http://www.cinephelia.com/john_r_hand_012007.asp

3 captures Go 19 Oct 2007 - 21 Feb 2016

cinerheria.com isual perversion in which films are the preferred visual object

w/ John R. Hand

of The Mind?

Uninitiated

D.V.D.

1997 L.D. vs. 2007

What Are The Shadows

Through A Lens Darkly w/ Joseph Conrad III

Russ Meyer for the

Suggest One! Search

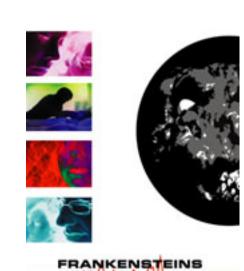
2 ? **8**

Reviews Daily

News/New Reviews About Us Contact Us Message Board Reviews v Interviews

Shadows of The Mind John R. Hand: Mad Scientist

For fans of surreal, experimental and head cinema the present day is tough. Really, really tough. It seems now that the mind benders of the 60's and 70's have almost become extinct. Films do exist that push your mind, but they have forgotten how important imagery is to the final mix. Every once in a while though an experimental film is made that makes you remember the days of lost cinema. "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare" is a horror film that brings fans of head cinema along for the ride. The film is really one of a kind and not something that you would expect to come with a 2005 tag on it. The film as in our top 5 indie film list of 2006 and has garnered itself buzz on the Internet. John R. Hand took some time off of his journey into cultdom to answer some questions for Cinephelia.com. CD: "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare" is a thinking man's horror film. Is there any words of advice you'd like



to give a viewer before they begin the "FBN" experience?

JRH: I'm of two minds about the question really, because I'm not really into director introductions and whenever I've shown the movie for an audience I always tried to get out of introducing it because I really didn't have any idea what exactly to say that the film didn't say for me and since I play the main character it felt kind of weird breaking the illusion by having this real person stand up before everyone while this other person who looked similar was being projected on the wall. I guess that's getting a little picky and weird but there's something about breaking that illusion, you know? I guess it's kind of part the whole "experience" aspect of the thing. So in spite of my fear of destroying any illusions I'd probably tell any viewer of Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare to simply watch the film with an open mind and at very high

BLOODY NIGHTMARE TIME "_A COLUMN_"- JOS LIMBON, MARTY DVD

CD: You not only wrote and directed "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare", but you also starred in the film. Was this planned from the start and something that you will be doing again?

JRH: I'm not sure if I always set out to play this main role of Victor Karlstein from the start but very early on I realized that I didn't have anyone else that I could rely on to show up when I needed them and it had always been a little dream of mine to play this kind of mad scientist because maybe I related on a personal level to some dimension of that character type. So I was writing the thing, playing this lead guy and suddenly it just caused the film to go in this vaguely autobiographical direction; maybe it always wanted to be that way. On a lesser note, I'd always admired what Melvin Van Peebles had done with writing, directing and starring in Sweetback so I think was an big inspiration as well. I think the positive aspect of acting in the lead was that I knew I was going to show up and I could go into very improvisational directions where I could invent or rewrite scenes on the spot and basically shoot them at any time of the day I felt like it but in a way I was wearing so many hats that I lost that sense of detachment with the performance that I probably needed as the director/editor. So I gained a certain sense of security and lost a bit of clarity. Ultimately I think the film was small enough in scope that this didn't affect it negatively but I'm not sure if I'd ever want to play the lead again. CD: Are you kidding me, you nailed the role of the mad scientist. Let's talk about the film making process.

Take me from the time you thought about the film to the time you finished the final edit. Did it take you longer than expected, or were you surprised at the time frame you accomplished the project?

JRH: I would estimate that it took roughly a year from the original idea which was around April or May of 2005 to completion of the final edit which was around May of 2006. I'm not sure it surprised me that it took this amount of time and in fact if certain things hadn't slowed me down I probably would've been able to finish the film months sooner. I think in a way I probably could've finished the film a good five months earlier if around July/August that horrible weather hadn't wrecked the Gulf Coast and caused me to lose a few actors because they were just interested in other things. So I had to re-group and find tons of new people which took me until the end of October and then throughout those last three months of the year I shot the balance of the scenes with these new people (all the while doing lots of research and development on color grading the video and getting these video and film formats of varying quality to live together) and then worked throughout the beginning of 2006 shooting little inserts of hands and eyeballs by myself (again, being the lead actor I could do this easily), editing the whole thing and most importantly working constantly on this 5.1 audio mix for months and months. So I guess given that I was doing all this by myself, a year doesn't sound too long; it almost sounds way too short, but I think many tiny "weekend" projects that stretch on for a long period of time never get finished and I think that's just terrible.

