





# AMERICAN HORROR PROJECT<sup>x</sup>





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# AMERICAN HORROR PROJECT:

## THE RETURN OF THE EXPLOITATION INDEPENDENTS

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by Stephen Thrower

These inaugural releases for *American Horror Project* – *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood*, *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* and *The Premonition* – date from the 1970s, a period of intense creativity for the genre and one which still reverberates through film culture today. They embody the freedom and vitality of a time when the genre was expanding and diversifying, when independent producers could raise money for defiantly offbeat endeavours and still reach a cinema audience. The directors of these movies – Christopher Speeth, Matt Cimber and Robert Allen Schnitzer – approach horror from an oblique angle, adopting a poetic, dreamy mode of expression in which surreal imagery and elliptical storytelling take precedence over blood and guts. This outgrowth into the weird, fractured and experimental fits perfectly with the genre's architecture: after all, implicit in horror is the erosion of boundaries, be they physical, psychological or metaphysical. The horror genre allows filmmakers a license, unique in commercial cinema, to employ stylistic effects that would normally reside in avant-garde or 'art cinema' settings. Each film in this fascinating collection plays with hallucinatory disorientation to stretch our sense of what horror can be.

The seventies were rich and vibrant years for American cinema. Directors like Bob Rafelson, Brian De Palma, Robert Altman, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese and Woody Allen were at the height of their powers, with movies such as *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), *Sisters* (1973), *Nashville* (1975), *The Conversation* (1974), *Taxi Driver* (1976), and *Annie Hall* (1977). Horror films, too, were in the ascendant: Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972), Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) were bold, idiosyncratic works by hugely talented directors, with energy, imagination, and a confrontational approach to their subject matter, while John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) was as polished, dynamic and technically impressive as anything the majors could offer.

And then there was the subterranean film industry, the exploitation arena, where some of the wildest and most shocking movies imaginable proliferated, unchecked by censorship or the tyranny of 'good taste'. Some of the strangest midnight blooms of the horror genre emerged from the exploitation circuit in the 1970s and the early 1980s, as a multitude of creative individuals took the opportunity to advance their personal visions, shock audiences, and make money. Independent distributors were looking to maintain their edge

against television and the major studios, and so the race was on to be more extreme, more bizarre. Luridly-titled wonders like *I Drink Your Blood*, *Daddy's Deadly Darling* and *Kidnapped Coed* played cross-country, from Texas to Illinois, New York to Los Angeles, offering a vibrant and varied alternative to the mainstream of American cinema. Frequently programmed in double or even triple bills, these low-budget shockers were at last in step with the hyperbole of their sales pitches.

For decades, horror film trailers had been promising 'An Unbelievable Orgy of Terror!', and for decades audiences had been trooping home afterwards, passably entertained but somewhat unfulfilled. As exploitation entrepreneur David F. Friedman once so brilliantly put it, what the market tended to offer was "the sizzle without the steak". It was only really in the 1970s that horror stopped teasing and delivered on those dangled promises. Technically the films were often crude, but when it came to the meat of the matter you stood a fair chance of getting it all – the sizzle *and* the steak. Quality, of course, varied wildly. Some films of the period were small gems of invention and intelligence. Others were simply terrible. One week you might see something as poetic and haunting as Frederick R. Friedel's *Lisa Lisa* aka *Axe* (1974); the next you could be stuck with a creaky Al Adamson movie like *Blood of Ghastly Horror* (1971). Nevertheless, what matters is that taken together, this cavalcade of oddballs, chancers and iconoclasts constituted a thriving parallel cinema, a genuine alternative to Hollywood, with its own exhibition networks and its own aesthetic principles. A place where lack of big bucks was *not* an obstacle, where stories could roam and wander as they pleased, unrestrained by film-making orthodoxy.

### Welcome to the Carnival

The carnival is a prominent element in two of the films in this collection (*The Premonition* features a travelling funfair, while *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* speaks for itself). It's a coincidence worth dwelling upon, as it links us to the very roots of independent horror cinema, and the 'exploitation' circuit that sustained it.

Historically speaking, the carnival is where exploitation cinema learned most of its tricks; indeed a cynic might claim that the horror genre is simply the furtherance of the carnival experience by more sophisticated means. Like the rollercoaster, you are taken slowly to the brink of anticipation, and then plunged, with a sickening lurch of the stomach, towards apparent death and disaster. Like the ghost train, you pay your money, take a seat, and allow yourself to be enveloped in darkness, where all manner of ghouls, witches, spiders and knife-wielding cacklers loom at you through the murk. Then suddenly the doors fly open, and you disembark, returning to your normal life. There's a great deal more to the horror genre than that, but nevertheless: the carnival

thrill ride is deep within the genre's DNA.

There's something about carnivals and fairgrounds that resonates with us psychologically. More than just the thrill of the rides, it's the mystery and romance of the lifestyle that seduces our imagination. Unlike the clientele, who live in a fixed location surrounded by a familiar milieu, the denizens of the carnival are outsiders, moving from town to town. As a result, those of fixed residence have long regarded travellers, carnies, gypsies, and itinerant fairground workers with a mixture of envy, fascination and suspicion. (It's this mixture of dark romance, unease and paranoid anxiety that Ray Bradbury drew upon for his classic carnival tale *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.) We turn to the carnival for amusement and diversion, but in the days before regulation it was also for a taste of something dark and wild and illicit – and this is surely what we seek from horror too.

Influential exploitation film producer David F. Friedman, the man who gave the world *She Freak* (1967) and the Herschell Gordon Lewis "Blood Trilogy" (1963-65), was a born huckster who brought to the movie business all the skills he'd learned in the carnival trade. "Originally, all the exploiteers, including myself, were carnies," he told John McCarty in 1995. "If they weren't working on road-showing a movie, they were out working with a circus or carnival. The early days of exploitation, what we call road-showing – a combination of stage and screen show presentation – were definitely the transition period from the carnival to the movie theater." 'Road-showing' was the practice of putting live presenters, pseudo-lecturers, book salesmen, and people associated with the movie, on stage or in the lobby before and after a screening. Most notoriously, when exploitation director-producer Dwain Esper bought the rights to Tod Browning's 1932 commercial flop *Freaks* for a mere \$50,000 and re-released it in 1947 as *Nature's Mistakes*, he took a whole company of 'freaks' with him on the road and set them up in the lobby of theaters playing the film, essentially recreating a circus sideshow in the cinema.

Early exploitation movies had a reputation for slack delivery and unfulfilled promises. As Friedman once explained, "The whole secret to exploitation and our successful little racket was the carnival tease: Boy, we didn't see it this week, but next week they're really going to show it to us." And yet the films did occasionally deliver, just as travelling fairs sometimes featured a real two-headed calf, or a genuine human oddity strange enough to send you home unsettled and subdued. Leading the pack when it came to outright shocks was *Mom and Dad*, a 1945 'educational film' by producer/distributor Kroger Babb and director William Beaudine. It featured footage of a real human birth and an unflinching look at a Caesarean section, all topped off (if you were still in your seat) with images of venereal disease. *Mom and Dad* triggered shocked reactions at the time, all the more so because Babb was such a passionate and vociferous promoter, sending out 'advance men' to generate controversy in the local newspaper letters columns and posting 'tabloid





heralds' (press releases designed to look like tabloid extras) to thousands of homes in the area (a technique he pursued so assiduously for *Mom and Dad* that Time Magazine once said that his methods, "left only the livestock unaware of the chance to learn the facts of life"). *Mom and Dad* went on to become one of the highest grossing pictures of the 1940s, and helped to forge an exhibition model that secured the viability of the exploitation industry: henceforth, a multitude of drive-ins and theaters knew they could make good money by showing 'shocking' pictures that the major studios, in the words of Herschell Gordon Lewis, "either could not or would not make".

