

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: A look at the evolution of Underground Digital Cinema - A discussion of some of my experiences, insights and perspectives - Part 3 - December 2007
(Note: See the October 2007 TFTM for Part 1 of this continuing column, and the November 2007 TFTM for Part 2)

In the last installment of this continuing column I discussed in detail the underground horror movie *Psycho Sisters*, and talked just a bit about two New Jersey-based independent production companies - namely EI Cinema (now called POP Cinema) and W.A.V.E. Productions, the company behind *Psycho Sisters*. As mentioned, these companies (among others) today specialize in low-budget horror and exploitation movies, and they are major players in the whole underground digital horror movie scene. I'd like to begin to delve further into this particular unique type of cinema; however first, in order to provide a framework for the discussion, I'll begin by talking about some exploitation and b-movies from decades past. This of course was before the digital video revolution, before the aforementioned companies came into existence, and thus it should be noted the categories and movies discussed below refer to more traditional (for lack of a better word) types of exploitation and b-movie cinema.

When I was younger I wasn't familiar with the labels "exploitation movie" or "b-movie", however I knew these types of adult-oriented films basically came in two flavors: the adult drama and the raunchy comedy. These were the types of films I would want to sneak into the movie theater to see (if they were at a multiplex), or want to stay up and watch on late night pay cable. I remember the ones on pay cable channels often being referred to as "after dark" movies, a label which at the time only added to their salacious appeal. (People often tend to want what they're told they can't have - the "forbidden fruit", so to speak). Thinking back about these movies now is pretty humorous, because many of them are actually rather tame, and, in the case of some of the comedies, silly by today's standards. However they represent b-movie and exploitation cinema of years

past, predecessors to some of the types of underground and independent digital movies I'll soon be discussing, and thus warrant mention in this continuing column series. I'll start this month by focusing briefly on a couple prominent examples in the adult drama category.

The adult drama category of exploitation film has traditionally consisted of movies featuring a lot of overly dramatic, soap opera-like, or melodramatic stories strung together by nude scenes and/or simulated sex scenes. Another label often given to these types of productions, which to this day mainly populate late night pay cable channels and DVD, is soft-core adult entertainment. I remember that back in the 1980's one of the more popular and long-lasting string of films in this category was the 'Emmanuelle' series. This series of movies actually started out in 1974 with the film **Emmanuelle**, starring beautiful Dutch actress Sylvia Kristel as the title character. She played a young model living with her older husband in an open marriage, and through the course of several films fans were treated to watching her ongoing sexual adventures in numerous exotic locations throughout the world. The films themselves often weren't the most riveting in terms of plot or action; however they held an undeniable appeal (at that time) mainly for the copious nude scenes featuring Kristel, and later other beautiful actresses portraying the role, and the often exquisite locations on display. Additionally, the first film is hailed by some as a cinematic landmark for opening up the boundaries for erotic content in mainstream adult dramas. Ironically however, despite the appeal of these films for people wanting to see voyeuristic, "after dark" type movies, the onscreen sex was actually portrayed in a very ordinary, almost mundane manner despite the exotic locales and artful photography. By today's standards in fact many would probably not consider these movies to be very explicit, unlike more sensationalistic adult dramas which followed. * However these films are viewed though, there is no doubt the character became something of an icon, given that the list of **Emmanuelle** movies currently numbers more than 30, and titles in this series can still be found on pay cable (and now DVD) to this day.

Adult dramas can also focus on more sensationalistic fare, including plots revolving around elements like revenge and murder. And throughout the 1990's several franchises defined this category, including the enduring **Night Eyes** series. From 1990 to 1996 Andrew Stevens starred in four movies (**Night Eyes 1-4**) as security expert Will Griffith, a man who was constantly involved in steamy plots involving adultery, voyeurism, radio sex therapy, murder and mayhem. ** Of course the real appeal of these movies was the beauty of the actresses on display in the films (such as Shannon Tweed and Tanya Roberts) and the steamy sex scenes. I remember the **Night Eyes** films being prominent on pay cable and home video during these years, as were other similar type adult drama series like the **Body Chemistry** movies - which also featured the same type of tantalizing elements and coincidentally also ran through the course of four movies (**Body Chemistry 1-4** from 1990 to 1995). Stay tuned for Part 4 of this continuing series...

* Actress Sylvia Kristel originally portrayed the Emmanuelle character and, besides the first film, also starred in three direct sequels throughout the late 1970's and early 1980's. She also made appearances in several more of these productions right up through the mid 1990's, as well as appearing in other adult dramas such as the surprisingly heartfelt **Private Lessons** in 1981. Additionally, the 'Emmanuelle' moniker has been used on a plethora of other movies (some of them sequels to the original series) starring actresses such as Monique Gabrielle, Natalie Uher, and most notably Krista Allen, who basically restarted the franchise with a series of science fiction-oriented adult dramas beginning in

1994 with ***Emmanuelle: First Contact***. An internet search for 'Emmanuelle' titles reveals a diverse list indeed, including the outrageous (and decidedly B-horror film-sounding) 2004 series entry ***Emmanuelle vs. Dracula!***

** Actresses Shannon Tweed and Tanya Roberts became well known for adult dramas in the 1990's. The two actresses boast a long list of credits between them in this film category including ***Night Eyes II & III, Cold Sweat, Scorned*** and ***Indecent Behavior II*** (Shannon Tweed), and ***Night Eyes, Inner Sanctum*** and ***Deep Down*** (Tanya Roberts). (Another popular label often given to this particular category of dramatic films is "erotic thriller"). For a full list of actress credits visit The Internet Movie Database (IMDb).