

## Gay of the Dead: Vincent Kovar of 'CREATURES FROM THE PINK LAGOON,' Part Two

Written by Sean Abley

Wednesday, 06 October 2010 15:59

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In [Part One](#) of this blog, we left off with actor Vincent Kovar being asked to strip down to his underwear...again. In this second portion of my interview with the CREATURE FROM THE PINK LAGOON star, we talk about his experiences on the CREATURES set, including the importance of cinnamon gum when kissing a straight guy.

SEAN ABLEY: CREATURES FROM THE PINK LAGOON came out when all of us queer horror filmmakers were grinding out product. It seemed like queer horror was The Little Genre That Could. Were you aware of the climate for it when you were making the film? Did the endeavor seem groundbreaking?

VINCENT KOVAR: Yes, it did feel that way. I remember seeing the movie HELLBENT shortly before we started filming and thinking that CREATURES was part of a new movement in gay cinema. So many of the earlier gay movies limited themselves to the “coming-out story,” “AIDS story” or “gay prostitute/drug addict story” that the expansion into other genres was very exciting.

ABLEY: I’m assuming that when shooting in Seattle, a city that isn’t inundated with blocked streets and people running around with bullhorns in the name of film production, your locations were a pain in the ass.

KOVAR: He may not have told you, but Chris [Diani] seems to have a penchant for choosing locations that are heavily trafficked. People were always jogging through the set or driving up to see what we were doing. While we were shooting on the beach, we had the police called two or three times by people who claimed we were “making a porn film.” The fact that there were a dozen guys in green zombie makeup didn’t seem to affect their perception.

ABLEY: If they’d stumbled upon a Bruce LaBruce set, they’d have been right! (See [L.A. ZOMBIE](#)

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for those who don't get the reference.)



KOVAR: Since the movie was in black and white, the green makeup was supposed to produce a better effect on film. In life, it was ghastly and weird. Usually, the zombie actors all sat in one room while all the non-zombies waited to shoot in another; I think we were supposed to be practicing our lines or something. The divide started a lot of commentary about “the green room” and “the green line.” I suppose it could be overly analyzed into an us/not-us interpretation between the living and the dead.

Another [scene had an] actor who was playing the cop dressed in a skin-tight shirt. The effect was sexy, but hardly authentic. People kept coming by and asking if he was a real officer...this eventually led to the real police showing up just as our fake cop was getting a faux BJ on the beach—again, we were right on a very popular jogging/walking/stroller trail.

In one scene that got cut, our cop was lying on the beach—the rockiest, most uncomfortable beach in America—all mangled and dismembered. He had his shirt either off or open. At the time I thought it was a brilliant idea, but in retrospect I suppose I should be glad it was cut, as he was much better built than I am. Anyway, we were filming as fast as possible because—as often seemed to happen—the tide was coming in and we were afraid he might not be able to free himself from being partly buried in time. Somebody—who shall remain nameless—had a tide schedule, but always had us on the beach as the tide was coming in, not going out. Consequently, it seemed like we were always simultaneously losing both light and land.

Other scenes that got cut included several versions of the zombie dance, but the tide cost us at least one of them. There was also a longer dance where I was supposed to have a quick number—for once, not in my underwear. Well, it's apparently easier to teach a zombie to dance than it is to teach me. So I mostly sat on the sidelines.

ABLEY: I'll put my journalistic ethics aside and say that you dancing in the towel in the locker room was adorable. But I have to ask—are you that rarest of creatures, the gay man who can't dance?

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KOVAR: I am afraid I didn't get the full suite of gay genes. I've never been able to two-step. I can do a passable imitation of swing after a couple of cocktails, but as for group numbers...well, it's best if I'm carrying a spear or something right about then. I'm also a mediocre decorator and questionable dresser. I can get away with layers, though, because Seattle is chilly.

ABLEY: I'm assuming the scenes in the water weren't fun.

KOVAR: Those scenes were horrific and emasculating. The Puget Sound is only about 42 degrees F. While we were out in the water, John Kauffman turned blue, seriously blue, as the guy has like two fat cells total. We both got mild hypothermia. The cold didn't help me to remember my lines, and for some odd reason, maybe because I was crotch-deep in ice water, I kept mixing up the words "barbell" and "dumbbell," which just made the whole process go longer. One of the interns or somebody read on the Internet that you treat hypothermia by feeding people bouillon. This really lowered my enthusiasm for having interns, as a cup of bouillon is about the nastiest thing ever...well, second nastiest, but I didn't have the turkey [see below]. Prior to that, a bunch of us thought it was hysterical to have interns, and kept shouting random instructions like, "Intern, fetch me a Tab!" until someone explained that they didn't have to pay attention to us. Now that I think of it, that may account for the bouillon.

ABLEY: This was your first feature film, and it took longer than most to shoot. What did you get out of the extended production period?

KOVAR: A lot of funny oddities emerged just out of the set experience. My character, Billy, was always chewing cinnamon gum. This was not really a character choice so much as I spent a lot a time kissing other actors—particularly the good sport John Kauffman...who is straight—so I wanted to have good breath. Once I started it, though, I had to keep going. So for over a year, I spent many days chewing piece after piece of cheap cinnamon gum. I don't normally chew gum, so my jaw really got a workout. Now I can bite through a 2x4.