JRH: I think the phrase "take it back" is very appropriate in my case

CD: One of the things that encapsulated me from the start, and an aspect of the film was the film stock. Why



because with Super 8 in a way I was getting in touch with many of the things which I was interested in as a kid, all these old cameras and things that I had kind of thrown in a closet somewhere when I couldn't get it all to work together years ago when I didn't have the money for film. Suddenly in 2005 I found myself transferring someone's 8mm home movies to video and realizing that the format, with it's texture and vintage appearance, would be a perfect vehicle to make a horror movie in a unique way and it all came flooding back to me, the Super 8 movie that I'd watched as a kid like Dead Next Door, Darkness, Kenneth Anger movies, stuff like that. Also in mid-'05 there were already rumblings about Kodak discontinuing their excellent fine-grain color reversal stock, Kodachrome, and by the time I started placing orders for Kodachrome-40 they'd already stopped producing the film and they

in the direction of having an excuse to experiment with the stock before it was gone forever. So to sum it up, I guess there's something about Super 8, particularly reversal and most particularly the practically-defunct Kodachrome process, which has a certain life about it that I really liked. I think the grain of 8mm leaves the viewer feeling like they've had a stronger connection to the physical media of the film. You're just forced to take it all in and stare at all these moving grain patterns inside the image, like standing really close to some painting and looking at all the brush strokes. It's definitely a very stylized look. CD: I like the way we all as adults find things that bring out our inner child, things from the past that used to amaze us...but we really didn't know why. When was the point in your growing up where you knew that you wanted to somehow make films? Is it just a feeling that you believe someone has inside of them naturally?

announced that in 2006 they were going to cease processing the stock in their Swiss lab, so that prodded me

JRH: I think this question that you pose is, again, one of those eternal questions of "why we do what we do," and it's this question that everyone can't find a concrete answer to but they continually want to ask it because I guess they have to ask it. This whole question has always made me nervous for some reason; you see a form

of it all the time on job applications and college entrance forms and the like, "why do you want be in this class?" or "why do you want this or that" and it's probably a character flaw in me personally but I feel in some ways that I want to give an honest answer to this question and not what people want to hear. There's also something within me that wants to give you a "new" answer, to find something within myself that will satisfy this question of why I do what I do, and not the same old "I grew up loving films and I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else." That's a really stupid answer really, and for movies it's potentially dangerous because maybe a ten-of-a-tenth-of-a-tenth of the people who honestly have that answer to your question really can't make any substantial film because they don't have the means to. Almost every film you see, from low to high, has been either made by someone whose family was rich or at least ingratiated themselves with someone rich and influential, someone who was able to get caught up in the synergy of a certain "in" crowd, or generally some kind of brown-noser of some sort. Really, to put it very simply, the bad guys, especially in America. So American movies today are generally made by the bad guys, whatever their intentions are, and I think they always have been. I hope your readers don't mistake this kind of comment as me being bitter or anything but it's more a sense of honesty which, I admit, is a kind of character flaw in such a ridiculous entertainment industry built on illusion at every level. So I don't really have a solid answer to this question, only that I think personally I was caught up as a very

very Chauncey Gardner-esque in a way. I think some of this weird accent I have is from television. I think when I was about ten or eleven I really wanted to do special effects but it seemed like I kept going more in the direction of doing everything myself as I got older so that camera and directing and writing (I was always writing) kind of came along with that, and I think on a tiny super-8 and video shoot it's just barely possible to everything yourself, probably not the perfect way of doing things but definitely valid to some extent. CD: Once "FBN" was edited and complete was the film submitted

young child in cable television and I almost think I half-taught myself the English language through television,



to any festivals? How did you go about pushing your film? JRH: With this question, too, I'm caught between the wretched

sameness of the stock answer and honesty of someone's who's been trying to get my film out there for over six months, every day, and has reached a small degree of success with it like getting it in New York's Pioneer Theater for a week and getting reviewed (and mostly panned) by Variety and just about every major New York Newspaper. I think it's kind of gratifying when the New York Times tells you to stuff it; actually they were slightly kinder than that but still, its fun to get slammed by all these