As road-show gimmicks gave way to a more movie-centred approach to salesmanship, the focus shifted to subject matter. What kind of hot topics would the major studios avoid? Incest? *Poor White Trash* (1957) sold out shows nationwide on the basis of that theme. Nudity? H.G. Lewis and Dave Friedman found a legal loophole allowing films about nudism and nudist camps and pumped out six in three years. Gore? Lewis and Friedman again, this time inspiring drive-in audiences to throw up after witnessing graphic scenes of butchery in the seminal *Blood Feast* (1963). Drugs? David E. Durston's *The Love Statue* (1965) and Roger Corman's *The Trip* (1967) responded quickly to the mood of teen rebellion around the subject of LSD. Word would get around from town to town, the more explicit films would reap 'boffo box-office' (in the words of industry trade paper *Variety*), and the practice of pushing beyond accepted boundaries of taste and decency was enshrined at the beating heart of horror cinema.

### Off the Beaten Track

*The Premonition*, *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* and *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* are not currently among the best-known horror films of the 1970s. In fact, unless you saw it on the Southern drive-in circuit, or at the 1973 Sitges Fantastic Film Festival, you had no chance of seeing *Malatesta* at all before it turned up on a limited edition DVD in the early 2000s. *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* has probably the highest UK profile of the three, thanks to being caught up in the 'video nasty' controversy of the early 1980s. The fact that *Witch* has considerable aesthetic qualities and a powerful central performance did not prevent it from being vilified as trash by the newspapers and many critics, most of whom were either ignorant of its actual content or unable to see past its blurry pan-and-scan video transfer. As for *The Premonition*, it received a decent enough video release from Embassy Home Entertainment in the 1980s, but it would seem that the combination of a low-key film title and uninspiring video cover dissuaded the curious from renting what is in fact an elegant, offbeat and emotionally gruelling story of a mother's greatest fear.

It's omissions, oversights and injustices of precisely this sort that *American Horror Project*

seeks to redress. Just as an expensive film by a well-known director can sometimes tank ignominiously, so too an obscure low budget movie can transcend its limitations, touching us in a way beyond the reach of the merely proficient. Searching through the thousands of low-budget horror pictures made since the 1930s is compulsive for this very reason. Years after one has seen the major contenders, one can still discover unexpected marvels, or maybe just amazing scenes or images, in movies largely unremarked-upon before. In the attics and cellars of American cinema, under its floorboards, behind the weighty furniture and between the layers of linoleum, strange cine-lifeforms lurk, and if sometimes your passion for the obscure gives you the mien of a deranged entomologist, holding aloft a weird insect and trying to convince others of its beauty while they wrinkle their noses in distaste, well, so be it! Let the principle here be inclusion, not exclusion – these are films which I passionately believe deserve wider respect and admiration.

In Hollywood, film is planned, shaped, cultivated, harvested: it's a garden for the medium, with all of the strict control which that implies. Exploitation movies, on the other hand, are more like the uncultivated countryside of the American film landscape, where weeds and wild flowers alike grow freely. These maverick productions contribute something of real value to American cinema: choice, variety, 'cultural plurality' if you will. From the 1930s to the mid-1980s, low-budget exploitation pictures provided a vital alternative to the prestige productions of the majors. They made good money for cinema owners and drive-in chains, thrived in urban and rural locations alike, and responded rapidly to current youth trends and issues. Exploitation moviemakers could badger away at the limits of what was legally allowed onscreen, and since most mainstream critics disdained to review the films, much of what went on in the wilder world of exploitation passed by without nationwide howls of outrage.

The USA boasts an incredible wealth of geographical and cultural variety – from the baking heat-haze of Death Valley to the sweltering marshlands of Louisiana, from the synthetic overload of Las Vegas to the old world elegance of New Orleans – and low-budget film productions sprang up in all manner of far-flung locations, giving us glimpses into small towns and rural corners generally ignored by the majors. The impetus for these regional productions varied: they could be the result of a local entrepreneur fulfilling a life-long dream of movie-making, or they could spring from thriving mini-studios dedicated to local production. New York and Los Angeles were still the hot-spots for low-budget exploitation in the seventies and eighties, but significant movie-makers emerged from Miami, Florida (Harry Kerwin, William Greffe); Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (George Romero, Christopher Speeth); Dallas, Texas (S.F. Brownrigg, Larry Buchanan); Texarkana, Texas (Charles B. Pierce); Shreveport, Louisiana (Joy N. Houck, Jr., James Wilson); New Orleans, Louisiana (Jack Weis); Louisville, Kentucky (William Girdler); Gleason, Wisconsin (Bill Rebane); Baltimore, Maryland (Don Dohler, Tony Malanowski); and the North Carolina towns of Shelby (Earl Owensby, Worth Keeter) and Charlotte (Pat Patterson),

Frederick R. Friedel). As time went by, some of these filmmakers headed off to California or New York to pursue their goals in the mainstream industry; others took just one spin of the roulette wheel before retiring, fingers burned after being defrauded by distributors, or simply losing their shirt on a movie that failed to find an audience.

It's no exaggeration to say that an alternative history of American cinema can be mapped through a study of these ephemeral products, and as the modern American film industry reverts to the monolithic form of its early days it can feel like a breath of fresh air to experience the products of a freer, less mediated film environment. Although the claims to be made for individual exploitation pictures must not be overstated, their great value was in decentring the industry, providing aesthetic and topical variance, offering pleasures above and beyond the more conservative major products, and even suggesting to the viewer that their home towns, their friends and acquaintances, could partake in the dream-structure of America. They provided balance against the feeling that cultural power in cinema was located entirely in Hollywood, and encouraged optimism and engagement in the medium at a local level.

