

*From the Desk of...*

# Baron Craze

## Terror Creeps into Philly...

By Baron Craze

PHILADELPHIA, PA - In late October, for four days, a building of ethical foundation was transformed into nightmarish delights, and hellish pleasures. While the buzz of Halloween swirl in the night air, this event called 'Terror Film Festival' unleashed itself to spread the toxics of horrors unto the unsuspecting, yet very eager, festival attendees.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has now entered into the realm of horror film festivals joining the prestigious grounds of the elite in such cities of New York and Los Angeles, with their respective events. Yes, Terror Film Festival did not have big stars there, nor the press. In fact, any 'major' press, well except me – one who found out about the event online. Nevertheless, what the event organizers did bring to the forefront was integrity and talent. And the festival made every effort to impress, with no tricks. Just treats for the audience to enjoy.

The event organizers were, Claw and Princess Horror, and with a little help from their friends and family, combined with their dedication and talent, Terror Film Festival was a great success on many levels and will continue to be one.

One hundred and forty-eight films were submitted for this festival, and they came from all across America, Poland, Spain, Germany, and even South Africa. This was not a festival of any small proportion, nor was it limited to any individual or nationality, but rather to the best independent film production.

Nevertheless, Terror Film Festival's style is an intimate film festival, personal and enjoyable, for all who attended. Setting itself apart from other festivals by not limiting the films to certain years or to MPAA ratings. Though they did still offer a shot at cash prizes and the 'Claw Awards'. However, one can argue on the definition of independent films and the quality of those said films with regard to budgets. Yet, it cannot be argued about the talent that was showcased here in Philadelphia, thanks to Claw, a man who declined to be interviewed except to state that "the event is about the filmmakers, the fans, and those who aspire for greatness, and not himself".

This event was very hauntingly special. Instead of offering a haunted house and ghost tours, it was a friendly and fiendishly enjoyable time that started on October 17th, highlighting four short films, all nominated in various categories. Among which was the entertaining animated short 'Teddy Scares'. If it sounds familiar, it should. 'Teddy Scares' was made by the same company that produces the collectible toy bears of the same name. This independent production highlighted the talent voices of Clive Barker ('Hellraiser' series), Linda Blair ('Exorcist'), and Rick Baker (Hollywood SFX Master), just to name a few stars of cast. The film's screenwriter, Jim Hankins, went on to win a 'Writers Boot Camp 6 Week Online Writing Course'. After a short intermission break, which allowed for a question and answer session with the filmmakers that were presented, the first full length feature of the festival played. It was 'Under Surveillance', a quirky film that lived up to a true Hitchcockian style. This film also won Best Screenplay.

The first night, Tuesday of the four day festival, ended with a second short film program of five programs total. It was wonderful to see the talent and how wide reaching this festival was, as films presented here

were from the likes of Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa (The Mamtsotsi Bird) by Jo Horn and Barcelona, Spain (Happy Birthday 2 You). The first film of the second short film program was even from Gothenburg, Sweden, that journeyed here to haunt the festival fans with 'Bad Dreams'.

Wednesday wickedly kicked off the night with a similar format as the previous night. Seven short films in different categories, with 'Dear Sweet Emma', a six-minute film that will have you rethinking the sweet old granny in the neighborhood. Ben, an audience member, stated after this movie, "He never would be short tempered with a senior citizen again." 'Half Price \$ale' was one of the hometown favorites created by filmmaker, Mike Zaleski. This short of 7 minutes was also nominated for Best Screenplay. Maybe 'Dancing with the Stars' (television show) will take notice and cringe!

Next was the first of two full length features of the night, 'Satan's Whip'. This was not only my personal favorite, but also one of the big crowd faves. The mixture of stylish tones and the material made for a colorfully entertaining film that pushed the boundaries. Pete Barker was truly the star of this film, playing the one-eyed priest, Father William. He was the audience's favorite character in all of the films of the festival. His serious, deadpan remarks and sinister humor were a cool change a pace. Many in the audience thought he should have been nominated for the Best Actor award, but he was not, to the displeasure of many in attendance. The director, Jason Maran, was one of the filmmakers on-hand for our ghastly delight.

The second feature of the night, highly promoted and praised by fans on MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)), was 'The Murder Game'. Its story line was clever and entertaining, and it also had the most ingenious murder scene that I have witnessed in a long while, using a fire extinguisher. And it's not how you would ever think. It was also swamped with great special effects for this low budget film.

Thursday was as thrilling as possible, with a format that was dead on, for a repeat of the previous nights. A slashing good time with four films that clocked in just over an hour. 'Project: Adam' was in the same vein as the television series 'The Twilight Zone'. A very entertaining film and intriguing screenplay by my friend and new drinking mate, Jacob Buchheit. 'Project: Adam' won Best Sci-fi Short Film, a Writer's Boot Camp Six Week Online Class, and a Writer's Boot Camp Script Consultation. Jake flew in from L.A. just for the festival and treated the audience to an extensive Q&A session.

The Thursday feature film of the night was 'They Must Eat!'. A black comedy with humor and horror mixed together with great gore scenes. This film was a big crowd gathering which really showed the word-of-mouth of Terror Film Festival's potential growth. The film had no CGI or other computer enhancements like other films. Just incredible and talented actors being hellish monsters without corny masks. With just minor costumes mixed with minimal makeup tricks. It was shot on DV (digital video), as were a lot of the other entries in the fest.

The night finished with four more shorts and the big draw of the night...'Penny Dreadful' (not the same film from the After Dark Festival or After Dark Distribution). This film starred the legendary actress Betsy Palmer (Friday the 13th) and went on to win Betsy the fest's Claw Award for Best Actress, for her minor, yet significant role. Also in the second segment of the short film program of the night was the fest's shortest short, of one minute. It was gruesome and bloody, and known as 'The Butcher, Baker and Nightmare Maker'.

On the final night, Claw displayed the personal filmmaking talents of 'Princess Horror', with a surprise screening of 'Deja vu'. This 9 minute short film came with much prompting from the cheering and dedicated fans in attendance. It was a horror spoof that honored Alfred Hitchcock's 'Psycho' and the slasher genre of the greats...Freddy, Jason, Michael Myers, Leatherface, Lector, Norman Bates, and of

course Janet Leigh's role. The film was highly enjoyable and funny as a fan film. It had won several awards at other film festivals in the past.

The Friday lineup was fiendish and filled with eight shorts and one trailer. One of the highlights here was the movie 'Steves', a true homage to the movie 'The Shining' and winner of the Best Actor award, and the most experimental film called 'Room 101' from Georgia. And the short film 'The Seance', created by Arun Vaidyanathan of New Jersey, was very eerie and left everyone wanting to see more.

The final film of the fest was the second hometown favorite, 'Of Darkness'. And it was a fine film to end the festival with. Making the audience leary to venture into the city's darkness, which is always scary, and making sure we know to fear the unknown. This film's storyline was great and true to the horror genre, with a great cast directed by Gary Irwin. Who also had a fantastic killing soundtrack. The screenwriter, Matt Casale, of local fame, won honors with a Writers Boot Camp 6 Week Online Class.

The only downside of Terror Film Festival was the 4:30 PM start time and the fact that the festival itself had to end. Many new bonds were created and smiles abound all – from the fans to the filmmakers to Claw and his crew. But fret not! It was announced at 'Oh!Sheas' – a local bar that held after party events each of the festival nights – that the festival would indeed resurrect itself and devour the living again, next year.

For more information on Terror Film Festival, including a full list of the nominees and winners, and to stay updated, visit their website at [www.TerrorFilmFestival.net](http://www.TerrorFilmFestival.net).

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