film on DVD through Unearthed Films so I kind of gave up on pursuing more festivals. The whole film festival issue is a very complex and highly emotional one because on one hand you've a got a festival with finite resources dealing with more and more entries every year than the year before and on the other you've got a filmmaker (who is admittedly biased and a little selfish and perhaps a bit unrealistic because in a way he/she kind of, well, MUST be) trying to get his work out there and do his or her best yet often feeling a lack of communication with the festival which he/she is basically supplying free product to (and often with free publicity materials and whatever else they may send). So even though the few festivals I was accepted into treated me extraordinarily well there is this feeling as a filmmaker that you shouldn't complain about the ones you didn't get into or the ones where you had the sinking suspicion that your DVD or VHS screener was never screened and thrown into the garbage the second before the rejection letter or email was sent (if one was ever sent at all) because there's this feeling that you're kind of sending in your ticket and "entering the lottery" in a way. The thing is, I don't think one has to be too bright before it all feels less like a lottery and more like a game of three card monte when many of these smaller festivals are programming three big budget indies, an hour of short films played a 9:00 AM on Sunday and the debut film from the cousin of the brother of the board of directors. And if you're accepted, then what? Many of these smaller festivals have little to offer other than a very nice party in some odd party of the country, and I don't like traveling hundreds of miles just for nice parties. I don't really like parties, honestly, so I'm probably out of step with the whole scene, which probably isn't a particularly bad thing. I think everyone's afraid to rock the boat and see if new things will work when I think that it's in everyone's best interest that we absolutely openly discuss these issue and problems we all have with festivals and distribution

Almost immediately after I finished FBN I started sending the film out to festivals and getting almost universally rejected. There were a few very brave festivals like Atlanta Horror and The Spooky Film Festival that played the film eventually but by around August and September I'd already started working on this deal to release the

and the like, rocking the boat as much as possible in a real and substantial way, which is to say not some panel discussion in an abandoned banquet hall at 2 PM on a Saturday that five people attend. It is a vital matter ESPECIALLY for these smaller festivals who are going to play mini-Sundance and stick their fingers in their ears to drown out the complaints as they watch their festivals stagnate and grow weaker every year as more filmmakers become more selective about their entries or pull out of the scene to an extent because they realize that the entrance fees, publicity and travel expenses which they pump into these festivals are going down the drain. The entertainment industry does a very good job of killing off things that it doesn't need by attrition - think of the hundreds of unresponsive or sub-optimum film labs around the country which were consolidated, bought-out or closed shop after industrial and television production switched to video in the seventies and eighties. I'm sure many of these labs thought they could continue to coast for years to come on the backs of their dull clients but they somehow received a rude wakeup call and I think many film festivals will receive the same within the next few years. CD: Your film is coming out on Unearthed Films this year. The label is becoming pretty diverse and moving

away from it's strictly gore foundations. How was it working with Unearthed Films for the release of "FBN"? JRH: What you have to realize about Unearthed, and they get no credit for this, is that they're essentially on the vanguard of extreme J-Horror. They've done for Japanese Horror what Elite Entertainment did with their

laserdiscs, which is to say legitimize it to an extent, bring it out in the open and produce decent digital versions of product that wasn't part of some studio catalog machine and, hence, not really "bonafide." To hail The Exorcist a classic is easy, but Mario Bava's Lisa and the Devil, or even Texas Chainsaw Massacre? Suddenly when you have a decent THX copy of Night of the Living Dead you can shake it at your stuck-up movie friends just like a kid in the seventies might shake their Bohemian Rhapsody record at their parents and shout "this stuff is ART." So in their own way Unearthed has done this for J-Horror several years before the crowd really came in and finished what they started. No other company, not Image, Criterion, Fox Lorber or even Elite, no one saw the profit potential or cultural

significance of Guinea Pig, and when you think about how many of them saw the viability of even fundamental films like Tetsuo? How long did Tsukamoto's American releases suffer through sub-par presentations, no presentation at all? So this was a genre of Japanese Cinema snubbed by everyone, with only classics like Kwaiden released, perhaps films with tangential connections to Anime, but little else. Suddenly The Ring comes out and everyone's falling all over themselves to release this stuff, fourteen-year-old girls are painting their faces white and pulling their hair over their eyes when they go to the mall, and Best Buy can't stock enough of this crap on their shelves - and in a very sly move Ventura Distribution gets Unearthed Film's product into Best Buy, including their Guinea Pig DVD box set. Guinea Pig. Investigated by the FBI, written about for years, controversial, extreme, ridiculous, weird, beautiful, but now with a BEST BUY price sticker. People will look back and see this as some kind of seminal event in home video, or perhaps a sign of the Apocalypse. So in a way, I knew I had to work with these guys because they're really one of the few companies left out there with some guts that can license unknown stuff and make that leap of faith. The experience working with them has been excellent and the main guy over there, Stephen Biro, has

