

B-Movie Festival Welcome to the ridiculous

Welcome to the world of B-Movies. Everything you've ever feared is waiting for you here, from pine-faced demons to evil, vicious Surf Nazis hell-bent on brutalization and senseless violence. In the following weeks, Excalibur's Norman Wilner will serve as your guide to the ominous world of B-Movies. This week Wilner talks to Rob Salem, Chris Holland and Julian Grant, the organizers of the B-Festival now taking place at the Bloor Cinema and Lee's Palace. In upcoming interviews, Wilner will be speaking with producer-director Fred Olen Ray, whose movie—The Empire Phantom—premiered at the B-Movie Festival last Sunday. Shows yet to be seen include: Clive Baker's uncut Hellraiser, playing at 11pm Hallowe'en night, and the Canadian premiere of Troma Films' Monster in the Closet at 9:00 the same evening. For specifics and price information, call the Bloor Cinema at 532-6677, or Lee's Palace, which hosts the video portion of the Festival across the road from the Bloor, at 532-7383. Tonight, The Festival features a tribute to John Waters, the master of trash concept cinema, presenting three of his most repugnant films.

EXCALIBUR: How did the B festival come about?

GRANT: It started last year with Chris and Rob running movies at the Big Bop a club, at Queen St. West and Bathurst. I met them last year and I said it would be great if it could expand, to do this on a bigger scale. "Let's get the Bloor, try to set it up, in competition with the Festival of Festivals." They liked that set-up, so I became involved, really as a film programmer. I've done festivals before...so it was really kind of natural that we all get together.

EXCALIBUR: Some of these prints are almost impossible to come by. Frankenstein 3-D, for example. How do you get hold of them?

GRANT: We pulled a lot of favors. My

background for the most part is...after graduating from York University, with a film production degree, I worked around town in a couple of B films, most notably *The Pink Chiquitas*, with Frank Stallone, and found myself running the Cinema Lumiere.

EXCALIBUR: Which burned down?

GRANT: Yeah, the roof fell in. I was running a midnight series there called Psychotronic Cinema (based on the book by Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*), and we were running films like *The Miniskirt Mob* and that's when it dawned on me that people like this stuff...it's kind of a desire to see it.

EXCALIBUR: How do you feel about your big Hallowe'en night premiere, *Troma's Monster in the Closet*, being available on videocassette almost a month before its theatrical debut this Saturday?

GRANT: Well, Lorimar Home Video has that, and they're our sponsors, so for the most part I don't see that as a threat...To be honest with you, *Monster in the Closet* demands to be seen on a big screen. It's a return to all the "Old Dark House" movies...Godzilla Live and like that. (Rob Salem wanders by).

EXCALIBUR: Anything you feel like telling the people at York, Rob?

SALEM: Come down. Spend your money. Repeatedly. Every night.

EXCALIBUR: How did you manage to get Clive Barker to present an uncut version of his recent gore opus *Hellraiser* (the closing night gala, after *Monster in the Closet*)?

SALEM: Clive was going to be here anyway, and it's funny because initially we went after it as a premiere, since it was supposed to be released around Hallowe'en. But it came out, and we saw it, and figured "wuhh, this is something special..." And so, then we heard that Clive might be in town, and then he was going to be in town, and so we

sent him a letter on the wings of a dove...

GRANT: Or a demon...

SALEM: Yeah, absolutely. And then we asked the censor board, and they've been just wonderful.

GRANT: Yeah, they really have been. I think that's one thing that we really ought to stress.

SALEM: Anne Johnston in particular, but the whole bunch of them have been great, both for the video and the film programme. Not, I mean, that there's anything objectionable or the least bit offensive, 'cause we're probably more easily offended than most.

GRANT: It's not a slash-and-dice festival, you should be aware of that, although last year we did have one

SALEM: It was a documentary which had been cleared by the censor board (and rated PG) called *The Architects of Fear*, about how they make splatter films, and when a woman was chained to a bed and a chainsaw went through her... (laughter) I really don't think that this should be on our show. We're staying away from that.

EXCALIBUR: Well, what about Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein 3-D*?

SALEM: But look at that, made in 1974... that's pretty innocuous.

GRANT: And don't forget, it's probably one of the few films that really takes the 3-D process and throws it in your face.

SALEM: Last night... I mean, people applauded the bat scene (in which three bats swoop right into the audience's eyes).

EXCALIBUR: The audience was very supportive, too.

SALEM: Right, right. Somebody told me last night that it was like watching *Rocky Horror* for the first time.

GRANT: And that was a gimmick film; the first real gay musical...



THERE ARE NO LIMITS: A Cenobite with a severe acupuncture problem stands tall in Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*, to be screened uncut Hallowe'en night at the Second Annual B Festival.

SALEM: So this is the way it is, but you don't have to know the ritual here. Just make it up as you go along. But tonight (Sunday the 25th, with *Dementia 13*, *The Phantom Empire*, and *Spirits of the Dead*, we're getting some real cineastes, film students, people who are interested in early Coppola and like that.

EXCALIBUR: Almost like a cult?

SALEM: Exactly. People are into this, more than even we thought. It's like a fellowship of sorts.

EXCALIBUR: And this is the ultimate cult festival.

SALEM: Yeah, and a number of different cults are involved. The audiences change from night to night. This (the modest turnout for *Dementia 13*) is not the Surf Nazi crowd.

GRANT: We tried to cover all the various veins...

SALEM: The pulsing veins, the spurt-ing veins...

GRANT: Tonight's Sunday, being kind of a low-key night, people want to take it easy...

SALEM: They don't want zombies jumping out at them (Saturday night's showing of *The Incredibly Strange Creatures*... featured Salem, Holland and everybody else in zombie fright masks running in the

aisles). (Salem leaves for the club, Lee's Palace, where the Festival party continues during and after the screenings).

EXCALIBUR: So the B Festival will go on?

GRANT: Oh, sure. This year it's "Assault On the Senses." Give 'em a smattering through the gimmick image itself, and so on. Next year... next year...

EXCALIBUR: A change of pace? A more laid-back angle for the B?

GRANT: God, no. If we were laid-back, we'd be dead. It's always going to be moving, it's always going to be growing. It's always going to be a lot of fun. (Chris Holland walks by)

EXCALIBUR: Anything you feel like adding?

HOLLAND: Oh, no. Just have a good time. (Holland tells Grant something about Fred Olen Ray wanting his film *The Phantom Empire* to be preserved in its proper ratio. Grant promises to tell Salem. Later, the film is shown properly. The two decide to join Salem at Lee's Palace. Wilner opts to stay and watch *Dementia 13*, arranging to meet them again next Saturday night for the wrap-up, coming in next week's *Excalibur*.)

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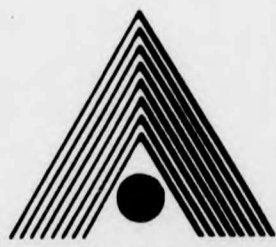
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