

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: Convention Comebacks – July 2011

* In the past I've written columns describing some of the film conventions I've attended, notably the Fangoria Weekend of Horrors show and Chiller Theatre in New Jersey. I believe Fangoria started hosting conventions back in the mid 1980's with Chiller Theatre having been around nearly as long. Since that time the overall scope of horror movie conventions has expanded, as evidenced by the sheer number of different shows currently taking place around the United States (and the world for that matter) on a regular basis. Besides Fangoria and Chiller, other notable shows include Horrorfind Weekend, Horrorhound Weekend, and Days of the Dead, to name a few. These fan-oriented shows have been a boom for both attendees and celebrity guests alike. They offer fans the chance to be up-close and personal with their favorite horror luminaries (actors, directors, writers, effects artists, etc.), something which was not possible in years past. Conversely, the shows offer those in the business the chance to meet and network directly with their fans. Autographs, celebrity photo opportunities, merchandise and the like have become big business. Indeed an increasing number of horror and cult movie stars are hitting the convention trail, making rounds of appearances at different shows in different states, which is of course great for fans living in all different parts of the country.

Tied into this monetary aspect is the fact that conventions have aided in revitalizing the careers of many in the business. ** Cult movie stars have gained increased exposure like never before. One example of this would be the "Ladies of the Evil Dead" (Betsy Baker, Ellen Sandweiss and Sarah York), who are perhaps more recognizable now to casual horror fans than when ***The Evil Dead*** first came out. Conventions have also been the catalyst for new projects as well. For example I recently attended Chiller Theatre and was happy to finally get to meet several of my favorite ***Nightmare on Elm Street*** stars, notably Heather Langenkamp, Amanda Wyss and Mark Patton. These are people I had wanted to meet in person for some time, but whose past convention appearances had been few and far between. *** Now however, they are increasingly making the convention rounds and are in the spotlight with Heather Langenkamp being the producer of two recent documentaries – ***Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy***, and ***I Am Nancy***, which focuses on horror convention fandom and her role in it. This latter project

seems timelier than ever, with the subject matter being quite telling as to how much of a force film conventions have become. Life imitating art imitating life...

* For an overview of the Chiller Theatre Toy, Model & Film Expo see the May 2003 TFTM column, and to read about one of my past trips to Fangoria's Weekend of Horrors see the February 2004 TFTM column.

** I might also mention that Facebook is another big factor in helping to spotlight cult movie stars by connecting them directly with their fans.

*** I reviewed ***Never Sleep Again: The Elm Street Legacy*** in the June 2010 TFTM column.