Begotten or something, I mean obscure one-off release from AIP (ACTION International Pictures), titles so strange I'd maybe seen the VHS box years ago but never bothered to rent it, so what I'm saying is that this company really has a good eye for obscure movies which also have a little depth and eccentricity to them.

obviously spent way too much time in video stores over the years because when we started talking he began making connections between my film and other obscure VHS releases I'd never even known - I'm not talking



contained and do as much by myself as possible, but I'm not against collaboration of any sort and I think my next film should have more collaboration along with all of the things I simply couldn't afford to do on this film either for time or money reasons. Essentially with my next movie I just want to make something a little bigger, a little better and just something on the "next level," whatever that may be.

JRH: I think it will be similar in the sense that I'd like to keep things

CD: "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare" had a week long run in New York City. How did that come about and how did that feel to see the name of your film on a marguee?

JRH: It came about because Ray Privett, the programmer for Two Boots Pioneer Theater in NY, saw the review for my film at Twitch and after I sent him a screener he liked it. I think he really, really liked it. I thought he wanted play it for a night but he ended up offering me this week of shows which gave the film a great deal of exposure. Many of the films which Pioneer book have some kind of built-in audience so for them to go out on a limb with my film was something very brave. Please don't think I'm putting anyone down, but even a place like Austin's Alamo Theater which is supposed to be so "edgy" and risk-taking was a little hesitant; they requested a screener after Pioneer booked it but they were kind of like "we'll give it to our other programmers and see if we can fit it in" but I haven't heard from them for a few months. I can understand that given that I think Alamo is a much bigger institution than Pioneer and I also think it's a pretty tough crowd and they either want to laugh or scream at a movie, very raucous. Something about that audience kind of scares me; it's liberating but almost feels like the hippy beatniks dancing around and accidentally stomping down a field of daisies, you know? My movie is a weird, frail little grainy thing and it probably couldn't support those guys, though I think the 5.1 could probably blow the theater away. Who knows, I might've been able to get into Austin's Fantastic Fest but by that time I had committed my efforts to these Pioneer shows. Quite frankly I would've understood if Pioneer had shrugged the film off or played it for a night but they really stepped up to the plate.

This was the first time I'd ever been to New York, the first time my movie's playing for a week, lots of first times. I remember walking from somewhere on Avenue C on over to where the theater was on 3rd. St. and just having this distinct feeling that this was what E.T. felt like wandering around Earth; the East Village was like a different planet. Still, I was surprised by how familiar the place was and I definitely liked New York more than Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a scary place and when I'm there I get the feeling like it's a mirage and it shouldn't exist. It was definitely a little surreal seeing FBN on the big marquee there at the corner along with the posters in the light boxes on either side of the building. I remember the last night it played, that I didn't take home the posters but they left them in all night and I walked by the place at like 3 AM, the place is all chained up, but the light box is on and the poster's there. That was an eerie feeling.

CD: We run a review site as you know. Sometimes it's hard to review someone's art primarily because you hope you have interpreted the film correctly. There has been some press reviews of your film. What is the strangest; most off the mark quote someone has given "Frankenstein's Bloody Nightmare"? JRH: It's surprised me how well some critics "got" the film, and



mediocrity. . .

