

Gay of the Dead: Dark Arts photographer April A. Taylor

Written by Sean Abley
Sunday, 27 February 2011 09:42



To wrap up Women in Horror Month, I've found the most elusive of creatures—the horror lesbian! Just take a tour through photographer April A. Taylor's website, and you'll find blood and women in peril to satisfy even the most voracious of gore-lovin' eyeballs. Much like me, Taylor (pictured) is a complete horror geek, so this interview is more of a conversation than your traditional Q&A. Warning: Readers may be exposed to high levels of nerd.

SEAN ABLEY: Give me a little bit of your background. As a child, were you a horror fan?

APRIL A. TAYLOR: Michael Jackson's THRILLER video came out when I was 6, and I fell in love with it. I loved the zombies, I loved the makeup, I loved the horror—as soon as I saw it, I was hooked. I started watching all the old Universals, all the old Hammers, and then shortly after that the original NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET came out, and there was no going back at that point. You know how most people have pictures from teen magazines on their walls and whatnot when they're growing up? I had posters of Freddy Krueger.



ABLEY: Awesome.

TAYLOR: Back when the fifth movie [THE DREAM CHILD] came out, they did a 900 number, a trivia contest where you could win a Freddy Krueger prize pack. I was the person who won that. So that's how obsessed I've been. Every single new thing I find in horror, I love even more. At a very not-appropriate age, I discovered Clive Barker, fell in love with him and just kept going.

ABLEY: I was so enamored of the THRILLER video. MTV showed it every hour for a while, and I watched it so many times, I know where people are making mistakes. I know when one of the dancers falls in the background, or where the dancers are doing the moves wrong. I'm obsessed with it, so I understand.

TAYLOR: I still think it's the greatest achievement, not just in music videos, but in short filmmaking, in horror, like, ever. It's amazing. I think before that I had a vague idea there was horror because I have an older brother. And I can remember at one point I walked into the room and he was watching, probably a FRIDAY THE 13TH, and I saw a scene where a machete goes through an eye. And instead of getting grossed out or freaked out, I was like [*ma*
kes a "baby is amazed" sound
] and kind of cocked my head to the side. So from the time I was born, basically—I think I was born to love horror.

ABLEY: What's the horror scene like in Detroit? Conventions? Indie films? What's going on there these days.

TAYLOR: Detroit is getting back into horror. Many years ago—I was probably 10 or 12—we had a FANGORIA *Weekend of Horrors* convention here. Then nothing, for many, many years. Four years ago the first new horror convention popped up [Motor City Nightmares], and I'm actually one of the guests [this year]. And there are a lot of independent horror projects going on in the area right now.

ABLEY: I know there's a big gay horror community. But is there a big lesbian horror community?

TAYLOR: That's an interesting question. There was an article that was done on my work by [Bi
g Gay Horror Fan](#)
. I don't know if you're familiar with him...

ABLEY: I'm actually friends with Brian Kirst. I lived in Chicago for about 10 years, and Brian and I did theater stuff together back then.

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TAYLOR: Well, Brian's a great guy. He did a piece on my work, and ever since he did that it's been interesting. I have been introduced to more lesbians in the community who like horror, but I don't tend to hear from as many of them or see as many of them as I do gay men who are into horror. I don't know what that's all about, to be honest, but there's definitely a community; I just don't think there's a huge community.

ABLEY: I would think your work would appeal, if not to lesbians, to the pan-sexual Goth girls.

TAYLOR: Yeah, you could say that! A convention I did locally called Detroit Fanfare renamed me from "Dark Art of April A. Taylor Photography" to "April A. Taylor Goth Girl Photos." [

Laughs

] According to Facebook, 57 percent of my fans are female, which is great.

ABLEY: How did you get those quotes from the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET folks?

TAYLOR: I've met all of them. I'll back up a few years. I don't know if you're familiar with Fear Fest—they're kind of a bad name right now in the horror-convention world because of the whole Camp Blood thing. [*Camp Blood organizer John Gray has been under fire recently about deceptive advertising of convention guests who appear to not have been actually booked—Ed.*]

But Texas Fear Fest had a show, and it was a NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET reunion. The last time I was in LA, I had taken pictures of the actual ELM STREET house, as it had been rehabbed. I took those into the show, and Robert Englund was all excited, and he introduced me to the Nightmare Gloves guys and I did some shooting for them—and that's where I met Lisa Wilcox. Now we end up being guests at the same shows, so that's pretty cool.



ABLEY: What's your favorite NIGHTMARE film?

TAYLOR: Probably the original, but if not that, WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE. I didn't like what he did with Freddy's makeup in that movie, but aside from that, I think it was the most inventive storytelling, and the most interesting and compelling movie since the first one.

ABLEY: Any current horror flicks you're drawn to?

TAYLOR: The last really good film I saw in the theater was BLACK SWAN, which is almost a horror movie, because it had so many dark twists and turns. The last sort of quote-unquote horror movie I saw on DVD was BURIED. Did you see that?

ABLEY: I can't because I have claustrophobia...

TAYLOR: Then don't watch it! [*Laughs*] I have a strong interest in campy or cheesy horror movies as well, movies that are so bad they're good, that you can make fun of. My actual comedy gold movie of the last year and a half is HUMAN CENTIPEDE.

ABLEY: I loved HUMAN CENTIPEDE!