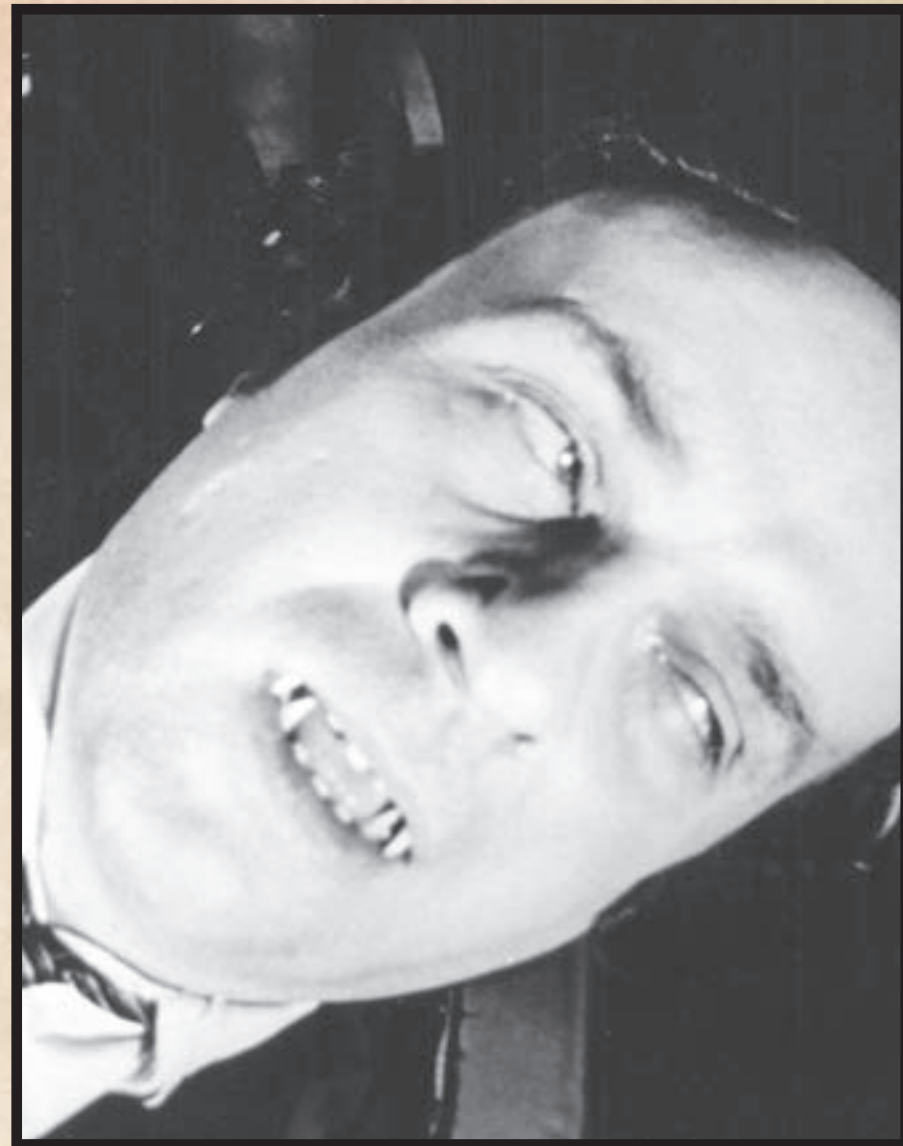
Nowadays the industry has been restructured so profoundly that an oblique, non-conformist independent horror film stands little chance of reaching movie screens. There are occasional exceptions, but they basically prove the rule. It's only through DVD, Blu-ray, and the tireless obsession of fans that these works survive today. Like FM radio, where the same 'golden oldies' are peddled from a play-list that ignores 95% of the past, the modern entertainment machine tends to push these human oddities, these rough gems of the awkward squad, out of the picture. *American Horror Project*, therefore, will provide a safe harbour and a brand new launching point for creative, unusual films that have in the past, for whatever reason, been neglected or under-exposed. Not in the name of 'art', not to ennoble a new list of greats, but for variance, diversity, strangeness – and all the pleasures they can bring.

**Stephen Thrower is author of *Nightmare USA: The Untold Story of the Exploitation Independents* (FAB Press).**

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Notes:

Quotes from an interview with David F. Friedman drawn from *The Sleaze Merchants* by John McCarty (St. Martin's Griffin, 2000).







# MALATESTA'S CARNIVAL OF BLOOD

## CAST

**JANINE CARAZO** as Vena  
**JEROME DEMPSEY** as Mr. Blood  
**DANIEL DIETRICH** as Malatesta  
**LENNY BAKER** as Sonja  
**HERVE VILLECHAIZE** as Bobo  
**WILLIAM PRESTON** as Sticker  
**PAUL HOSTETLER** as Mr. Norris  
**BESTY HENN** as Mrs. Norris

## CREW

Directed by **CHRISTOPHER SPEETH**  
Produced by **RICHARD GROSSER** and **WALKER STUART**  
Written by **WERNER LIEPOLT**  
Director of Photography **NORMAN GAINES**



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# ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR: MALATESTA'S CARNIVAL OF BLOOD

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by Kim Newman

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, local news – even if it isn't really news, but just a set of striking photographs of a forgotten landmark – can go viral. In 2015, several websites ran photo essays about the abandoned Williams Grove amusement park outside Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. See '23 spine-tingling photos of Pennsylvania's abandoned amusement park' on Theme Park Tourist, 'The Remains of Williams Grove' on Wendyvee's Roadside Wonders and 'This creepy abandoned amusement park in Pennsylvania is chilling' on Onlyinyourstate.com. The photographs show the once-renowned Cyclone rollercoaster in the process of being slowly engulfed by forest like a set from one of the *Planet of the Apes* films and other attractions seemingly left to rot when the park closed down in 2005. In business from 1928, the park took a major hit in 1972 when it was devastated by a hurricane, but survived for decades, even taking on rides from other parks that shut down as this segment of the entertainment industry was replaced by glitzier theme parks linked to the movie industry.

Ironically, the park can be seen in better shape – though still presented in an eerie light – in *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* (1973), an independent horror film made by director Christopher Speeth, who got to use the place after hours as a setting for a wild story of cannibal carnies and vampire showmen. Little-seen on its original release to the grindhouse and drive-in circuit in the 1970s, the film was long thought lost but rediscovered in 2003 and has gradually built up a reputation. In the always-pertinent *Nightmare USA* (2007), critic Stephen Thrower notes that the film is "beautifully photographed, imaginatively-designed, far-out in conception and successfully bonkers at least half the time." In *Video Watchdog*, Shaun Brady chimed in with "*Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* looks like almost nothing else, with a handmade, collage-art-of-the-damned design that resembles the Manson Family remaking *Magical Mystery Tour* in the aftermath of a circus train derailment."

Though the first great sideshow horror film, Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920), is German, carnival or circus horror seems an especially American sub-genre. In the silent era, sawdust settings were surprisingly commonplace, perhaps as the cinema grew out of its sideshow origins and wanted to demonise the space from which it had emerged to assume respectability on a par with legitimate theatre. Lon Chaney, glimpsed throughout *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* in character as the Hunchback of Notre Dame and the Phantom of the Opera, said there was nothing funny about a clown after midnight, and starred as masochistic clowns in Victor Sjöström's *He Who*





*Gets Slapped* (1924) and Herbert Brenon's *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* (1928). Ex-carny Tod Browning, Chaney's favourite director, made a specialty of macabre movies with big top or sideshow settings. Browning's *The Unholy Three* (1925), *The Show* (1927), *The Unknown* (1927) and – most notoriously – *Freaks* (1932) are full of cruelties, scams, mutilations and strange desires. In Edmund Goulding's *Nightmare Alley* (1947), Tyrone Power finally suffers the living hell of becoming a 'geek', a grinning alcoholic derelict who sits in a booth biting the heads off chickens for a cheap shock. Novelists Charles G. Finney and Ray Bradbury stirred double-barbed supernatural whimsy into the travelling show in *The Circus of Dr. Lao* (1935) and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962) – filmed respectively by George Pal in 1964 (as *7 Faces of Dr. Lao*) and Jack Clayton in 1983 – and set precedents for the monster-run attractions of Speeth's movie. Later, vampires would run sucker-bait attractions in Robert Young's *Vampire Circus* (1972), Hope Perello's *Howling VI: The Freaks* (1991) and Paul Weitz's *Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant* (2009).

*Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* is a regional, independent horror film – made well away from Hollywood, with the odd face-to-watch amid the mostly amateur cast and a sense that the movie might go further than more conventional product (though, in fact, some gruesome moments – restored now – were originally scissored to appease the MPAA). While defiantly its own film, elements link it to its notable predecessors and contemporaries. Like Herk Harvey's *Carnival of Souls* (1962), it makes use of an impressive, found location and taps into the unease that has always accompanied the hurdy-gurdy tackiness of the tent show... and, like George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), another Pennsylvania production, it features ghouls gobbling human flesh and a lopsided plot whereby characters who might be expected to survive meet nasty fates. Unlike these films, *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* is in lurid colour, with a psychedelic edge that lumps it in with 'weird hippie shit' horror movies like Bruce Kessler's *Simon, King of the Witches* (1971) or Willard Huyck's *Messiah of Evil* (1973).