even begin and end in a similar manner. Even the horrible review that I got from Variety worked in a reference to this film called Psyched by the 4D Witch and even though I wasn't consciously following this movie I actually DID in fact watch parts of it on a Something Weird clip compilation and was vaguely inspired by the psychedelic colors. Maybe he just pulled up weirdo movies and hit on this 4D, but it just feels weird. The review in the Village Voice also hit on the irony of that line of dialogue which went like "if only I'd had the proper facilities!," because in a way throughout FBN I'm kind of subtlety commenting on myself and how tiny the film is. Victor is also a doctor who's kind of obsessed with these ideals and he feels he's being steamrolled by a world that's become so "financially motivated" that it's forgotten about what's driving the money, the quality. I don't think Victor hates money but he's like me, he's like "I'm a craftsman and I want to build a sturdy table." He's not like some filmmaker taking the cash and just making something like The Fog remake, which I would consider a "wobbly table." Who says that any kind of table, even a rather bare one, has to be wobbly? But beyond Victor there's all these guys pulling his strings, enforcing the status quo of

really how many of the reviews hit many of the same points and

In the TVGuide.com review, Maitland McDonough wrote that my film contained "more scenes of aimless driving and walking around than the legendary BEAST OF YUCCA FLATS (1961)" and on a certain level that bothered me but I'm not sure if that's off the mark. For me I was using the walking moments as a way of transitioning between all these different visual tones. She also called the film "tedious and obscure," which I loved. I never got enough attention as a kid so things like that really excite me.

CD: How important is MySpace for indie films? JRH: I think it's given many smaller films a certain degree of exposure, or at least a chance for exposure, and

I'm not sure if it'll be this important in a year or so but I have a feeling that social networking sites are the way CD: If you were told by a studio that you could make one film with an unlimited budget, but it had to be a

remake of straight drama turned into a horror film what would it be. RH: You've strangled me with all of these qualifiers because first I thought about this question and I thought I'd be a jerk and tell you that I'd like to remake a documentary like Fahrenheit 911, just get a transcript of a documentary and then redo it only with little children playing all the parts or something. But as now I re-read

the question so I can't do that. I was also saying, with straight horror, I'd like to do a remake of a remake, just go off and do a new version of Texas Chain Saw Massacre just because it would be funny to see three films in a video store with the same name. Three Hitchers, three TCMs. You know, I'm only 27 years old but I can remember a time when you'd go into a video store and there was only ONE Dawn of the Dead. Damn, unlimited budget? A straight drama? I feel your question is not as far out as it seems because basically you want me to



choose a straight drama and then expand on the horrific ramifications of the scenario, which is what most modern remakes do in a sense, they kind of trot everything out and "explain" everything. Every back story is seen in vivid flashbacks, every scare punctuated by weirdo digital effects. So you see, it's very difficult to do something like Jack Clayton's The Innocents, very subdued stuff, right? Honestly I don't think we'd have a problem with most remakes if they were as interesting or as well thought-out as Cronenberg's The Fly. Certainly we can split these films off and call them "re-imaginings" but I think that's kind of stupid; call them "re-adaptations" but really, the term "remake" would suffice. I wear band-aids, watch My gut reaction is Taxi Driver, because we can take Travis Bickle and then play with all these stupid digital

effects because the pimp and everybody are actually real demonic figures in this version. Screw it, let's just be Stanley Kubrick and re-build New York like in Eyes Wide Shut, shoot it in Arizona or something. Just make NY in Arizona and shoot the remake of Taxi Driver. Silkwood might be a good one for me, because we've got an older woman being chased by these weirdo

sexual situations because she has dreams where tiny little elves are crawling around inside people and making them kill. Then you see, we find out the elves are being produced by the nuclear reactor, and the elves are really vicious guys too. I always think "tiny terror" movies are often ridiculous because even a very frail woman has the power to beat up a Shih-Tzu so like, how can Chucky take down all these full-grown men armed to the teeth? Like how does he kill that voodoo guy in part one? I enjoyed Child's Play when it came out, saw it theatrical, but come on. Child's Play 2 was the only realistic one. The thing with the elves is they come in force, they're legion, so it's like a swarm of locusts, radioactive elf locusts. I would like Kurt Russell to either reprise his original role or become an elf, perhaps the model for all the digital elves.

employers so we've got people in space suits and an older woman that I can hopefully put into all these odd

Finally, I think you could re-do Pretty Woman and have the prostitute turn out to be either some eerie time witch or Richard Gere's mother, his eerie time witch mother. Also, I have this feeling that they should have sex and this causes them to be beamed to another planet like at the end of Lifeforce.

"Frankenstein's Bloody nightmare is slated for April release from Unearthed Films. I promise its something that

you fans of the experimental and horror will not want to pass up. Until you can find your copy to put on at midnight, there is a MySpace page for the film with the latest news. We wish John R Hand all the luck and plan on seeing more from the young director down the road. Clay Dempsey

Co-Founder Cinephelia.com