TAYLOR: Comedy gold! So many people are, "Oh, it's gross!" No! It's comedy gold! [*Laughs*] There's something about that movie to me—it's good, and it's also funny, and I just love it. And Ashley (C. Williams), you know the "middle," she's an amazing girl, she's great. I love that movie.

ABLEY: Be honest—you have a crush on the middle of the human centipede.

TAYLOR: No, I know her [*laughs*]. If you go on the website, you'll see there's a picture of her

wearing my T-shirt.

ABLEY: I think she's truly good in that film. And I think the genius of that film is that it's not really gory, but you still wince. You're so uncomfortable at what's going to happen. It's one of the few movies where I feel the long buildup is actually effective, as opposed to just stalling for time. I mean, when he's describing what he's going to do to them? That's almost the worst part of the movie!

TAYLOR: The best thing I've seen yet, I just found it a couple of days ago—the HUMAN CENTIPEDE Holiday Cookies. [*Laughs*] I kid you not. It's the funniest thing ever.

ABLEY: I remember going to see that film. I'd heard all about it, and went to a press screening. Walking into that film, I had the same feeling I had walking into UNITED 93. I didn't know if I was ready for it. I honestly didn't know if I was ready for the horrible events that were about to unfold. And then I came out of it and I thought it was genius. Switching gears...HIGH TENSION? Thoughts?

TAYLOR: I don't really remember all the details, but I do remember thinking, at the end of the movie, that it wasn't as good as I thought I would be. For some reason I was disappointed in it. It could have been the place I was in the day I watched it. But I don't remember being overwhelmed by it in a good way by any means.

ABLEY: There's the whole lesbian-content thing, the lesbian-crazy-person situation. Did that affect you in any way, good or bad?

TAYLOR: You know, I kind of look at that as it is what it is. You're going to have the crazy person of any gender and of any sexuality in different roles. I don't think I looked at it as "Oh, the lesbian crazy person..." I think I looked at it as "Oh, this chick's crazy and she happens to be gay."

ABLEY: I personally loved HIGH TENSION. I think it was amazingly well done. But I feel like I'm one of the few. So many people hated the twist at the end.



TAYLOR: Now sometimes I'll watch something again, and be like, "Oh, that's so much better than I thought..." That happened with *CABIN FEVER*. First time I saw that, I hated it. But when I watched it again, I was like, "Oh, wait a minute, this is actually really good, and part of this movie is comedic gold as well..." And now it's one of my favorite movies. Maybe I should watch *HIGH TENSION* again.

ABLEY: I hated *CABIN FEVER*, and never understood why *FANGORIA* went to the mat for that movie. I just think it's a mess.

TAYLOR: Did you stay for the credits?

ABLEY: I did.

TAYLOR: That part was funny! [*Laughs*]

ABLEY: Eh...

TAYLOR: There's two scenes in that movie—stylistically, from a cinematography standpoint—that kind of inspired me in the way I look at certain things, and that's probably why I like the movie so much now. I tend to notice that more than whatever else is going on, but that makes sense because that's what I do for a living.

ABLEY: Speaking of influences, who are yours?

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TAYLOR: Many people who aspire to be photographers spend a lot of time looking at other people's work, looking at the quote-unquote masters and things like that. I never really did that. I came out of the womb with a camera in my hand. I was taking pictures from the second I could.

ABLEY: Where do you hope to go with your photography? Would you like a career that becomes solely about the "Dark Arts" stuff, or would you like to diversify?

TAYLOR: I do enjoy some of the diversity, but I would definitely like it to become more and more of the "Dark Art" material, because that's what allows me to express what's in my imagination, and express a lot of my critique on society. Most of my pieces are actually metaphors. A lot of people don't realize that, and that's totally fine. I figure if you want to look at it as just horror and blood on a hot chick, that's fine. But that's not all it's about; there's a lot more going on.

ABLEY: What's a good example of that?

TAYLOR: "Loss of Innocence" [2nd photo above]. The girl represents the beaten-down spirit of the city of Detroit, and the blood on her hands is the literal blood on the hands of the bad politicians for all the corruption and all the things that went wrong. Nobody gets that, but that's what it's about. [*Laughs*]



ABLEY: Single? Dating? Married?

TAYLOR: I'm dating.

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ABLEY: Have you found another horror lesbian? Or is there a nonstop campaign to get her on board with horror?

TAYLOR: [*Laughs*] She's not really into horror. But she likes my work. We actually met at a show. She was attracted to the "Post-Apocalyptic Princess" photo [3rd photo above], and we started talking and never stopped.

ABLEY: So what's on deck?

TAYLOR: Over the next six months to a year, I have a lot of different sets I have in mind. I don't usually talk about them too much in advance. But some of them are continuations some of the fan favorites, including a big twist on the "Mine" set [pictured left], which will be interesting because that's been the most controversial set. I'll be interested to see how people react to that twist. Some of my stuff was featured in a short film called CathARTic by Devanny Pinn, which will be coming out at the Viscera Film Festival. And then I'm signed on to do appearances at multiple shows around the country for the rest of the year. In October I'm going to be at [ZomBcon](#) in Seattle.

ABLEY: Super-jealous! Say "Hi" to the zombies for me!

You can find out more about April's photography at her [website](#) and join her Facebook page [here](#)

Become a Gay of the Dead Facebook stalker [here](#) !

Get your RDA of gay horror tweets [here](#) !

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