

Jeff Kirkendall's Thoughts For The Month Column

Thoughts, Opinions, Reviews, Commentary & More!

Hello and Welcome! My name is Jeff Kirkendall and I'm an independent filmmaker and actor from the Upstate New York area. This is the section of the Very Scary Productions website where I write about topics related to independent filmmaking, digital video production, acting, movies in general, horror movies in particular, my own indie movies, as well as anything and everything related or in between.

I decided to create this commentary page because I find that I often come across things that either interest me, excite me, intrigue me, or maybe just bug me. Any topic related to movies and cinema is fair game, from the most mainstream to the most controversial. For example I'll often read about movie projects that I have a strong interest in or opinion on, for one reason or another. This page gives me a forum to discuss these things. It's all about discussion and furthering understanding of our pop culture. Anyone who has feedback concerning what I have to say here, feel free to contact me (see the contact link at <http://www.veryscaryproductions.com/>).

I'd also like to point out that the following is just my opinion, and everyone is free to agree or disagree with what I have to say. Enjoy, and to all the Indies out there: Keep on Filming!

SUBJECT: Q & A Time – An interview with filmmaker Jeff Kirkendall – August 2003

Not too long ago I was asked to answer some questions for an article on independent filmmakers that was to appear in a new print publication about B-movies. Unfortunately (to my knowledge) the article was never published. So I decided to post the questions and answers in this column. Hope you find it interesting.

Q: There are lots of technology advances (DV cameras, DVD, the increasing affordability of computer-generated graphics) that have affected the budget film industry, but what Internet-specific services have most affected your own work? List some sites and/or services that help you do your job better or faster, and comment on each.

A: As you say, there have been many technological advances that have affected the budget film industry in recent years. The proliferation of new production gear such as inexpensive digital video cameras (DV) and non-linear based editing programs have made it possible for many aspiring filmmakers to attempt projects they wouldn't have been able to years ago because of cost and technology limitations. The internet has also been a major factor in what many are calling the digital revolution. In my own work as a digital filmmaker I often rely heavily on internet sites for technological support and to keep on top of the ever-evolving world of the new digital technology. For example, as a user of Adobe Premiere editing software, I visit the Adobe website (www.adobe.com) whenever I need to look up information regarding the product. They have an extensive database of information, including a large FAQ section that is very helpful. Other sites that deal with video production have also been helpful in terms of staying up to date with the technology. One site that I find useful is the Videomaker magazine site (www.videomaker.com). They provide articles that deal with all facets of video production from basic to more advanced topics. In addition, places like the Adobe site also have pages of

downloads that can offer solutions to problems, and enhancements for programs like Adobe Premiere. The ability to download information and programs at any time from different web sites is an internet-specific service that can help people get work done faster. As I said, with digital video this often applies to support for computer-related products like editing programs, video cards and cameras that interact with a computer setup.

Q: How much does e-mail (and the Internet in general) come into play during the production of a film? Are cast and crew ever contacted by online means, or is it still primarily a phone-and-fax business? During which stages of production do you consider the Internet to be essential, and during which would you never consider using online communication?

A: I recently completed post-production on an independent horror feature called ***The Temptress***. From the time production began in early 2000, to the end of editing in late 2002, e-mail didn't come into play very much at all. In my case telephone was the main means of communication with actors and crew during the production phase of the movie. This was mainly due to the fact that everybody who worked on the production was from the same area (Upstate New York), and that is where the movie was lensed. Because of all the intricate details and planning involved in making a movie, I have always found verbal communication on the telephone to be essential. It's possible this may not always be the case on bigger productions shot in more varied locations, but for my own locally-produced movies it's mainly what I use.

Q: In what forms of Internet promotion do you and/or your company engage? Which do you consider the most (and least) effective? Has there ever been a promotional campaign by another company that you wished you'd thought of first?

A: The internet can be a great means of promotion for an independent movie during all phases of production. In mid 2002 - while I was editing my aforementioned feature ***The Temptress*** - I started my own website called Very Scary Productions (www.veryscaryproductions.com), which was the production company title I had used on some of my previous short films. Since the site went up I've been using it to promote the feature, as well as my past work, to independent and underground movie fans. The site offers descriptions and pictures from many of the movies I've done, and gives up to date information on upcoming projects. It's always best to get people interested in a project sooner rather than later. If you can build interest in a project before production even begins, that's great. The goal is to have an audience eagerly awaiting your movie upon release. Of course the internet can then be used to sell the completed movie as well.

If there is any promotional campaign I wish I'd thought of first, it would have to be the one for the independent movie ***The Blair Witch Project***. The people behind this movie created interest in their project well before it was released. By the time it finally came out everyone was eagerly awaiting it. Their campaign involved heavy use of their website. This is a striking example of how the internet was used for the promotion of an independent production.

Q: The World Wide Web has provided everyone with an opinion and the desire to share it the opportunity to do so. The web sites of amateur film critics have proliferated. How carefully do you read the online reviews of your work? At what point, in your opinion, does an Internet film

critic become more than just another fanboy with a web site? Do you feel that such web sites do more good than harm?

A: Movie review websites have indeed become widespread on the internet. I've only recently become involved with this trend. My feature mentioned above received a positive review from a movie site shortly after the film's area premiere. (The reviewer was somebody who came to the screening.) This review has given me some exposure I wouldn't have had otherwise, which I'm very grateful for. I've used quotes from this review to promote the movie on my website. Although I'm obviously happy that the review was good rather than bad, my feeling on the matter is that any exposure is better than no exposure. I myself have never been one to take reviews too seriously when picking movies to see, and I believe a lot of people feel this way. If I've been waiting for months to see the latest horror blockbuster, I'm going to see it on opening night regardless of what even the most well-known critics say. In regards to fans with movie review sites, it's hard to determine the line between serious movie criticism and a fanboy with a web site. I found the review I received to be thoughtful and insightful. Reviews are, after all, just opinion no matter who writes them. The bottom line is that movie reviews on these websites are exposure. How much exposure these sites provide is unclear however, as it's hard to determine how popular many of them are and how heavily people weigh the opinions of these internet writers.