Speeth's film even has a relationship with even more disreputable cinema oddities. In its setting and love for carnival Americana, there's a whiff of Ray Dennis Steckler's *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies!!?* (1964), David F. Friedman's *She Freak* (1967) or (obviously) Leonard Kirtman's *Carnival of Blood* (1970). The parade of spectacular dismemberments (most bluntly a rollercoaster-ride-to-decapitation) echoes the *grot guignol* style of Herschell Gordon Lewis's *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964) and *The Wizard of Gore* (1970) or Joel M. Reed's *Blood Sucking Freaks* (aka *The Incredible Torture Show*, 1976). The highly-stylised, shrill-to-camp manner of performance evokes Andy Milligan – for whom Daniel Dietrich, Speeth's Dracula-cloaked Malatesta, appeared in *Fleshpot on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1973) – or John Waters. Indeed, the mix of professional actors, fringe folk and weird-looking passers-by is very much in the mode of the Waters of *Pink Flamingos* (1972) or *Desperate Living* (1977), down to casting Broadway star Lenny Baker (a Tony-winner for Best Performance in a Musical in 1977 for *I Love My Wife*) in drag as Sonja, the carnival's sinister fortune teller. Karen Salmansohn gives one of the most strident, grating performances in all horror cinema (all the more remarkable for being confined

to only a few brief scenes) as Toby Davis, the obnoxious little girl who throws a temper tantrum ("I want a chicken!") to get a prize which she then throws away. Mrs Davis (Gloria Salmansohn) airily says "It's a trial having an intelligent child" while the little horror scowls and strains in the parental grip. Toby's fate is unspecified, but since her whole family disappear into the Tunnel of Love and only her father's bloodstained glasses come out we can assume she deservedly ends up as a cannibal's snack. Fortunately, perhaps, Salmansohn Jr. abandoned acting and grew up to become a best-selling author of self-help books like *How to Be Happy, Dammit* (2001), *The Bounce Back Book* (2008) and *Prince Harming Syndrome* (2009).

The most immediately recognisable face (and voice) in the film is Hervé Villechaize as Bobo, the sadistic, ranting midget – a role in the line of descent from Harry Earles in *The Unholy Three* through Torben Bille in *The Sinful Dwarf* (1973) to Luis De Jesus in *Bloodsucking Freaks*. For the busy, always-enthusiastic Villechaize, the *Malatesta* gig came between appearing in Robert Downey Sr's scurrilous Western Christ parable *Greaser's Palace* (1972) and Oliver Stone's disturbing, nightmarish debut feature *Seizure* (1974). Later, he would graduate to mainstream visibility as sidekicks to Christopher Lee in *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) and Ricardo Montalban on 131 episodes ("de plane de plane") of *Fantasy Island* (1977-84) – though he ventured back into the movie netherworld as King Fausto of the Sixth Dimension in Richard Elfman's cultish *Forbidden Zone* (1980). Pudgy Jerome Dempsey – later a bit-player as boardroom suits in *Network* (1976) and *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994) – is Mr. Blood, the carnival's vampire manager, who is in the thrall of the mysterious Malatesta: it's another unique performance, with each word oddly stressed and a general mismatch of the actor's ordinary looks with the bizarre role he has to play. Even stranger is pop-eyed poet William Preston as Sticker, the grey-faced clean-up man who giggles as he stabs victims with a litter-skewer. From this humble beginning, Preston went on to bit parts in *The Exorcist III* (1990), *The Fisher King* (1991), *Waterworld* (1995) and *The Crucible* (1996) and a recurring character spot as 'Carl "Oldy" Olson' on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*.

Like Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), *Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* is loosely inspired by the legend of Scots cannibal chieftain Sawney Bean and his clan – as Brady notices in *Video Watchdog*, "one unfortunate remnant of the source is Malatesta's character Mr Bean, the frequent mentions of whose name become inadvertently humorous in the post-Rowan Atkinson world." Having met up with investor Richard Grosser on a plane and secured interest in financing a film on the model of *Night of the Living Dead*, Speeth looked around for a writer. "After seeing an Off-Broadway show where the main actor gave a soliloquy to his own tapeworm," Speeth told Stephen Thrower, "I sought and drafted the playwright Werner Liepolt to do the script." The Off-Broadway influence is apparent in the finished film – which has a streak of deliberate surrealism as well as obvious exploitation elements. Like Rinse Dream/Stephen Sayadian (*Café Flesh*, 1982, *Dr. Caligari*, 1989), Speeth stages sequences which have the feel of a 'happening' or 'freak-out', from the ghouls who make up an enthusiastic audience for silent horror movies screened over and over in the caverns below the carnival to the madrigal-singing monster choir.





Augmenting the Williams Grove locations are some truly bizarre sets crafted by the Alley Friends Troupe (Bruce Millard, Alan Johnson, Richard Stange). The most startling image is an upside-down Volkswagen shell suspended in mid-air, fitted with swathes of orange bubble-wrap “to resemble a huge red mouth”, but this epitomises the repurposed junk aesthetic that makes *Malatesta’s Carnival of Blood* one of the most defiantly trashy, and yet reflective of trash films. “If we hadn’t had to make do with that stuff,” Johnson told *Video Watchdog*, “we might now have a film that was less amateurish, but much less interesting. It was all born out of necessity, a little art, and a bit of our heart in the message. There isn’t a shot in there for which three-quarters of the imagery isn’t recycled.” Thrower reveals that the Alley Friends have gone on to design “festival structures, passive solar buildings and award-winning, multi-purpose high-rise condominiums (see [www.bemarchitect.com](http://www.bemarchitect.com)).” There are other ambitious elements – Sheridan Speeth, the director’s brother, crafted a ‘fear track’ for the film, a nearly sub-audible range of unnerving noises mixed in with the regular soundtrack (he’s credited with ‘psychoacoustics’) and the decapitations, stabbings, bloody wounds and shrieking victims sometimes give way to moments of melancholy introspection and philosophical aside that must have proved puzzling in a grindhouse context.

Speeth and Liepolt never made another film... but they didn’t really need to. *Malatesta’s Carnival of Blood* is unique and weird enough to earn them a place in the pantheon of 1970s indie horror. Representative of a decade when anything seemed possible in the movies, the film can now reside comfortably in a file with such acid haze horror-art offerings as Alan Gadney’s *Moonchild* (1974), Stephanie Rothman’s *The Velvet Vampire* (1971), George Englund’s *Zachariah* (1971), Alan Rudolph’s *Premonition* (1972), Leo Garen’s *Hex* (1973), Bill Gunn’s *Ganja & Hess* (1973), Richard Blackburn’s *Lemora: A Child’s Tale of the Supernatural* (1973), Michael Barry’s *The Second Coming of Suzanne* (1974), Matt Cimber’s *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* (1976) and Robert Voskanian’s *The Child* (1977).

