

Horrorfest 2012: Still scary as hell

 By [Johann M. Smith](#)

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Let me open up with a question that's a kind of joke: What's worse, a person addicted to horror or porn flicks? Bizarre how both instantly paint an undesirable stereotype hooked on entertainment we've all secretly indulged. Now think why. You have? Wonderful. Now that we've all had time to reflect and laugh at our choices of recreation, it's easier for me to ask you without any immediate satanic associations: Keen to nurture your love of horror?



Enter HorrorFest 2012, a film festival celebrating cinema's scariest moments - and, possibly, the Department of Arts & Cultures' hardest sell (and potentially also its second dirtiest little secret). Since its inception eight years ago, it's refused to take the hint, according to its founders: it's only become more stubborn. This year promises to be its most chilling yet, it marks the 90th anniversary of the Holy Grail of horror flicks: Nosferatu. Still keen? Saying yes doesn't give the Devil ownership of your soul. It might, however, be your first step towards becoming a bona fide scare addict.

You made it past the introduction

If you're reading this, congratulations: you made it past the introduction as a mature, open-minded citizen. Now let's introduce Paul Blom and Sonja Ruppertsberg: two enduring fans of all things horror and film, who make up one half of industrial hard-electro band Terminatrix and who are the founders of HorrorFest, here to tell you more about it. Hell yeah, they're quite alternative: piercings, tattoos, black hair and all of that, only they're also quite normal.

For your benefit, here's some random "Paul and Sonja" slice of life trivia: they own a miniature Chihuahua and, other than being called Zoltan after Dracula's hound, he's just an adorable dog; Paul is an avid gamer and other than his collection of six consoles, he's also the proud owner of the entire Twin Peaks series on video tape; Sonja is the official poster child/queen of HorrorFest, this year she will be attending as the bride of Frankenstein; both live together in Sea Point with a view of the beach, not in Observatory with a view of a graveyard; and they both love getting the hell scared out of them and sharing the experience.

A niche thing



"It's such a niche thing," said Paul, "even though everybody loves horror." He explained that SA doesn't really have the culture and most people just rent the odd DVD to get kicks. But that there's more to scary films than popular Hollywood horrors - the bulk of which aren't scary but shocking, mostly because they fit the current trend of oh-so-innocent victims suffering endless torture from textbook psychotics, who on their off days find solace rocking back and forth to the Dinkie-toy melodies of favourite nursery rhymes.

So, who usually attends HorrorFest? "You'd expect Goths and metalheads. There are some, but it's a cross-section of people from students to old grey guys," smiled Paul. He clarified that the festival isn't aimed at any hard core alternative crowd: "There's no [fake] philosophy behind it. One of the main reasons we started was to help boost the local film industry by making it possible for people to create movies they wouldn't usually be able to."

A winning recipe

A 200 percent increase in submissions since starting in 2005 verifies that they have a winning recipe, but despite

noteworthy additions, some of which are extremely rare sought-after underground cult classics, very few are local productions.

"We're dying to get local films," claimed Paul. Both remain adamant and encouraging of local talent - especially from their still-anonymous ubuntu brethren. Despite a constant battle, it's still only their second biggest problem.

Without sigh, or a second's consideration, Paul confessed: "A wall-to-wall struggle is finding sponsors, investors and affiliates." The appropriate words necessary to describe their project doesn't make it an easy sell. So, what does Paul say?

"Well, we tell them that people who watch horror movies aren't weird freaks; just regular folks who like to enjoy movies that just happen to be scary."





In their collective professional and personal experience: "[our target market] are fans of film across an extremely wide age group. But like most alternative markets people assume that it's small and needn't be bothered with. However, once you start accumulating the collective [alternative] market it makes up a large chunk of what's out there. And if you ignore all those and just go for the single big ones, you miss out on potential consumers who haven't had much access to any brands."

It's a familiar oddity overseas that's more than often produced financially beneficial (not to mention influential) results in the most liberal countries, but it still remains something abrasive and alien to most SA marketing men. Like most of local alternative culture (skateboarding, indie music, street-Afro), any progressive shift has been initiated by inexperienced aspiring entrepreneurs originating from the market they cater for (Iron Fist, we-are-awesome, Darkie Clothing). Most are successful, but limited, and it's no different with HorrorFest. However, unlike previous years, the work has started to pay off in larger sums.

And now in Joburg ...



2012 has the horror expanding to Joburg, as well as the forthcoming DVD release of *Shadow Realm* - a collection of short films featuring some of the best international short films screened at the event since its humble beginnings. Not to mention that HorrorFest has continually been an interest of the most prominent names in international alternative media circles, the most impressive of which is *Fangoria* - America's foremost horror film magazine since 1979. Not bad for a couple who've managed to gain screening rights from more than a few dozen notorious films from across the world, using only a telephone, an Internet line and the hair on their teeth.

For their eighth instalment, they're doing something really special and uniquely them: a screening of *Nosferatu*, the 1922 expressionist horror film that started it all. Directed during the silent era by FW Murnua, a 210cm German and American immigrant who had an icy obsession with film, the movie gained

instant notoriety as it was an unauthorised adaptation of Bram Stoker's Dracula. Most of the original score has been lost and this is where HorrorFest earns it trademark.

Halloween night features an original soundtrack performed live during the screening of Nosferatu, by the Makabra Ensemble - a music collective made up of Terminatrix (Paul and Sonja), Lark's Simon Ratcliffe and Sean Ou Tim, and violin sweeping madcap Matthijs van Dijk. Instruments are as widely varying as the potential murder instruments currently in your kitchen: electric guitars, standard and upright bass, keyboards, digital percussion as well as real drums, and something called a "theremin" (it exist, but not even Windows Word knows that).

