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Sevé Schelenz's Peelters Premieres at the New Jersey Film Festival on Saturday, October 1, 2016!

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By Al Nigrin

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Here is my interview with Sevé Schelenz Director of Peelters:

Nigrin: Your film *Peelters* is all in one a grindhouse film, a gore film, a twist on the zombie genre, and a very dark comedy. Please tell us what motivated you to make this very crazy film.

Schelenz: After completing our first horror feature film *Skew*, and having a very successful festival and distribution run, my sales agent asked me, "So, what's next?" I had a number of features that I was developing (both by myself and with others) but most were comedies, thrillers and sci-fi. He told me after the success of *Skew* I should do another horror. I asked him what he thought would be a good sell. His answer: "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, "I know I can get blood in there, no problem, but what about the nudity?" I just wasn't into having gratuitous breast shots. There had to be a purpose 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 looked into, they just weren't that great. So, I felt there was an untapped sub-genre of horror there. I went to Lisa DeVita (Devits), our screenwriter, and asked her if she would be interested in penning the script. I had three requests of her and they were: a strong female character(s) who kicked butt, a deft story and some good twists. Devits was very excited as she told me a story about an incident she was "involved" in at a strip club in Vegas. And from there, *Peelters* was born. Oh, and if you want to know the story, just buy Devits a drink and ask her. She'll tell it the best.

Nigrin: The lead actor who plays Blue Jean Douglas is really smart, tough and sexy at the same time. Can you tell us more about how you found her and how you came about casting her in the lead role?

Schelenz: Our lead protagonist, Blue Jean was very tough to cast. We did have a number of very talented girls come out and read for the role but none of them really emulated what we wanted in the character. As a matter of fact, we really only had two viable options in terms of who could play her. Funny enough, Wren Walker came in late to the audition process because her boyfriend saw our ad and encouraged her to read for Blue Jean. She almost didn't come in! Luckily she did, and she nailed it. Wren just owned the Blue Jean role right off the bat. When we made our final decisions and offered her the role, she was ecstatic. Following up from that, Wren really took the time to get into character both mentally and physically. She worked out like a fiend to look the part and was always prepared on set to talk the part. Blue Jean is in almost every scene so that's a lot of prep for an actor. In addition to this, Wren and I hit the ball field and practiced some throwing and swinging of the bat to make sure everything looked as authentic as possible for the film. Oh, and speaking of authentic, Wren actually joined a few of the other actresses in doing some research ahead of time. Yes, they all went to a strip club together.

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Nigrin: Where did you shoot your film and how long did it take to complete.

Schelenz: It took us a quite some time to nail down our main location for shooting *Peelters*. We needed a bar for about two weeks without interruption. This was almost impossible as most bars were open for business so we could only shoot during their off hours. We figured out pretty quickly 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 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 had to build some false walls, a kitchen, a dressing room and an office during pre-production. Then after the shooting itself, we had some tear down and clean up time to finish things off. We couldn't have planned it better.

Nigrin: Were you influenced by the Tarantino and Rodriguez grindhouse films?

Schelenz: I'm a huge fan of Tarantino. His dialogue alone is just incredible. But what really impresses me is his love, determination and originality as a filmmaker. He has so much passion for filmmaking that it literally oozes off the screen. I definitely look to him as a source of motivation and education when it comes to filmmaking. Although people like to place films in categories I wouldn't call *Peelters* a grindhouse film. As a matter of fact, we wanted to take the film one step further and give *Peelters* a bit more of a slick and glossy look. We wanted to create our own style and go against grain to give the audience a different feel. Having said that, Rodriguez was definitely an inspiration when it came to the action. He does it like no other. What's been the biggest compliment so far for *Peelters* is that fans have actually described the film as "Rodriguez meets Tarantino." That's some pretty high praise and we're honored and stoked to be compared to these awesome filmmakers.

Nigrin: What has the response been to your film so far.

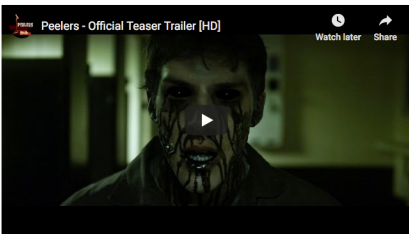
Schelenz: It's been a blast taking *Peelters* to festivals so far! We're probably just over half-ways on our festival run and audiences are really digging it. We've had great crowds and they're really been into the film. The best part is taking a seat with the audience and watching the movie with everyone. Just seeing their reactions to the film for the first time has been awesome. At one screening, we had just sat down after introducing *Peelters* and a couple of people arrived late. They sat right behind our screenwriter, Devits and myself. 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're up to 42 festival acceptances so far and are pretty excited about our premiere at the New Jersey Film Festival on October 1st. I have to add that I really do encourage your readers to seek out the film when it's playing at the festival. Seeing it with a crowd of horror fans is like no other experience.