**Kim Newman is a novelist, critic and broadcaster. His latest novel is *The Secrets of Drearcliff Grange School*. His official website is at [www.johnnyalucard.com](http://www.johnnyalucard.com). He is on Twitter as @AnnoDracula.**

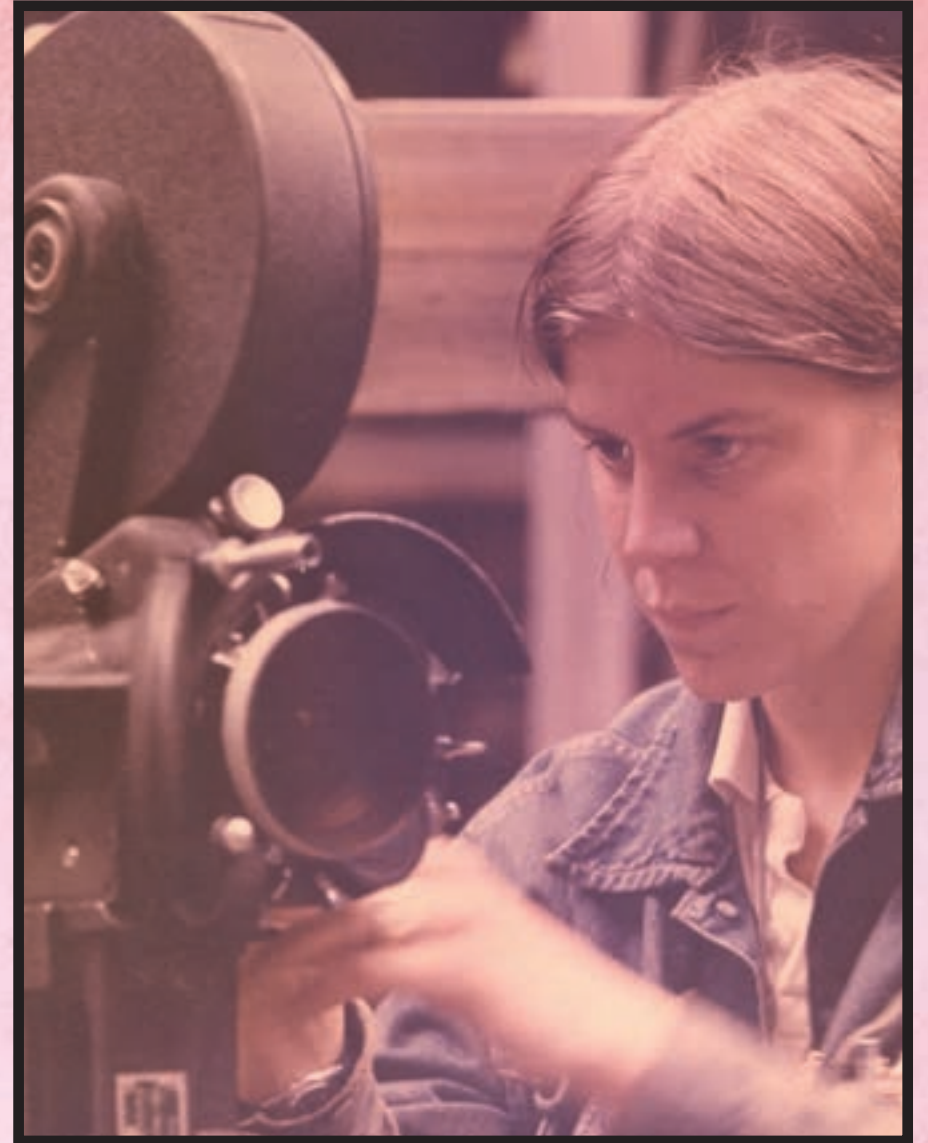
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# THE WITCH WHO CAME FROM THE SEA

## CAST

**MILLIE PERKINS** as Molly  
**LONNY CHAPMAN** as Long John  
**VANESSA BROWN** as Cathy  
**PEGGY FEURY** as Doris  
**JEAN PIERRE CAMPS** as Tadd  
**MARK LIVINGSTON** as Tripoli  
**RICK JASON** as Billy Batt  
**STAFFORD MORGAN** as Alexander McPeak  
**RICHARD KENNEDY** as Detective Beardsley  
**GEORGE 'BUCK' FLOWER** as Detective Stone  
**JOHN GOFF** as Molly's Father

## CREW

Produced and Directed by **MATT CIMBER**  
Written by **ROBERT THOM**  
Director of Photography **KEN GIBB**  
Associate Director of Photography **DEAN CUNDEY**  
Edited by **BUD WARNER**  
Music Composed and Directed by **HERSCHEL BURKE GILBERT**









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## “A GODDAMN AMERICAN SAINT”: THE PERVERSION OF PERFECTION IN THE WITCH WHO CAME FROM THE SEA

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by Kier-La Janisse

A few minutes into Matt Cimber’s 1976 exploitation oddity *The Witch Who Came from the Sea*, its troubled protagonist Molly is entranced by an illustration in the window of a tattoo parlour run by a man named Jack Dracula. The rudimentary drawing is the same mermaid tattoo her father – a sea captain – had on his abdomen. Despite her horror at Dracula’s fully-tattooed appearance, later in the film she will return to have the same tattoo inscribed on her own body. “The mermaid’s tail won’t go down too far, will it?” she asks the bug-eyed artist. “Just perfect,” he assures her. “Just rising from the curly black sea.” As the needle buzzes and burrows, she recounts a tale of her father beckoning, “Come with me and we’ll get lost at sea, Molly ma’ lass.” While her face bears an ecstatic smile, the recollection is intercut with images of a child being molested. She sighs. “We got lost at sea so many, many times.”

Apart from providing an arresting visual, this scene distills all the themes and anxieties of *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* into one potent transmission. Written by Robert Thom (who also penned the 1968 AIP classic *Wild in the Streets*) as a vehicle for his wife, actress Millie Perkins, *Witch* was the first film notorious exploiter Matt Cimber (creator of *The Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling*) ever worked on that he wasn’t involved with from conception. But Cimber had worked with Perkins on *Lady Cocoa* (1975) – where she played a man in drag – and this connection is what bought Thom’s unusual script to him. It remains an incredibly elegant film (with early cinematography by Dean Cundey), despite moments of vicious violence that led it to spend some time on the British ‘video nasties’ list. At the time, Millie Perkins was still most famous for playing the title role in George Stevens’s 1959 adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but had subsequent counterculture cred for her many collaborations with the likes of Monte Hellman, Jack Nicholson and Warren Oates. As such, she’s always spoken about the film with some trepidation, and in interviews has voiced concern over what her moviemaking pals must have thought of her for doing it. But this speaks to her incredibly vulnerable performance, shaped by her husband Thom’s script, and inspired by her own nautical obsessions as the daughter of a sea captain herself.

Her character Molly loves her father desperately, and submits to his abuse out of adulation, even though she senses that a grave boundary is being crossed. As an adult, after her father had been (allegedly) taken by the waves 15 years prior, Molly’s love transforms into outright mythology – she talks about him like she’s reciting an old folk tale, which if rehearsed and retold enough times might keep her from crumbling. When her adoring nephews ask why their grandfather was lost at sea, she says stoically: “Because he was perfect – too good to live on land.”





Issues stemming from absentee fathers in genre films are usually tied to some sort of sexual pathology in their daughters; the absentee father is over-sexualized – as in *Toys Are Not for Children* (1972), Joseph Losey's *Secret Ceremony* (1968), Peter Whitehead and Niki De Saint Phalle's *Daddy* (1973) – which is especially tragic when this sexualization replaces anger over early incidents of abuse. Of the latter, *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* and the Mimsy Farmer vehicle *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* (1974) specifically feature absent fathers who are wandering seafarers, which their daughters associate with virility.

The film's title comes from just such a conversation in the second act. After getting herself invited to the hedonistic party of a movie star who frequents the Malibu beach bar where she works, the two find themselves in front of a reproduction of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. "She's a witch who came out of the sea," he tells her. "She's not a witch, she's beautiful," Molly protests. "Venus was born in the sea," he continues, "Her father was a god. They cut off his balls – his sperm dropped into the ocean. The sea was knocked up, Venus was the kid." As her eyes dart over the image you can see her brain forming the same analogies we are.

Molly's insistence on her father's moral perfection shields her from facing the truth about his incestuous transgressions and his alcoholism, an affliction she now shares. Her put-upon sister Cathy is the only one who can see through the delusion, who knows their father to have been "a drunken bum" who is responsible for Molly's repressed anxieties. Interestingly, Cathy is a seamstress who makes fake hobo-chic clothes for rich people, thus catering to a contrived bohemianism that is their own form of delusion.