Paul claimed: "We're used to people thinking that we encourage violence, but we're not like that. We're used to people thinking that underground horror is a low-budget production shot on home video, but we don't see horror as this creepy thing that dirty old men watch in their basements. It's entertainment like any other entertainment. There's a cathartic attachment in horror, usually when you get a fright you laugh afterwards.

"Across the board, we ensure that there is a certain qualitative element: each and every screening goes through a thorough checklist; we make sure that we don't upset any status quo." He humbly concluded, "I'd like to see a HorrorFest in every single town of South Africa."

No doubt, it comes with a rating of 18. By all accounts, HorrorFest 2012 can afford to be a bit more ostentatious like the Devil himself. But unlike the fevered dreams of certain persons with dim views, there are no demons waiting to possess your soul anywhere near here. Just a much needed jolt to make you go aaah! - if only for once a year.

For more go to www.horrorfest.info

The full menu on offer at Horrorfest 2012

- Cape Town: 24 October to 2 November. The Labia Theatre (www.labia.co.za)
- Joburg: 26 to 31 October. Bioscope Indie Cinema (www.thebioscope.co.za)

Movies

A great range of movies are lined up, from brand new studio releases all the way through the spectrum to very low budget indies.

The festival will open on Wednesday, 24 October with a special free sneak preview of Tim Burton's new stop-animated

movie Frankenweenie in 3D. Unlike the rest of the screenings happening at The Labia Theatre, this show will be at Ster Kinekor's 3D cinema in Cavendish, Cape Town. Seats are limited and in order to secure a set of double tickets, send the title of your favourite Tim Burton movie, and why you love the HorrorFest to: SAhorrorfest@gmail.com

This will be followed by another pre-release screening the night thereafter (Thursday, 25 October, at The Labia Theatre) - a paid sneak preview of the Sam Raimi-produced movie The Possession.

With the event's Frankenstein theme, naturally you can expect movies along that vein, but there will also be also vampire themes, zombies, serial killers and some cool documentaries. Besides these invigorating, scary, creepy and wild movies from around the globe, don't forget the four feature film-length collections of amazingly original, innovative and diverse short films (with a prizes for exceptional shorts from Visual Impact, Cosmesis and Masque, and Sound & Motion Studios).

Most of these motion pictures and shorts make their South African (and African) theatrical premieres. Full line-up announced next week.

Music

The Makabra Ensemble will perform new original soundtracks live to the screening of several classic silent films. They've done seven of these over the years, including Metropolis, The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari, The Phantom Of The Opera, Haxan, Maciste In Hell and Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde.

This year is the 90th anniversary of FW Murnau's legendary vampire film, Nosferatu. To celebrate this on Halloween night (Wednesday, 31 October), The Makabra Ensemble will perform their live soundtrack to this ground-breaking classic (and may be opening with the Frankenstein short, made in 1910). This is also the Halloween dress-up night (with prizes). DVDs of the new Nosferatu version will also be on sale. For more, go to www.terminatryx.com/makabra

Literature

The Bloody Parchment literary chapter has grown into a force of its own (overseen by [Nerine Dorman](#)). The Lounge of Horror (with the promise of horrifically brilliant cupcakes and wine) will happen on Friday, 26 October at The Book Lounge (Roeland Street, Cape Town) with a live fiction reading evening by local horror, fantasy, and thriller writers. The short story competition is open for just about another month. For more, go to www.bloodyparchment.blogspot.com or the Facebook Group.

Random House/Struik imprint eKhaya has picked up the next chapter in the Bloody Parchment collection, Hidden Things, Lost Things And Other Stories. This exciting e-book is available at various retailers and can be purchased from Amazon. (Also available at Exclus1ves.co.za and Kalahari.com). A print-on-demand version will be available soon. The first Bloody Parchment Anthology was released last year - [Download Here for FREE](#). For more go to www.shadowrealmnc.com/bloodyparchment

Alternative Market

2011 had the kick-start of the Alternative Market, featuring a range of exciting stalls.

This year it's back. Anyone with interesting, rare, strange, Halloween-related or simply super-cool merchandise or products, contact us on SAhorrorfest@gmail.com

Dark Art and Photographic Exhibition

Due to the exhibition location becoming unavailable, plans for a full-scale dark art and photography exhibition are underway for 2013.

Shadow Realm film DVD collection

Another plan many years in the works is the DVD series featuring the best and most memorable short films screened at the Shadow Realm short film chapters across the festival history (since 2005).

The mammoth task of selecting from the vast library of great short films is currently underway and ENT Entertainment is set to release it in conjunction with Flamedrop Productions and ShadowRealm. For more, see additional links below.

While it may not be ready for the HorrorFest, a DVD launch event will be arranged.

Halloween dress-up

What is Halloween without a dress-up get-together?

Every year the Halloween Dress-up Competition happens at the Makabra Ensemble live soundtrack performance (this year on Halloween night, Wednesday, 31 October). Great prizes to be won.

Zombie Walk

The HorrorFest will link up with the Cape Town Zombie Walk again. This year it is being planned for Saturday, 27 October on Cape Town's Sea Point promenade. www.facebook.com/events/269515323149643

Additional links

www.twitter.com/SAhorrorfest

www.facebook.com/events/425878747469204 (events page)

www.facebook.com/groups/198343676892121 (group page)

www.shadowrealminc.com

www.myspace.com/SAhorrorfest

Please note: Some events are still to be announced and confirmed. Also, present details contained are subject to change.

ABOUT JOHANN M. SMITH

Johann MSmith is a music journalist turned content hacker. Known as the IDMMAG launch designer, Johann specialises in entertainment, travel and social commentary. Or as he puts it: "I speak as and for companies through social and design."

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