

## 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: The Chiller Theatre Toy, Model & Film Expo: An overview - May 2003

For those who aren't familiar with it, The Chiller Theatre Toy, Model & Film Expo is quite simply one of the biggest film and memorabilia conventions on the East Coast. The show, held twice a year in New Jersey, is a three day gathering of fans, collectors and talent, which makes for quite an entertaining long weekend. For the movie fan, the convention is a place to meet popular actors, directors, FX artists, models and others in the business. The guests are spread throughout the convention hotel in different rooms. Each room usually has more than a few guests sitting at tables greeting and talking to fans and selling their photos and autographs. The guest list at each and every Chiller show is numerous, and ranges from widely known celebrities to cult film stars to independent actresses to the ever-enduring "scream queens". At this past April show there were around 100 guests on the bill. I won't take up space listing them, but suffice it to say this is a convention where you can meet guests ranging in diversity from horror star Kane Hodder (Jason Voorhees himself), to actor and film star Rowdy Roddy Piper, to Misty Mundae & the Women of E.I. Cinema. Many of the guests are people whose name you might not know offhand, but who you immediately recognize upon seeing their face or seeing their movie photos. For example, when I first saw actor Glenn Shadix sitting at the table, I didn't recognize the name, but I knew I had seen him somewhere before. I then smiled upon seeing his photos from **Beetlejuice**, a favorite movie of mine. It's always fun to go around to the tables and strike up a conversation with somebody you feel you know already because you've watched them so many times in movies or on television. Generally the guests are very sociable and accommodating to most questions and idle chatter, but of course personalities do vary, and not everyone you meet (as is the case in life generally) is exactly as you'd like them to be. Some people don't turn out to have the personality you've always imagined they would have. Also, if you're a collector of autographed pictures, be prepared to bring a few bucks along, because most

guests charge between twenty and thirty dollars for a signed photo. This can become costly; however I'd be the first to admit there are some people I'm willing to pay the price for and wouldn't miss the chance to meet for anything. Walking through the guest rooms at Chiller is just an opportunity you don't get everyday, and I look forward to it every time.

Besides the guest rooms, the other big draw of the convention is the dealer rooms. Chiller usually has two huge convention rooms full of dealers with additional dealers in the hallways surrounding the rooms. At these tables you can buy anything from videos and DVD's to movie scripts from your favorite films. Some items, such as mainstream horror and science fiction tapes, can be found elsewhere, and the prices at Chiller are generally comparable to shopping at a video store. (The shopper with a particularly good eye can usually find a bargain in the dealer rooms though.) However, the real draw of the dealer rooms comes from things you can't get just anywhere, such as foreign video/DVD titles and independent films. I've picked up a lot of independent videos direct from the filmmakers themselves. In addition to movies, items such as movie posters and movie t-shirts are always popular. I've bought most of my favorite horror t-shirts at the convention. As a word of advice I would say to always take your time and look at all the tables before rushing to buy something. The prices between dealers can vary, and unless the item is incredibly rare, it's usually worth the extra time to look and compare prices. It's really amazing to see what you can discover at the various dealer tables.

Finally, for those of you who are filmmakers (or just aspiring filmmakers) or actors, or involved in some other way with independent filmmaking, Chiller can also be a great place to network and meet new people. I've met a lot of interesting people by attending the convention, and I would highly recommend a trip to New Jersey to anyone interested in low/no-budget moviemaking. Even if you're not there to concentrate on networking, you never know who you might run into. So head on down to the next Chiller Theatre Toy, Model and Film Expo prepare for a truly unique experience.