Molly projects her father's crimes onto other men that she sees as "perfect" – weightlifters, athletes, movie and television stars – and then sets out to punish them. At first she seems unaware that she is doing it, until her fantasies align with news reports about real-life homicides. The more "perfect" or desirable they are perceived as, the more she wants them, and she is aggressive about it, despite her co-worker's insistence that "Molly is a saint. A goddamn American saint." While attracted to these men, she wants to humiliate them and cut them down to size. When she kills two well-known football players in the middle of a stoned threesome, she ties them together so that they are holding hands, betraying an older era's insinuations of homosexuality as weakness (as well as echoing her co-worker's later statement that "all football players are faggots, honey"). Likewise, when she is at the party of the movie star – a notorious womanizer – she mocks him in the bedroom. "I think you're too gentle for me," she says accusingly. "Why don't you act like a man and go hide in the closet, cowboy?" The disturbing question is a reference to those times when she got "lost at sea" with her father, whom she would find hiding naked in the closet, waiting for her – the strong virile sea captain reduced to a drunken, puerile state (in a featurette included on this release, it is revealed that writer Robert Thom's own stepfather would hide in the closet waiting for him as a youngster). She continues mocking the movie star: "Could you die for love? Well, my father did!" That her targets







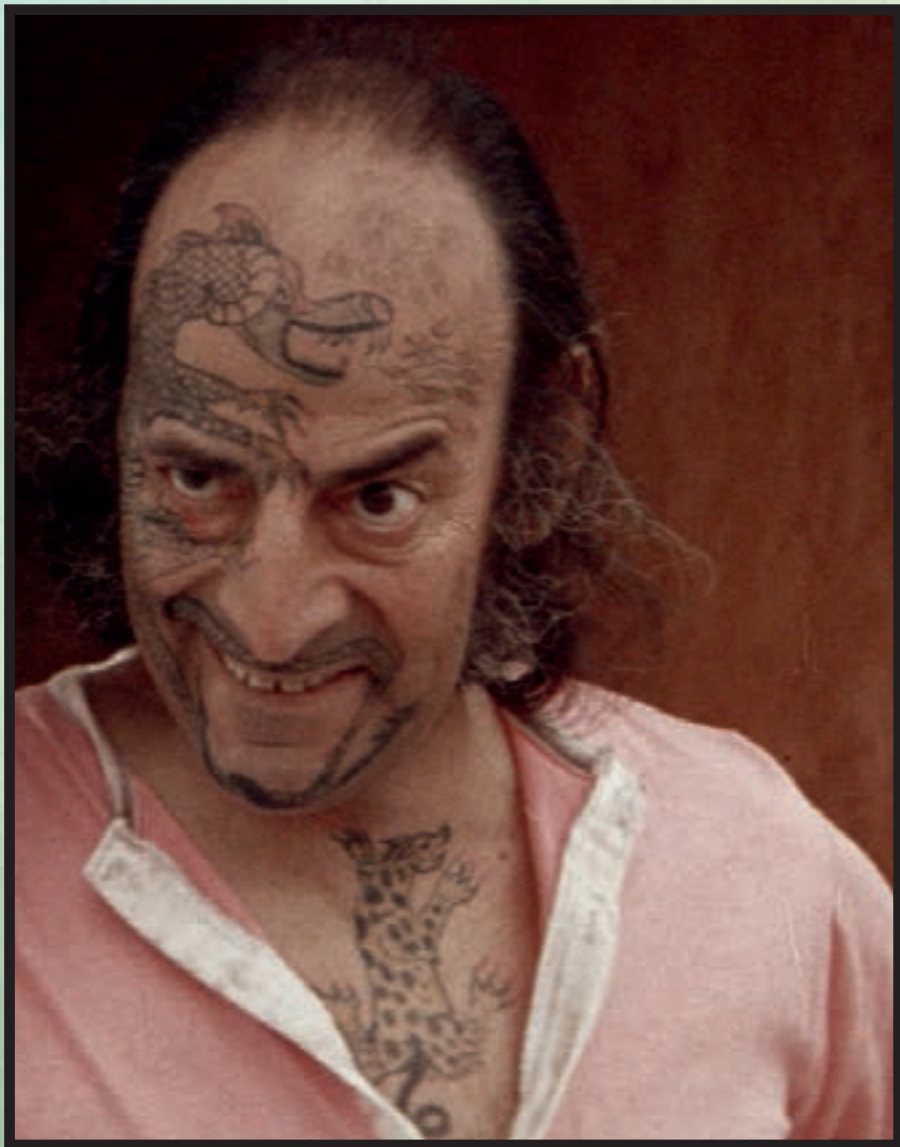
are all either physically strong or socially powerful is an attempt to rectify the helplessness she felt as a child, literally trapped beneath the weight of a physical and emotional burden that will haunt her for life. Interestingly the only person Molly has a normal sexual relationship with is Long John, her boss at the beach bar – who she refers to as a “pirate”, thus distinguishing him as a rogue element in her warped ideology. And Long John is equally accepting of her idiosyncrasies, which he doesn’t take as seriously as he should. Molly’s sister Cathy says to Long John: “You think she’s practically perfect!” He shrugs, “Yeah, why not?”

But Molly is far from perfect. Like Mia Farrow’s character Cenci in *Secret Ceremony*, Molly accommodates her abuser with distorted memories, and lives within the confines of weird absolutes and misguided convictions – many of them derived from legends and stereotypes concerning her father’s vocation as a sea captain.

The image of the sea is one that comes up again and again in genre films, and in the case of *The Witch Who Came from the Sea* it’s not just the obvious symbolic connection between water and femininity that is of interest, but also the fact that the father is a seaman. While there’s no sign that the traumatic elements of the story have any basis in actress Millie Perkins’ real life, she clearly appreciated her father’s connection to the sea, and the stereotypical implications of his vocation – solitude, stoicism and a refusal to be landlocked. In literature – from medieval mythology to Wilkie Collins to Yukio Mishima (whose book *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* was adapted into a film the same year as *Witch*) – seafaring men have always been outsiders: their life’s work is typically to protect and uphold societal values, but they live outside of the structure that maintains those values. It’s a vocation that has been endowed with a sense of purity that is ruptured whenever the seaman hits land: cussing, whoring, drinking and carousing to mask the pain of separation from the sea. Sailors become moral failures when forced to live as normal humans.

Molly’s tattoo session is a consecration that further binds her to her villain. Jack Dracula’s comment about Molly’s tattoo “just rising from the curly black sea” is one of the film’s many analogies of the sea with female sensuality, this one in particular presaging Kim Ki-duk’s *The Isle* (2000), when the protagonist/killer wades through some thick marshlands and the camera pulls back to reveal it to be the public triangle of the lover he has just killed, who now rests in an underwater grave. The Jack Dracula character himself (played by character actor Stan Ross, already creeping people out in the ’50s on the Jackie Gleason Show and others, here giving one of the film’s many strange performances) adds density to the film’s thematic preoccupations. When Molly starts telling Dracula of the elaborate fake names she gave herself as a child, he objects: “But Jack Dracula is my *real* name,” he says, which is interesting as Jack Dracula was the name of a real tattooed man, famously photographed by Diane Arbus in 1961 (it was not, however, *his* real name). Arbus was known for photographing outsiders, deformed and “imperfect” people – normative society’s rejects – so the reference is poignant given *Witch*’s constant return to the theme of perfection.





Molly strives so hard for perfection that she renders everything wholly dysfunctional. The concept of perfection is an elusive and frustrating one – it's an entirely subjective fictional model we create and then imbue with meaning – and then castigate ourselves and others for not adhering to it. But while Molly seeks perfection in others, she doesn't hold herself to the same standard. She is wild, unpredictable, often selfish and cruel. Given *Witch's* frequent reference to deities and the concept of divinity in its discussions of perfection (recall that Molly is referred to as a saint and her father likened to a "god"), it's interesting to note that the Christian theory of perfection does not require perfection in the earthly 'sinner'.

