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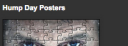
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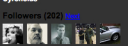


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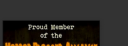
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### Chainsaw Strippers and Coal Miners: An Interview With Sevé Schelenz



Recently I had the pleasure to talk to Sevé Schelenz the Director/Producer of Peelers. A gory new indie horror film making the rounds at various film festivals. The story of Peelers involves Coal Miners, Strippers and a deadly outbreak.

How did you first get interested in film making?

After seeing films like Raiders of the Lost Ark and Star Wars I was hooked on the idea of making movies. I wanted to recreate the same excitement and joy I got from watching those flicks. Of course, easier said than done! I quickly learned the enormous undertaking that is filmmaking. But I decided to dive in and started making short videos starring my friends and family (whether they wanted to or not). Each one of my little "projects" got slightly bigger in production and, I would like to think, better, as I started learning the hard lessons that come with putting a film together. Eventually, my guidance counselor in high school came to me and asked that dreaded question, "What do you want to do with your life?" Of course, I didn't even think about my love of film. So, I avoided him as much as possible until he cornered me one day and told me that there was such a thing as a film career. At that point I was all in. I studied and graduated film at York University in Toronto and proceeded to work in the industry. Sticking to post production to pay the bills, I quickly learned a lot of the tricks from professionals on how to film. As I continued to work for the man, I found that the creative side was really suffering and so I promised myself I would get back to making my own films. So, I took all my knowledge from both school and the real world and set down to make a feature film. Skew was my first horror feature film and I went on to premiere in over 50 festivals, won a bunch of awards and has been distributed around the world. I followed this up with the horror feature Peelers which has just recently hit the festival circuit and is getting a lot of buzz. I'm certainly enjoying this time to promote the film, but, never one to stand still, I continue to develop the next few projects and we'll see what gets greenlit next.

Strippers: Coal Miners. An epidemic. That's a crazy mix! How did the story for Peelers come about?

After our first feature film Skew did its festival run and distribution, my sales agent asked me, "So, what's next?" I actually had a number of features that I was developing (both by myself and with others) but most were either comedies, thrillers, or sci-fi. He told me flat out that I should do another horror. I did have a horror film in mind, but it wasn't the forefront of my projects (and it wasn't Peelers). I asked him what he thought would be a good sell. He said, "More blood and more boobs." Well, quite honestly, that didn't interest me. I was more into anticipation-building and psychological horror. But I went away and thought to myself, "I know I can get the blood in there, no problem, but what about the nudity?" I just wasn't interested in having gratuitous boob shots. There had to be a reason for it. So, I thought, "Where would we see nudity and accept it for being there? A strip club." So I did some research and it turned out there were not a lot of stripper horror films, and of the ones I found, they just weren't that great. So, I felt there was an untapped sub-genre of horror there. I went to Devits, our screenwriter, and asked her if she would be interested in writing the script. I had three requests of her and they were: a strong female character(s) who kicked ass, a deft story and some good twists. Devits' eyes went wide and then she told me a story about an incident that happened to her while she was at a strip club in Las Vegas. From there, Peelers was born. Oh, and if you want to know that story, just ask Devits. She'll tell it best.

How did the production of Peelers go?

Production for Peelers went surprisingly well. I say "surprisingly" because not only was this a bigger production than my last feature, but it was just an overall ambitious project for an indie film on such a small budget. With so many characters, so much blood and the goal to give a good look to the film, we had a lot on our plate to get through in a short amount of time. Thankfully we had a hell of a cast and crew. The camera department alone (lead by my amazing DOP Lindsay George) was stellar and kept things moving along at a good pace and delivered amazing shots. The cast was super prepared and fun to work with and that kept the film in check. For me, surrounding myself with a lot of people who do their jobs really well, are ambitious and genuinely excited to be there is the key. Also, pre-production. I can't stress this enough, but a thorough pre-production process will help make production go smoother. So, for all you young filmmakers out there, please use your pre-production time wisely. You can avoid a lot of hassles on set if you do. Of course, there will always be surprises in production no matter how prepared you are, so just accept this too. For us, for example, our VFX Supervisor was detained by the police for allegedly having counterfeit money. Also, our SPFX Supervisor decided to over-fill the squibs on our first bullet shots of production. Ask me about these two instances and many others over a beer some time.

What challenges did you face budget wise?

Everything. Simply put, true indie films have to be creative to keep within the budget. Every department in the film is given only so much money to make it work so you not only have to be inventive in pre-production, but on set as well. One of the tricks is to try and keep everything within one shooting location. Yes, we had a bar location for Peelers, but all the rooms within that bar did not actually exist. We built fake walls for several of the rooms and had set dec fit them up. Not only that, but we doubled and sometimes tripled rooms to make it look like a different location in the bar. Another trick we did to cut costs was for the gun shots in the film. Our SPFX Supervisor, Keir Vichart, came up with a very unique way to use compressed air instead of the standard squibs for gun shots. Funny enough, in the end they look fantastic and arguably better than if we paid for the squibs. As a matter of fact, a little shout-out to Keir and his amazing SPFX team as they did some remarkable stuff on the film.

