

Face Riff: Face Riffing the Nation, Part Two

Written by Jeff Tuttle

Thursday, 07 October 2010 14:02



I don't want to say that if you're unfamiliar with Alkaline Trio, or Every Time I Die that you're an asshole, but hey—sometimes the shoe just fits. All kidding aside, both are amazing bands filled with amazing people and both are near and dear to The Dillinger Escape Plan family. Collectively, we slaughtered Warped Tour fans on a daily basis this summer, leaving our nights free to catch up on some cinematic schooling. We would trade movies like junkies trade needles, always eager to get our nightly fix.

Derek Grant, drummer of Alkaline Trio, fellow Detroit native and hardcore horror fanatic gave me several great films ranging from Nicolas Winding Refn's BRONSON (a beautifully violent A CLOCKWORK ORANGE-esque true tale of Britain's most notorious prisoner) to Koji Shiraishi's GROTESQUE (this film about a doctor who agrees to set a couple he has kidnapped free if they can sexually excite him while they are tortured was banned in the UK... I wonder why?



However, fellow horrorphile and Every Time I Die bassist Josh Newton has the dubious honor of burdening me with a film called TUMBLING DOLL OF FLESH, or PSYCHO—SNUFF REELS (yes, it's a Japanese "snuff" movie.) Did I watch it? Shit, yeah, I did. Do I wish I hadn't? I'm not quite sure yet, but I do know that this need to seek out the most extreme forms of film is not unlike the attitude of many of this year's Warped Tour attendees.

It seems there's been a musical paradigm shift that is akin to the movement of earthly tectonic plates. The ground has been split open and from this chasm has erupted a geyser of metallic fury known as deathcore. This burgeoning genre is a mix of death metal technicality and the youthful spirit of hardcore and has seemingly pulled the wool over a sizable subset of today's younger generation by passing itself off as pop music. Deathcore is providing the world with the latest batch of boy-bands and by the massive crowds I witnessed for acts like Whitechapel, Suicide Silence and Bring Me The Horizon—all bands that would provide the soundtrack to

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social suicide in my formative years—these kids, some as young as middle school age, are none the wiser.

It seems clear that all of this is a direct result of the proverbial envelope being pushed so hard that it finally hit a wall and is being mangled and mashed into a crumbled wad. Rock 'n' roll has always provided a rebellious outlet for kids. I'm willing to bet that when cave children first started banging sticks on stones, cave parents were perplexed and outraged at the sounds of "the devil's music." From then on, whether it was Elvis shaking his tawdry hips, or the Beatles wanting to hold your hand, this vilification has acted like a magnet that attracts hip young crowds and has snowballed further and further down the rabbit hole.

Similarly, once Alfred Hitchcock's PSYCHO planted a tiny seed that sprouted the Italian giallo and blossomed into the slasher, it's been a constant challenge to push the boundaries of filmmaking and a morbid curiosity that keeps theater seats packed. The infamous shower scene, while lasting only minutes, sparked a barrage of imitators that slowly added more blood, more gore, more nudity and more sleaze until the likes of TUMBLING DOLL OF FLESH was achieved.



Not the first of its kind and certainly not the last, this film begins like a bit of poorly executed porn shot with a handheld and ends with the dismemberment of the female and sex with her numerous stab wounds. Strangely, despite the extremely graphic nature of the film, the Japanese still found it necessary to blur out all its genital shots like curly head faces on the show COPS. So if you're way into "snuff" movies, but seeing a dude's flopper is your limit—don't worry. You can rest assured that you won't be fully exposed to the tyranny of balls and pubes.

TUMBLING DOLL OF FLESH and GROTESQUE may appear like blips on the radar of mainstream cinema, but the likes of SAW and HOSTEL amount to much more. While not exactly "snuff," they're at the very least, its bastard kin. Just as the slasher genre of the '80s became a rehash of the Italian Giallo of the '70s (sans character and plot development), the giallo was itself a rehash of popular murder/mystery books from the '50s and '60s with a greater

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emphasis on sex and violence. Torture porn is certainly the next link in this chain. Movies such as SAW and HOSTEL may look flashy and stylized, but at their core they are merely the torchbearers of tradition once again scraping the flesh off the gialli bones. Plot and character? When you have tits and torture, who needs 'em?

So with deathcore headlining a music festival aimed at 14 year olds and torture porn top-billed in your local theater, the question on its bruised and bloody knees begging for query is... where do we go from here??? Personally, I see all of this as progress. In the future, my morbid curiosity will undoubtedly lead me down similarly bleak paths and I cherish the thought. However, the subsequent chain link remains as mysterious as a bad giallo film—I'm not sure what's happening or where this is going, but the soundtrack is funky and I can't stop watching. So, many condolences and much well wishing to you, little proverbial envelope, you've had a rough journey thus far, but it seems your voyage into oblivion is only beginning.

{comments on}