*This theory simply asserts the attainableness, in the present life, of a state of holiness truly denominated Christian perfection. This Christian perfection implies loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength – a perfect fulfilment of the terms of salvation. These terms being based upon the covenant of grace do not imply a perfect compliance with the requisition of the covenant of works. In relation to the latter it is truly said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*

- The Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection, Stated and Defended, 1843

While I don't claim to know enough about writer Robert Thom to assert whether he was familiar with and deliberately mining this theory in creating Molly's character, it does explain why Molly may not hold herself to the same standards of perfection. She can kill because she's the soiled saint, and as with many victims of abuse, probably thinks she does not deserve love. But the sea will wash her sins away and return her to a state of grace through a reunion with her 'perfect' father.

Another sad facet of Molly's disturbed fantasy life is that it's contagious; her sister Cathy's young sons revere her, buy into her stories, and hate their own mother for contradicting their beloved Aunt. Mythologizing is a powerful way of compartmentalizing and defusing trauma, and is common in films involving neurotic women, who – rather than face the thought of victimization, or experience disappointment in role models they unrealistically idolize – cast themselves as accomplices in their own abuse.

***Kier-La Janisse is the author of House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films, the founder of the Miskatonic Institute of Horror Studies and runs the micro-press Spectacular Optical.***



# the Premonition

## CAST

**SHARON FARRELL** as Sheri Bennett

**EDWARD BELL** as Miles Bennett

**JEFF COREY** as Lt. Mark Denver

**CHIITRA NEOGY** as Dr. Jenna Kingsly

**RICHARD LYNCH** as Jude

**ELLEN BARBER** as Andrea

**DANIELLE BRISEBOIS** as Janie Bennett

## CREW

Produced and Directed by **ROBERT ALLEN SCHNITZER**

Written by **ANTHONY MAHON** and **ROBERT ALLEN SCHNITZER**

Director of Photography **VICTOR C. MILT**

Edited by **SYDNEY KATZ**

Music Composed and Performed by **HENRY MOLlicONE**





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## MOTHERHOOD, METAPHYSICS, MISSISSIPPI, AND THE PREMONITION

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by Brian Albright

Robert Schnitzer's singular supernatural thriller *The Premonition* juggles a number of heady ideas about love, madness, motherhood, and metaphysics, but one of its important underlying themes is the role of luck and coincidence, and a sort of paranormal serendipity that (the film suggests) connects us to each other and guides the events of our lives.

"When I was 17 or 18, I heard about vision quests," Schnitzer remembers. "I went out on my own vision quest in the Smokey Mountains in Virginia for a day, and after eight hours I had an epiphany. I saw that everything was interconnected. There's only this illusion that we're separated from our environment. Of course this is knowledge that's been around for thousands of years, but for a middle-class Jewish guy from New York, it was an eye-opener. I had just started making films, and I decided this would be a recurring theme in everything I do."

Connection and coincidence propel the story forward. Mentally ill pianist Andrea (Ellen Barber) loses custody of her daughter Janie when she is committed. Five years later she tracks her down with the help of equally disturbed carnival clown Jude (Richard Lynch), who just happens to snap her photo at the fair. The pair then attempts to kidnap her from her adoptive parents Sheri and Miles Bennett (Sharon Farrell and Edward Bell). Sheri experiences psychic visions of Andrea and Jude that, once Janie disappears, provide the clues that ultimately lead to her rescue.

"We got lucky," Jude tells Andrea early in the film, highlighting the fair amount of lucky happenstance that advances the story. In another film, the frequency with which characters arrive at the right place at the right time or just happen to notice important clues would be an eye-rolling plot contrivance. In *The Premonition*, those coincidences simply reinforce the notion that there are powers beyond our physical understanding that have drawn these characters together.

Serendipity, in fact, even played a role in the film's production. *The Premonition* was made at a time when a confluence of distributor demand and generous tax incentives encouraged the production of eccentric independent films. By the time of the film's release, the doors



that made this type of quirky production possible were already closing. For a film that deals so heavily in coincidence, the timing of its production may have been the happiest one of all.

In 1976, the horror genre was undergoing a major transformation. From the late 1950s until the early 1970s, the majority of the horror films playing US screens were foreign imports (from the UK, Spain and Italy), or low-budget items from independent producers and distributors like American International Pictures, New World, Independent-International, Avco Embassy and the like. Horror was just another flavor of the type of exploitation films that cycled in and out of American cinemas during that era.

There were occasionally prestige horror films from major studios, but it wasn't until after *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973) that the majors took horror seriously. Several major studios established low-budget production units that turned out their own exploitation-style horror films. After the release of *Jaws* in 1975, the studios began releasing big-budget genre films with well-known stars and elaborate special effects.

At the same time, a new generation of independent filmmakers began making thoughtful, esoteric horror films, influenced as much by the French New Wave and Federico Fellini as they were by *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. By 1976, these upstarts were jostling for screen time (and sometimes sharing double-bills) with standard cape-and-fang schlock from overseas and slick studio productions.

*The Premonition*, like George Romero's *Martin* and Alfred Sole's *Alice, Sweet Alice* (both released the same year), hails from that more cerebral wing of the genre as it stood in the 1970s, but larger, louder, and bloodier films had already asserted their dominance. 1976 was the year of *Carrie*, *The Omen*, *Burnt Offerings*, and Michael Winner's overblown, star-studded *The Sentinel* on one end of the spectrum, and Joel M. Reed's *Bloodsucking Freaks* on the other.

That tension in the genre led distributor Avco Embassy to make some misguided choices both in the film's title (Schnitzer originally wanted to go with the more obtuse *Turtle Heaven*), marketing ("Beyond the power of an exorcist, beyond the doors of science, lies the world of terror for two damned souls and the spirit that's dying to get out!", the ads promised) and in its distribution. The film was frequently paired on double-bills with *The House of Exorcism* (the 1975 re-edit of Mario Bava's *Lisa and the Devil*) or *Psychic Killer* (1975), a tawdrier take on similar subject matter.

*The Premonition* largely avoids traditional horror trappings, though. In fact, the original script by Anthony Mahon was more of a family drama and police procedural. Schnitzer was

intensely interested in metaphysics and the paranormal, and he brought those interests to bear on the story along with his love of avant-garde cinema.

The film's focus on parapsychology and Sherri's increasingly disturbing visions of Andrea do place it within the genre, but Schnitzer is more concerned with getting us to think and care about these characters rather than scaring us. Schnitzer lingers over the cracks in the Bennett's bland, suburban marriage. Jude and Andrea are crazy but sympathetic; Andrea is desperate to regain her daughter, and Jude is hopelessly, tragically in love. They are both capable of monstrous behavior (Jude in particular), but they aren't monsters.

Roughly 30 minutes into the film, though, Schnitzer *does* deliver a harrowing and disturbing 'scare' sequence that works on multiple levels: Planning to abduct her daughter, Andrea creeps into the Bennett's house, past a slumbering Sherri and into Janie's room. Awakened by noises above, Sherri slowly climbs the stairs and opens the bedroom door to find Andrea in a bright red gown, cradling the sleeping child in a rocking chair.

Key to the scene's effectiveness are the very real responses we see from the two mothers. Sherri is too paralyzed to move, to even scream. Andrea pauses to tuck Janie tenderly into bed before turning her claws on Sherri. When the two women finally clash, Andrea easily subdues Sherri and towers over her, clearly winning the fight before she falters and flees the house with the child's doll.