Where did the bulk of the filming take place?

We scouted for a location for Peelers for quite some time. We needed a bar to shoot in for about two weeks. This was near impossible as most bars were open for business so we could only shoot during their off hours. We figured out pretty quick that we needed a bar that was already shut down so we could have access to it 24-7. Of course, this is easier said than done. But as luck would have it, a friend of mine told me about an old country bar near his home that had been closed for some time, so we went and checked it out. It was perfect. But the owners had just sold it to another company that wanted to demolish it and rebuild within six months. Thankfully they weren't in any big rush and we were able to convince them to let us use it before demolishing it. It was absolute perfect timing. The place was ours 24-7 for two months. We couldn't have planned it better.

What's it like taking Peelers around to various film festivals?

It's been a blast taking Peelers to festivals so far. The audiences are really digging it. We've had great crowds so far and they've been really into the movie. The best part is taking a seat with the audience and watching the movie with everyone. Just seeing their reactions to the film for the first time has been awesome. At one screening, we had just sat down after introducing the film and a couple of people arrived late. They sat right behind myself and the writer, Lisa DeVita. We got to hear their comments all the way through because they didn't know we were the filmmakers. That was pretty funny. Especially during the jump scares. We have only begun our festival run and some of the best horror fests are coming up. We've actually received an early invitation to screen Peelers at one of the top horror fests in the world. The notice is so early that we can't even officially announce it! So, pretty stocked about that. Oh, and I encourage your readers to seek out the film when it's playing at a festival. Especially if someone from the film is there for the Q&A. It's an experience you won't get anywhere else.

Tell us a little about your previous film, Skew?

I really loved making Skew. It was a smaller film with an intimate cast and crew. It was a very different film than Peelers. Skew was shot as POV (or what most horror fans would like to call "found footage"). At the time, I didn't have the sort of budget or technology needed to create a "traditional" style film. As a matter of fact, I went to several festivals with Skew and when I watched many of the other "traditionally shot" films, they really stood out as looking a little off. At the time, high quality HD was not as accessible and most indie films were shot on HDV or 1080. In my opinion, this compounded with the "video look" didn't bode well for a lot of those films. Since 2011, better quality like 4K is much more accessible and many DOPs have really mastered the look of this format. So much so that you can now get away with making a good looking film and not worry about it looking too "video-ish". Sorry, went off on a tangent there... Skew did really well as it was in over 50 festivals, won a handful of awards and had distribution around the world. It really was the little film that could.

What directors have had an influence on you?

The reason I got into filmmaking was due to Spielberg and Lucas. Not only because both filmmakers knew how to create fun and exciting movies, but they genuinely loved making them. Every photo or interview I saw of them, they had this glint in their eye and it has never left them to this day. Especially Spielberg. Even at his age today and with all the films he's worked on, Spielberg has this childlike grin that says he loves what he's doing. In university, I was introduced to Tarantino. I was blown away by not only his storytelling style as a writer and director, but his knowledge and passion for film. Love or hate his films, you can't deny his love of filmmaking. I can only hope to achieve that level of movie-making one day and I'll keep working at it till I do.

What are you working on now?

Although we have a lot of work (and fun) to attend to for our film festival run on Peelers, we have a number of projects at different stages that we're working on. We have a finished script that we're shopping around right now and another one on the go. Funny enough, although we have another horror feature idea, it's early on in the stages for that one. We've been focusing on some other genres and are really pumped with what we've got. Sorry to be a little aloof on the exact subject of each, but we like to hold our cards close to our chest until a project has reached the actual production stage. Check back with us soon and we'll keep you posted.

Any advice for aspiring filmmakers?

I have this specific message that pops up on my phone every time I hang up. So, good or bad, no matter the phone call, I always see this message and it keeps me going even on the days I'd like to sleep through. It's very simple. It reads: "Never give up!" I'd like to pass that along to every young and aspiring filmmaker. This industry is very hard to work in as a creative type. There are so many obstacles to get through that you feel like you're alone in the fight. That can be very frustrating and the easy way out of it is to say, "Screw it. It's not worth it." But let me tell you, it is. If you've got a story to tell and you want to put your vision out there, then you have to work at it every single day. It will pay off for you. It's the ones who keep going that win. And remember this, even if you're not yet at the level of the game you hoped you'd be at this point in time, you're putting yourself out there and making the attempt, and that's more than most people can say.

Thanks for taking the time to talk with me.

Thanks so much for the interview, Shane. Had a blast answering your questions. I want your readers to know that if they like indie films, they need to get out and support their local film festivals. This is the best way to see the films you may never get a chance to see on the big screen anywhere else. I guarantee you will have an amazing experience seeing Peelers at a film fest! Especially if some of the cast/crew will be attending. I've been to a couple of festivals already to represent the film and the audience has really gotten a kick out of it. The bigger the audience, the better the experience. It's been a blast!

