



- HOME | INDAILY | ISSUES | NEWS | BLOG | COLUMNS | A&E | MUSIC | CALENDAR | GUIDES

- columns: Outtakes, Winners & Losers, Rants & Raves, The Last Word
news: Cover Story, The Buzz, News, News of the Weird
a & e: A&E Features, Music, Hot Times, Community Outreach
monthly guides: Health & Wellness, Stay Local
blogs: Rick's Blog
extras: Best Of The Coast 2009, Power List 2010, Eat Guide 2010, Green Matters 2010, 2010 Rising Stars, 2010 Law Guide, Stay Local 2010, 2010 Lush Guide

CULTURE | August 17, 2006, Vol. 6, No. 33 (Left Behind Part 3: Education) E-mail this to a friend

Weird Science

by Sam Baltrusis

LOCAL FILMMAKER REANIMATES 'FRANKENSTEIN'

Milton-based filmmaker, John R. Hand, has the nervous, Woody Allen neurosis thing down. Promoting the debut of his full-length horror flick, "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare," the 27-year-old actor-director is hiding behind his retro, jet-black haircut and wire-rimmed glasses.

Hand can't keep his hands still.

"It came in a weird way," he says, talking about the inspiration behind the film he shot in downtown Pensacola and near his home in Milton. "I was helping a friend transfer his Super 8 home movies to video. There was something about the format that really intrigued me and it brought back memories of when I was a kid and when I would collect old bits of projectors and cameras."

Similar to the "mad scientist" protagonist in his film, Hand pieced together an old-school Super 8 camera from the hardware parts he stored in his garage.

"It seemed like an interesting format to tell a really strange story," he says, again emphasizing the word "strange." "I describe it as a fantastic film, having one foot in the past and one foot in the future. It's dreamlike and kind of in that unknown zone—in that unknown vector—and I thought Super 8 would be an interesting way to visually tell the story."

In a contemporary twist on the "Frankenstein" tale, Hand plays Victor Karlstein, a brilliant young scientist who finds himself falling into an abyss of personal turmoil and professional stress after a female patient dies while under his care. Determined to keep his love interest and patient alive, Karlstein uses a mechanically enhanced reanimated corpse to murder young women in order to furnish raw parts for her new body.

Hand says audiences so far have been polarized about his experimental exploration of the aggressive male psyche gone terribly awry.

"People either really love it or really hate it," he says, adding that the Pensacola Bay International Film Festival initially expressed interest in screening the film in November but felt it may be "too weird" for local filmgoers. "I don't think a film like this has been shot in Pensacola before. It has a cohesive rhythm to it but it doesn't necessarily follow a traditional mold."

While the plot suggests an overt retelling of the Shelley classic, Hand insists that the inspiration behind "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare" is more from the Euro-cult horror films from the '60s/'70s and less from the stitched-up green Freudian id people know from the 1930s Boris Karloff movies.

"The weird joke of the title is that I got it from this Spanish werewolf film called 'Frankenstein's Bloody Terror,'" he explains. "It was re-titled in the United States and has nothing to do with Frankenstein."

However, the Full Sail-trained director did pull some source material from Shelley's monster masterpiece.

"There's a chapter in the book that actually has a nightmare and I work that into the film," he remarks. "There's a segment where I take that chapter and have the lead actress using William S. Burroughs' cut-up technique—read the text from 'Frankenstein' backwards and forwards."

The result is a schizophrenic romp into avant-garde horror reminiscent of David Cronenberg and David Lynch's early works.

"The film does have a nightmare, which is odd because the whole film is a nightmare," he says, letting his neurotic, hand-waving alter-ego take over. "It's a nightmare inside a nightmare. I mean, the film itself is a dream so I really don't understand what I was thinking at all."

The young filmmaker looks up after deconstructing his dream-within-a-dream sequence. Hand smiles as if he's having an epiphany mid-sentence. "I guess it was a stupid idea," he says with a laugh. "A nightmare within a nightmare within a nightmare? I know it sounds weird."

sam@inweekly.net

What: John R. Hand's "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare"
When: 11:30 p.m. Saturday, August 26
Where: Silver Screen Theatre, 7280 Plantation Road.
Cost: \$2
Details: 476-7469 www.pulsingcinema.com

