

Filmmaker talks “TERROR” documentary “CREEP!”

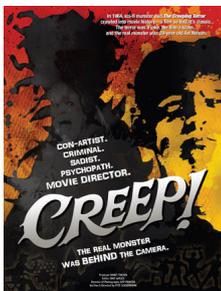
Written by Mark McLaughlin

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Usually, the most terrifying aspect of any horror movie is its creature. But as Pete Schuermann (pictured), writer/director of the forthcoming documentary CREEP!, reveals, the most frightening facet of the 1964 camp classic THE CREEPING TERROR wasn't its human-gobbling alien visitors. It was in fact the director, 29-year-old con artist Art (A.J.) Nelson, a.k.a. Vic Savage, a.k.a. Arthur White.

“A.J. Nelson was a chameleon of cosmic proportions—in many ways the true monster behind the original film,” Schuermann, owner of Monster Zero Animation and FX, tells Fango. Together with producer Nancy Theken and editor Dave Wruck, he explores the origins of TERROR and the cinematic malpractice of its creator in CREEP! While making TERROR, Nelson roped many trusting people into his web of weirdness, and Schuermann says the goal of his movie is to connect the dots between a horrible movie and its apparently psychotic maker.



“What emerged is a story about a man who saw the human desire for creative collaboration as a very potent kind of catnip,” Schuermann says. “And he dangled that catnip masterfully to achieve his own ends—which was making money any way he could.”

THE CREEPING TERROR tells the tale of a spaceship that lands on Earth with alien passengers—creatures reminiscent of Chinese New Year dragons, in that they're composed of tarps with performers underneath, topped with artificial heads. But while the Chinese monster visages are artfully sculpted, the heads of TERROR's aliens are shapeless masses adorned with Slinky-like whiskers. Schuermann first saw the film in 1980 when he was a teenager living in Montrose, Colorado. “My brother and I, after months of intense frustration with the limited entertainment choices afforded through local TV, had finally found a program that featured genre films: SCREAM THEATER, which aired Saturday nights.” He fondly remembers the night

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when TERROR was featured: “We were in absolute hysterics. In reflection, a definite sense of unreality pervaded the entire experience; we had never heard of it, much less been witness to a movie that was *entirely* narrated.”

Years later, Schuermann learned of the film’s incredible history. “Harry Medved, co-author of THE GOLDEN TURKEY AWARDS, was also a huge fan of THE CREEPING TERROR,” he says. “Thanks to the Medved brothers’ follow-up book, SON OF GOLDEN TURKEY AWARDS, I was able to learn TERROR’s backstory. They had an entire chapter dedicated to the movie, which described in detail Art Nelson’s efforts to make it and hustle people.”



That book inspired Schuermann to make CREEP! To gather information for the documentary, Schuermann and Theken decided that TERROR star and key investor Bill Thourlby (pictured left) would be the logical place to start, and Schuermann contacted Paul Parla, author of a past interview with Thourlby. “Paul was kind and supportive and offered some routes to try and connect with Bill,” Schuermann recalls. “He also provided us with further background on the production and gave us many more connections to people involved. Basically, we owe much to Paul and his researcher Eric Huffstutler, as they had already gathered up a wealth of information.”

In time, the CREEP! team tracked down Thourlby. “We met this witty, still handsome elder statesman at the New York Athletic Club,” Schuermann says. “His interview was golden, just as we had hoped.” From that point on, getting people involved was a surprisingly easy process. “We would send an e-mail or make a phone call and see if those people we had found would agree to go on camera. In almost every case, the answer was yes.”

To date, the CREEP! team has also interviewed screenwriter Allan Silliphant, actor Byrd Holland, Nelson’s ex-wife Lois Wiseman, FX guru Richard Edlund (creator of TERROR’s title sequence!), Harry and Michael Medved, Ain’t It Cool News “Head Geek” Harry Knowles, Parla, Huffstutler and Bonnie Callahan, friend to monster designer Jon Lackey. Originally slated for completion in late 2011, CREEP! may come in ahead of schedule much earlier in the year, owing to the enormous enthusiasm the project has received. You can watch the trailer below, and visit the film’s website [here](#) .

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