Nigrin: Are there any memorable stories while you made this film or any other info about your film you can relay to our readers?

Schelenz: We had some pretty funny things happen on set while shooting *Peelters*. One of them involved our Visual Effects Supervisor who went M.I.A. during a crucial scene where we needed his expertise. Suddenly the hunt was on to find him. We had to push the scene forward and continue shooting to make our day. Eventually he showed up and we got the shot done. Where was he? Turns out he was detained at a gas station just up the street on suspicion of using counterfeit money! In between shots, he went to grab a snack and pulled some cash out of the ATM. Turns out it was funny money and he couldn't make it back to set until he answered all of the police's questions. He kept telling them, "Hey, I'm working right now and I need to get back to set." He was released of course when they realized they had the wrong guy.

Thanks so much for taking the time to interview me. I make sure you catch it at New Jersey Film Fest screening!

Here is the *Peelters* trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emkSNAAAsEk>



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Event calendar Saturday, Oct 26, 2019

MUSIC

- info** Chris Mardini @ The Wonder Bar, Asbury Park - 7:00pm
- info** HOWL PEAK HALLOWEEN PARTY @ The Saint, Asbury Park - 7:00pm
- info** THE SMITHEREENS @ The Stone Pony, Asbury Park - 7:00pm
- info** Wicked Divas @ The Avenel Performing Arts Center, Avenel - 2:00pm and 8:00pm
- info** MR TWIN SISTER @ White Eagle Hall, Jersey City - 8:30pm
- info** ABBA REVISITED @ The Strand Theater, Lakewood - 8:00pm
- info** CMS Concert: Immortal Schubert @ Dorothy Young concert hall at Drew University, Madison - 8:00pm
- info** Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince(TM) in Concert @ Prudential Hall @ New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), Newark - 2:00pm and 7:30pm
- info** Tusk: The Ultimate Fleetwood Mac Tribute @ Victoria Theater @ New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), Newark - 8:00pm
- info** Sugar Mountain @ The Newton Theatre, Newton - 8:00pm
- info** Elgar and Brahms @ Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall, Princeton - 8:00pm
- info** Dead On Live 65-95, All the Years Combine @ Count Basic Center For The Arts, Red Bank - 8:00pm
- info** LATIN JAZZ @ MONDO: Latin Grammy artist THE FERNANDO OTERO TRIO in concert @ MONDO, Summit - 8:00pm
- info** Erin Harpe & The Messers @ Lizzie Rose Music Room, Tuckerton - 7:30pm
- info** MANON @ Pollak Theatre @ Monmouth University, West Long Branch - 1:00pm

THEATRE

- info** East Lynne Theater Company presents SHERLOCK HOLMES ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE @ First Presbyterian Church (Cape May), Cape May - 8:00pm
- info** Monster Princess Tales @ West Hudson Arts & Theatre Co, Kearny - 1:00pm and 4:00pm
- info** Lily @ New Jersey Repertory Company, Long Branch - 3:00pm and 8:00pm
- info** House on Haunted Hill (World Premiere) @ Burgdorff Center for the Performing Arts, Maplewood - 7:30pm
- info** Chasing Rainbows: The Road To Oz @ Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn - 1:30pm and 8:00pm
- info** Theater of Fear @ The Mill Race Theatrical Company, Mount Holly - 1:30pm and 7:30pm
- info** The Little Mermaid (Theater Terra) @ Victoria Theater @ New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), Newark - 11:00am
- info** Our Town @ Jay & Linda Grunin Center For The Arts At Ocean County College, Toms River - 8:00pm
- info** Superior Donuts @ Studio Playhouse Upper Montclair, Upper Montclair - 8:00pm
- info** Auditions: All Shook Up @ Our Lady of Consolation (Ministry Center - Wayne), Wayne - 3:00pm
- info** The Late Christopher Bean continues at WCP @ Westfield Community Players, Westfield - 8:00pm

COMEDY

- info** BERT KREISCHER BODY SHOTS TOUR *FIRST SHOW* @ The Wellmont Theater, Montclair - 6:00pm

FILM

- info** The Phantom of the Opera returns to the Historic Brook Theater @ Brook Arts Center, Bound Brook - 7:30pm
- info** Family Matinee: Halloween Edition: Casper @ Hopewell Theater, Hopewell - 2:30pm
- info** HOCUS FOCUS WITH KATHY NAJIMY @ Mayo Performing Arts Center (MPAC), Morristown - 8:00pm