

A Conversation with Faith & The Muse, Part One

Written by Thom Carnell

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Somewhere along the development of the horror “scene”, a connection was made and “horror” and “metal” became inextricably linked, and for many fans – synonymous. That connection, while suitable for certain scenes of violence or pursuit, may seem fair, but there is another level that is largely ignored by horror aficionados and that is dark music of a more ethereal and melancholic tone.

Take for example, a ghost story. As the specter floats down the hall, its arms reaching out to embrace and perhaps steal your soul, somehow the dulcet tones of Metallica just don't adequately fit the bill. Instead, the plaintive wail of a cello or the soft drone of a synthesizer seems more suitable as accompaniment for the inherent fear of the moment. Dark, ethereal music just doesn't get the respect it deserves in the genre mostly because fans simply aren't aware of it.

Since 1992, Faith and the Muse (William Faith & Monica Richards) – a duo known largely for their involvement in the Gothic underground scene – have been making music that not only touches the heart, but conjures the imagery of unearthly netherworlds in which all things dark and beautiful are possible.

FANGORIA: Let's start by getting some background on the two of you.

MONICA RICHARDS: I started in the hardcore punk scene in Washington, D.C. in bands like Hate From Ignorance, Madhouse, and then Strange Boutique.

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WILLIAM FAITH: I was in Los Angeles playing in a series of different bands. The one that got the most traction was called Wreckage in 1989. I then joined Mephisto Walz, which was an off-shoot of Christian Death and that was quickly followed by Shadow Project and Christian Death in 1992. When Monica and I met, Shadow Project was on the road and Strange Boutique was playing with us in Norfolk, VA. The two of us formulated a plan to put a project together and started Faith and the Muse and we've been at it ever since.

FANGO: If you were asked to describe it, how would you?

FAITH: The handle I think we are most comfortable with is "dark alternative" simply because it doesn't pigeon-hole us in any one category. There are elements of Gothic, Neo-Classical, World and Folk, some flirtations with Jazz and Avante-Garde... I like to think we're not the same band from song to song, let alone from album to album.

FANGO: Your music can at times be almost cinematic and I know you've had music in films and television before. Was that a good experience for you?

RICHARDS: It's always been a good experience because it's like, 'gee, about time.' We know that there are some songs of ours that could easily be in major films if the right person actually heard the music.



FAITH: With "Cantus" in particular, that one's been waiting for some sort of massive ceremony

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theme in some film.

FANGO: You had a few songs in CHILDREN OF THE CORN 666?

RICHARDS: Yeah, they took three songs.

FAITH: They took three and used two. They used "Cernunnos" in the film twice and then "The Sea Angler" was used for the end credit roll. We were told that the director was a fan and that was how that came about.

FANGO: Now what about NCIS?

FAITH: We've had cues on six different episodes.

RICHARDS: That's another case where they just picked existing tracks and said, "We could really use this." It would be so wonderful if we actually scored a film that we believed in though.

FAITH: The actual opportunity to write music specifically for a film... that's something we've dreamt of for ages.



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FANGO: What about this Japanese film, RPG (aka RePlay Girls)?

RICHARDS: It's fascinating for us that someone from Japan was asking to use a track from our Japanese-influenced album. [laughs] They wanted to use "The Woman Of The Snow" [a polyphonic vocal track from :ANKOKU BUTOH:] and we asked in what context? They said it was going to be used in a major fight scene which I thought sounded kind of beautiful, but we haven't seen it so we don't know. It could be a nice foot in the door.

FANGO: Is scoring films a direction you want to go in, or is it a something you'd want to do while still making albums as a band?

FAITH: A little bit of both, I suspect. We really do enjoy producing the music in and of its own accord for its own purpose. :ANKOKU BUTOH: was wonderful to do and I can't see letting that go any time soon. At the same time, being able to draw off of someone else's vision and create a unique work to support the images, that's something we would absolutely love to do, very much so.

FANGO: What role do you think music can have to influence and improve a film?

RICHARDS: When you get a great soundtrack, it's like a character in the film. Sometimes, music can even save a film... such as in WATERWORLD. [laughs] The soundtrack was the best thing about that film. I think people buy a soundtrack because it brings back the feelings they had while they were watching a film they love... It brings back the overall experience again. The right soundtrack with the right film can be an amazing and complete experience. It's the same thing if you have particular songs. It's great when you see a movie and they do a great job of putting the right song in the right place.

FANGO: Quentin Tarantino's been doing that for years now...

FAITH: I'm a big fan of the way Guy Ritchie uses music, the way he grabs classic tracks from a variety of eras; "Golden Brown" by The Stranglers in SNATCH, for example. You can have a song that may have been forgotten that hits at just the proper point in a film and really

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reconnects you to that moment. So, yeah... the use of pop songs in film works great, but when it comes to score, it's a whole different experience. It only takes one bad score for you to understand exactly how important it is. I don't know when the last time was that anybody watched LADYHAWKE, but that one goes down in memory as about as bad as it can get.

FANGO: You've both done projects either solo or with other people. Were those done to feed a part of you that the band didn't and will we see more of that stuff?

FAITH: Will you see more? Yes. However, is it intended to feed something that the band isn't? I don't know that I would couch it that way. However loose the definition is, we both understand the parameters of what Faith and the Muse is to us. We've been very honest with the music in as much as we've never created something out of obligation or just to have a record to sell. We've always waited until we've had something to say. So, I'd say the other projects occur when there is a hiatus in what the band is doing. For us to agree to do a Faith and the Muse work, we both have to be on the same page and inspired and ready to roll forward with it. If one of us isn't, then we'll wait. Sometimes that gives us leeway to do other projects. Other times, there's just something else we want to say that we didn't think would necessarily work within those parameters. The impetus may be different, but it's not because we find Faith and the Muse limiting in any way.

TO BE CONTINUED...

{comments on}