their feet.

They saved the best for last, and just beyond the witching hour, folk metal masters Snowfall hit the stage. A departure from the core family tree which took up most of this festival, the band, being seasoned veterans but still looking like music school scholars, made damn sure standing up for seven hours was worth it. Their quintessential traditional Chinese metal song exhibits a mash of styles as perfect as you can get, and when this was played live, the jubilation in the venue was something I wish I could bottle and take home to relive. Thankfully, there is always the internet for finding these songs again, but with the last two bands, good luck typing in Chinese.

- Ryan Dyer

camouflage



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