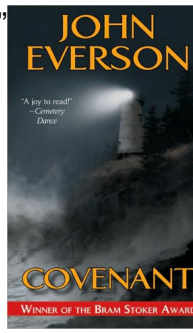
Some people enjoy the horror genre. John Everson loves it.

The affair started young when, as a child, he used to sneak peeks at genre movies or episodes of THE TWILIGHT ZONE and, later, copies of FANGORIA. As an adult, his passion for the genre has only grown, prompting him to write five novels and plenty of short stories. He's also had the good fortune to open his own small press, Dark Arts Books.

His newest novel, THE 13TH, is about an insane asylum where the crazies are not the patients, but the doctor and his sexy nurse. It's a bloody, atmospheric tale that, despite the sex, will make you want to stay clear of small-town hospitals and candle-lit basements. Other Everson books include COVENANT, SACRIFICE and the forthcoming SIREN.

If you haven't read Everson yet, now you have no excuse. His stories are not for the faint of heart. But what's a writer to do who's grown up with a love for the genre but to contribute to it? "I'm a horror writer," Everson tells Fango. "I'm proud of that and the label is an honest one."



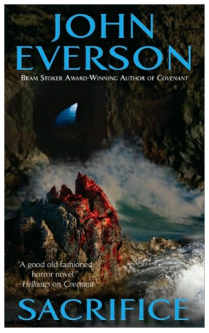
But he's annoyed by how some people, with self-righteous bias, shun the horror label. "Many people love thrillers about a cop or PI chasing down a serial killer," he says, "but those same people don't want to hear about a thriller with supernatural 'horror' elements. Believe me, I have talked to hundreds of them in bookstores over the past year. Say 'thriller' and they come over to the book-signing table. Mention 'horror' or the supernatural, and they put a hand up and walk away. And there are those who will actually say (I've heard it more than once), 'Oh no, I don't

read horror books, I just read Stephen King.'

"So the challenge is in writing the kind of fiction I love, and enticing people who don't otherwise read 'that sort of thing' to give it a shot."

It's the same challenge that confronts publishers, which is why many have chosen to remove the horror label from their titles. Everson wonders, however, if the marketing strategy really works. On a personal level, he doesn't like it.

"I hate it that Barnes & Noble and some other stores have merged horror into the sprawling aisles of 'Fiction & Literature.' I don't want to have to weed through shelf after shelf of books I have no interest in to find the genre material hidden amid them. And as a new mass market author, I want my books to be seen by those horror fans who are looking for the things they know, because then they'll have the chance to stumble on my books. I don't think the person picking up a book called THE SUNFLOWER (a book which seems to be shelved next to mine in most B&N stores) are going to have any interest in my novel THE 13TH, or vice versa. I understand the argument that says being shelved amid more general fiction thus gives you the chance to be seen by a larger audience. I just don't buy that it actually works that way. I'm a horror writer. I'm proud of that and the label is an honest one."



Everson has been writing for a long time; it just hasn't always been horror. A former journalist who worked beats for THE STAR NEWSPAPERS in Chicago's southern suburbs has also contributed to PEOPLE, THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, and HIGH FIDELTIY. Though he left newspaper reporting after a couple of years, he continued writing the music review column he had started, called "Pop Stops," for the next 20 years. "The archives are still online at www.pops tops.net .
My personal fiction website,
www.johneverson.com
, originally started in 1996 as the place for me to archive my music columns," he says. "Eventually, after I started posting some fiction there and an occasional blog, I split the site into

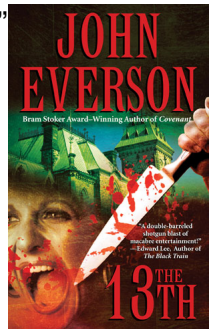
two separate ones."

Over the years Everson's contributed columns and review articles to DOORWAYS, TANGENT, BLOODSONGS, WETBONES, TALEBONES, CROSSROADS and other publications. He's been writing short stories since 1993. His first novel, COVENANT, was published in 2004 by Delirium Books. A year later, it won him a Bram Stoker Award, the genre's highest honor, and was later picked up by Leisure Books. His shorts have been published in France, and his first two books in Poland.

He's still waiting to hit the silver screen. "So far I have had nothing optioned, though I've had a couple independent filmmakers recently look at some of my short fiction for potential film ideas," he says. "And John Borowski, a Chicago filmmaker who made the serial killer documentaries H. H. HOLMES and ALBERT FISH, has shot a book 'trailer' for THE 13TH, which I suppose stands as the first translation of my fiction to film. I'd love to see one of my stories move from the page to the big screen at some point.

"I would love to see THE 13TH adapted, because in a lot of ways it owes its mood and imagery to '70s grindhouse and Eurohorror films. It has the whole 'what's going on in the basement' thing going on, with lots of dark spaces, occult candles, red Xs, women in the shadows being sacrificed to dark forces."

He says the year before, "every Friday and Saturday night I disappeared into my basement and watched movies from Argento, Rollins, Mario Bava, Jess Franco, Lucio Fulci and many more. I know some of that atmosphere seeped into THE 13TH, and it would be awesome to see someone translate it back to the screen."



He explains how his love for horror began, saying: "When I grew up, my parents didn't let me see a lot of horror movies, but I used to sometimes catch them secretly, late at night on a black

and white TV in my bedroom. It was like sneaking a peek into a 'forbidden' world for me to see the old horror movies presented on CREATURE FEATURES or to see the classic OUTER LIMITS and TWILIGHT ZONE programs. When I could get my hands on the magazines like FANGORIA, STARLOG and FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND (usually at a friend's, because my mother wouldn't have let that stuff in the house) it was another glimpse into this wondrous, strange world of the macabre and bizarre. Since there was no Internet at that point, magazines and late-night television were the only way to tap into this 'secret subculture.' So a lot of the impression for me wasn't because horror was so prevalent, but rather that I had to work so hard just to get a glimpse. It added a whole aura of 'forbidden' to horror movies and magazines that, as a kid, makes it doubly addictive!"

Everson's affair with horror seems to be paying off. But what does he do when he's not writing? "Well," he says, "since I'm not a full-time writer, writing is one of my hobbies. I also love gardening, cooking, watching horror movies—especially foreign films from the '70s—and writing songs (though I haven't done much of that the past couple years because I've been focused on the novels). I have been in a handful of garage bands over the years, most of which never left the garage. My musical passion, in the end, is ultimately more about creating new songs than performing them."

Everson's life's passion, however, has always been horror. Some might call it a match made in hell. He's currently wrapping up the third story in what is planned to be a three-story book from Delirium and finalizing the plot outline for what he hopes will be his third book for Leisure, called PUMPKIN MAN.

"I've worked in horror in a variety of capacities because I love the genre, and I love being creative," he says. "I love horror and the macabre, and I hope to always contribute something to the genre that gives people the kinds of chills that made me want to become a horror writer. That's why I sign all of my notes with a 'Yours in Dark Arts' tag. I love the creepy, whether it's in the visual, musical or prose format."