ABLEY: Remind me not to use a 2x4 if you ever attack me. So, kissing a straight guy: I was in a play once where I had to make out with another actor, and it turned out he was straight. I think it was harder for me to make out with him than vice versa. I was all in my head, worried that he felt coerced into kissing me, or taken advantage of. What was going through your mind as you made out with John?

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KOVAR: At first I was worried about not having my gum slip the divide. Then I was thinking about how nervous he was. That led me to wondering if he was actually that nervous or if I was a bad kisser. There were a lot of takes. I had a lot of time to indulge in strange thoughts.

ABLEY: Tell me about your death scene.

KOVAR: My “guts” were actually processed turkey slices and “chocolate-flavored sauce”—not even real chocolate, just flavored. Apparently, the combination is so nasty that the zombies were really gagging and near vomiting...right over me. The rest of it was latex that was glued to my belly, so as they were threatening to throw up on me, they were also slowly waxing my stomach. I imagine the idea of my stomach hair covered in chocolate and wrapped in processed turkey only helped encourage the nausea. As this was all going on—the second time—I was on the ground right next to a popular trail in West Seattle. Most of the passers-by were kind enough to keep moving, but also felt the need to trip over all the power cords.

ABLEY: Why did you have to shoot it twice?

KOVAR: I don't know exactly. I guess there was something about the lighting or the sound that didn't work in the first set of takes. We also shot the scene where I run into the tree in at least two different locations. There we discovered that I can't run backwards with any accuracy, and I kept missing the tree.



ABLEY: In an early e-mail between us, you mentioned the CREATURES FROM THE PINK LAGOON drinking game. Rules, please.

KOVAR: Well, we never did write them up, but the general concept was to have a goodly amount of tequila handy and take a shot every time the viewer notices a continuity error. For instance, in the beach house scenes, there is a boat anchored in the background which seems

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to come and go. I think there were other rules, but we started experimenting with the drinking portion of the game and never quite got around to finishing them.

ABLEY: What other performing stuff have you been up to?

KOVAR: Around the same time [as his short play MEMBER DISMEMBERED], I had another one I wrote, WAITING, put up at a festival here in Seattle. In April, I did my first formal stand-up comedy set at the Seattle Comedy Underground. While writing the jokes, I started looking at how sex references tend to be easy laughs, and thinking about how that is due to our societal discomfort with sex. I believe that is the source of homophobia. While performing, I noticed that guys who might be hostile on the street were laughing their asses off as I described "waking up naked in a Tijuana gutter married to a transsexual prostitute." It was a joke, of course; I'm single.

I haven't been acting much, though I did a couple of commercial photo shoots in which I played a "jumping chef" and an art teacher. I'm afraid I've reached the age where I no longer play sexy hunk but "teacher" or "middle-aged businessman..."

ABLEY: Besides being a total queer, what would be the one thing that would keep you from being elected to public office? Bonus points for photos or video proof of such.

KOVAR: Probably the drag imitation of Condoleeza Rice. It might make people think I'm a closet Republican.

ABLEY: As I write this, I'm eating a chef's salad at The Silver Spoon, the restaurant where Old Hollywood goes for lunch before they die. I see Robert Forster and Dick Miller here every day. Anyway, what makes a good salad?

KOVAR: It's funny you mention Dick Miller, as I just watched BUCKET OF BLOOD the other day. My tastes in salads are similar to my tastes in movies...something's gotta die to make them art. In the case of a salad, that should be a cow, chicken or shellfish.

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ABLEY: As a lazy writer, I use tricks and deception to fill out these interviews, and one of my favorites is to put “[INTERVIEW SUBJECT NAME] question” into Google and pick one of the results for my interviewee. So here goes: What if he cared? What if he had heart? What if he worked half as hard as Kobe? What if he took advantage of his God-given talents?

KOVAR: Hmm, as a lazy interviewee, I reverse-Google your questions and just spend a few thoughtful moments reading about the career of a basketball player who “almost cost the Magic their season and almost made Otis Smith look like an idiot for trading for him.” The headline was a call for this person to “hand over their talent if you’re not going to use it.” From the perspective of a gay actor/writer, I’d love to use my talent—such as it is—more. Just recently [as CREATURES hit Netflix streaming] I’ve started getting fan mail on Facebook from people asking if I’m still acting. When I’ve been up for other parts, I’ve frequently been asked, “What do you have besides the gay stuff?” I believe we’re really at a transition point where so-called “gay” films won’t be limited to a few narrow genres, nor will the lines between “gay” and “straight” entertainment be so clearly drawn. In a humbling way, I like to think that someday people might look back and say CREATURES was one of the first gay zombie movies and that, despite all its and my flaws, it contributed to breaking down a stereotype or two.

For more info on Vincent, check out his website [here](#) .

CREATURE FROM THE PINK LAGOON is available from [Amazon](#) .

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