It's probably unfair to compare *The Premonition* to more lavish horror films of the era, but in this instance I think it's to Schnitzer's advantage. Both *Carrie* and *The Omen* also deal in the paranormal and also have some interesting things to say about motherhood, but they rarely achieve that kind of emotional resonance. The bedroom encounter is the most frightening sequence in *The Premonition*, and there are very few scenes in *Carrie* (and none in *The Omen*) that are as unsettling. Schnitzer finds a raw nerve in that scene – drawing on our collective childhood *and* adult fears about parenting, about failure, and about The Thing Lurking in the Dark – and presses it hard for five minutes.

There are a few other shock sequences in the film, mostly via Sherri's increasingly intense psychic visions (Andrea's blood-soaked, filmed-in-reverse leap from the bed is a particularly good one), but the tense confrontation between the two mothers is the most powerful.





*The Premonition* was unusual among low-budget horror films of the era, boasting a good script and an excellent cast. What it did have in common with its contemporaries was its financing and distribution. Independent film production peaked in the US between 1973 and 1977, in part because of a lavish tax structure that allowed for considerable write-offs for film production. For independent filmmakers, particularly those working outside of Hollywood, this made it possible to rope in money from lawyers, doctors, grocers and other small business owners who got to experience the thrill of film production while also sheltering a lot of income from the Internal Revenue Service.

Similar incentives enabled the production of hundreds of regionally-produced horror and exploitation films, everything from ground-breaking films like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *The Evil Dead* (1981) to schlock like *The Giant Spider Invasion* (1975). When revisions to the tax code in 1976, 1978 and 1986 eliminated those write-offs, there was a concurrent decline in independent film production.

In Schnitzer's case, he sold shares in the film to 20 investors to raise the bulk of his budget, and secured a pre-production distribution deal from Avco Embassy to help guarantee their investment.

To get the most out of his small budget, New York-based Schnitzer shot the film in Jackson, Mississippi. Like Texas (another hotbed of independent film production), Mississippi was a right-to-work state, which meant Schnitzer could shoot the film without union involvement (which would have driven up the budget via overtime and weekend charges).

Mississippi was also actively trying to lure more filmmakers to the state, and they rolled out the red carpet even for Schnitzer's small production. The Mississippi Film Commission had been established in 1973 by a group of local artists and filmmakers that included future *Dukes of Hazzard* star James Best, local author and actor Thomas Hal Phillips (who served as the first head of the commission), and actor and writer Christian Garrison (the commission's executive director). According to the director, the commission was extremely hospitable.

"We had under a million dollars to make the film, and even in those days that was a relatively low budget," Schnitzer says. "We contacted various film commissions around the country to see where we could get the most bang for our buck. Mississippi was the most aggressive in terms of providing services that saved us the most money."

By the time *The Premonition* came to Jackson, the film commission had already brought larger productions like *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1974) and *Ode to Billy Joe* (1976) to the state. According to Schnitzer, they offered him free location shooting, discounted hotel rooms for the cast and crew, and a number of other perks that helped him









stretch his limited budget. He also cast locals in supporting and background roles. (Current Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, then a college student, even appears as an extra.)

He also gained production value by being able to shoot against a picturesque and alien backdrop that looked very different from what he would have been able to achieve in New York or Los Angeles. The Mississippi landscape is dotted with bayous, bucolic lakes, dense pine forests, crumbling antebellum mansions and weather-beaten, shotgun shacks. Shooting in the winter, Schnitzer was able to contrast his traveling carnival and Andrea's garish red dress against skeletal trees and gray skies, creating some haunting and surreal images along the way.

The film had a premiere in Jackson in November of 1975, followed by a wider release in the spring of 1976. Avco Embassy ponied up \$500,000 to promote the film, and according to Schnitzer everyone made a profit.

But while it was successful, *The Premonition* was neither *Carrie* nor *The Omen*, and as such it flew under the radar, overshadowed in a genre increasingly dominated by special effects spectacles and gory slasher films.

A movie as peculiar and haunting as *The Premonition* couldn't languish in complete obscurity, though. It remained a staple on video store shelves throughout the 1980s, with Richard Lynch's plaintive, painted face featured prominently on the video box.

"There's no question in my mind that had we made this into a more blatant slasher movie, it would have made a lot more money," Schnitzer says. "But I wanted to make an art film. At the time I was a little bit disappointed that more violent films were making hundreds of millions of dollars. Our film wasn't a blockbuster, but it has proven to have legs all these years later. The lesson, I guess, is you can never go wrong following your instinct and trying to do something with integrity. In retrospect, I don't regret anything."

In 2013, the film was featured as part of the Mississippi International Film Festival in Jackson to help mark the 40th anniversary of the state's film office. By chance, the organizers asked Schnitzer to attend. Also by chance, he was looking for a place to relocate his Elation Media business, an Internet streaming network focused on holistic, natural healing content. Happenstance. Serendipity. Forty years later, Robert Schnitzer has a home and office in Jackson, Mississippi, and *The Premonition* has returned to haunt us all over again.

**Brian Albright is a freelance writer and editor whose work has appeared in Fangoria, VideoScope, Shock Cinema, and SCREAM magazines. He is the author of Regional Horror Films, 1958-1990: A State-by-State Guide with Interviews and Wild Beyond Belief!.**





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# ABOUT THE RESTORATIONS

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The unique production and distribution histories of the independently made films in this collection have meant that in many cases the original film materials have not been readily accessible. Extensive research was therefore necessary to track the printing and/or storage background of these films, as well as the valuable assistance of the filmmakers themselves.

All films have been exclusively restored in 2K resolution for this release by Arrow Films. In all cases the best-quality materials available have been used as the source elements for our restorations.

## MALATESTA'S CARNIVAL OF BLOOD

*Malatesta's Carnival of Blood* is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with mono sound.

The director's own 35mm reference print was scanned in 2K resolution at OCN Digital, USA. Kodak Digital Ice was used to remove instances of dirt and debris during scanning. Grading was performed on the Baselight grading system at Deluxe Restoration, London. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris, light scratches and other forms of film damage were removed or improved through a combination of digital restoration tools.

The mono soundtrack was transferred directly from the 35mm reference print.

## THE WITCH WHO CAME FROM THE SEA

*The Witch Who Came from the Sea* is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 with mono sound.

A 35mm print accessed from UCLA Film Archive was scanned in 2K resolution at OCN Digital, USA. Kodak Digital Ice was used to remove instances of dirt and debris during scanning. Grading was performed on the Baselight grading system at Deluxe Restoration, London. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris, light scratches and other forms of film damage were removed or improved through a combination of digital restoration tools.

The mono soundtrack was transferred from the UCLA 35mm print.

## the Premonition

*The Premonition* is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with mono sound.

The original CRI was scanned in 2K resolution at OCN Digital, USA. Kodak Digital Ice was used to remove instances of dirt and debris during scanning. Grading was performed on the Baselight grading system at Deluxe Restoration, London. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris, light scratches and other forms of film damage were removed or improved through a combination of digital restoration tools.

The mono soundtrack was transferred from the original 3-strip magnetic reels.

The presentations of the three restored feature films in this collection have been approved by their directors.

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc, Booklet and Packaging Produced by **Ewan Cant**

Executive Producer: **Francesco Simeoni**

Production Assistant: **Liane Cunje**

Technical Producer: **James White**

QC and Proofing: **Ewan Cant, Nora Mehenni, Anthony Nield**

Subtitling: **day for night\***

Blu-ray/DVD Mastering: **David Mackenzie**

Artist: **Twins of Evil**

Design: **Jack Pemberton**

## SPECIAL THANKS

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