

# An Interview with Michael Shershenovich, Director of *Bloody Christmas*

by Mike Haberfelner  
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Films directed by Michael Shershenovich on (re)Search my Trash

Your new film *Bloody Christmas* - in a few words, what is it about?

*Bloody Christmas* on the outside is about a sad clown Santa kicking the shit out of a child murdering killer Priest. On the inside the film represents a chaotic America, a country divided by perceptions. And what better way to show America in chaos than Christmas? Overall, with lunacy and drama happening, the film comes off comedic as intended.

Very basic question: Why Christmas, and what does the holiday mean to you?

Christmas doesn't really mean that much to me to be honest. I actually hate Christmas. I hate the dumb ass holiday consumers, people wasting there money on useless material items. Families pretending that they get along, and expressing "love" by giving each other gifts. From a religious stand point Christians don't even know the exact date Jesus was born. Christmas sucks. It's just stupidity, and wasteful spending at its best.

Your sources of inspiration when writing *Bloody Christmas*?



Well, I really like the sad clown characters a lot. I unintentionally bit off of the *Twilight Zone*. I think the episode was called **Night of the Meek**. I remember watching this episode and feeling so bad for the Santa character. I also remember how heart warming the story was too.

Your washed-out ex-action star turned mall Santa Rich Tague is such a rich character - who or what was he based on, and to what extent do you identify with him yourself?

Rich Tague, is just a person that anybody could relate to and feel bad for. So no matter how much he fantasizes about doing ruthless acts, or how much violence he commits you still love him. I also made him with "What if Charles

Bronson went to shit before the 80's"? I always imagined that Rich, had a happy wife and lovely daughter. That at one time he purchased that Chevy Caprice brand new right off the lot. Then one day, his daughter got hooked on junk, prostituted herself, died, his wife committed suicide, and his brand new car was dieing inside such as him. Make sense?

How would you describe your directorial approach to your subject matter?

Well to perfectly honest, at the time I had only made three short films. The first was really good, the second was terrible, and third was ok. So I began writing *Bloody Christmas* as yet another short to experiment with comedy. I cast it, then sent out the scripts. Next thing I know, I had all of the actors calling me up saying "Mike, this script is really good, make it into a feature!" But at the time I wasn't sure if I had the confidence to actually make a feature. All I had was 2,500 dollars, and a camera that only shot HDV (mini HDV). Eventually I decided to do it with only that. I got to really say thank you you to Robert Youngren for helping me build my confidence.



At times, *Bloody Christmas* is pretty gory - so what can you tell us about your effects-work, and was there ever a line you refused to cross (for other than budgetary reasons)?

Hmmm... This is a really tuff question to answer. I really like violence in cinema, there is something about it that draws me into the movie. I love the ultra gory Lucio Fulci films [[Lucio Fulci bio - click here](#)], and am greatly inspired by 1970's Italian horror. But I was really trying to make most of the violence comedic and over the top. Most of the violence is in Santa's head and is how he perceives violence from a filmmaking point of view. And the real violence that he acts out is less climactic due to the reality of the matter. I express this after Rich kills the abusive father, soon after the murder he sits on the couch and

has a sober realization of "what have I done?". I feel it is an amazing contrast from a phoney campastic candy cane to the head to silent painful act of violence.



*James Balsamo, Geretta Geretta*

**You just have to talk about your cast a little bit!**

I love them all, everyone did an amazing job! Robert Youngren and Steve Montague are two actors that will literally rip out their hearts and bleed for any filmmaker's project. Geretta Geretta I was always a big fan of. I remember watching her in **Demons**, and Fulci's **Murder Rock**. She was also fantastic to work with. Great personality. Mary Arden from **Blood and Black Lace** was cool as hell too. She had no censor button on her, she always said what she felt, a very strong willed and talented woman. I remember her telling my special effects guy that his shirt looked stupid and he was dumb. Mary was funny as fuck. But honestly I think I can go on and on about how much I loved everyone involved, so I just want to take this moment to say thank you to everyone who acted in the film. I couldn't have made it with out you. You were all amazing, and I very much appreciate all of you time and effort - this movie wouldn't be shit without you guys.

**What can you tell us about the actual shoot and the on-set atmosphere?**

Every day was a

long 12-16 hour day. But it was fun, the atmosphere was really laid back when the cops weren't trying to arrest me. We ate sushi, pasta, drank, and cracked jokes. Good times.



**What can you tell us about critical and audience reception of **Bloody Christmas**?**

The general population loved Bloody Christmas. Matter of fact I remember selling out the *Demented Film Fest*. Everyone loved it. I think 3/5 critics really enjoyed our film. The other critics hated it. But hey, it's a movie made with a budget of only 2,500 dollars with one guy directing, editing, casting, location scouting, producing, writing, on camera, lighting, story boarding, financing, picking people up from the train, helping out with effects, creating the music, acting, and whatever else you can think of. Matter of fact all of the names in the opening credits and ending credits are fake. You think I want to type Shershenovich over and over again for all of those credits? Haha!

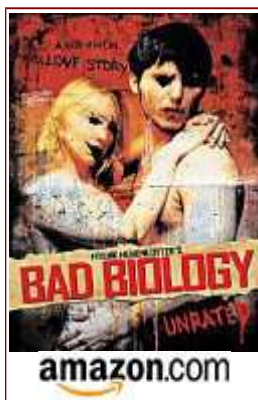
**Let's go back to the beginnings of your career: What got you into filmmaking in the first place, and did you receive any formal education on the subject?**

As a kid I was a musician, I floated around in a few bands, then became a rapper. I met this one guy who owned a wedding video company, and also did commercials. He needed a recording booth to do VO's, I needed a recording booth to do songs. So we worked shit out. I would help him with the camera equipment, and he would let me record. Eventually he taught me how to rebuild the old JVC's from scratch and taught me the basics to editing and filming. On my down time I was playing chess with Big John Thorburn and we became really tight, that guy was like a second father to me. He really looked out for me and kept me out of so much trouble. This guy was super smart, and wise as hell. Funny, sarcastic and really good people. I got mad love for this dude. Anyway... he linked me and R.A up and got me involved in **Bad Biology**. That's how I met

Nicholas Muserilli the Executive Producer of **Bloody Christmas**. We both got the movie making bug on that set.

**As far as I know, one of your first assignments in the movieworld was working on Frank Henenlotter's **Bad Biology** - now what was that experience like?**

**Bad Biology** was fucking crazy! I remember me and R.A sleeping in the box truck, hitting the mayor's car with the box truck, waking up sick because all we ate was white castles, exploding toilets, stories of the mansion being lit on fire during filming, and getting shit faced drunk. I



remember the lead actress hating me and tried telling R that I punched her in the vagina. Overall it was a really fun shoot, and I think that movie came out amazing. Frank Henenlotter is a fantastic director, and R.A is an incredible producer. Those two taught me so much. I really wouldn't be doing shit if it wasn't for R.A, Big John, and Frank.

- **Any other filmwork of yours prior to *Bloody Christmas* you want to talk about?**

- No, ***Bloody Christmas*** is the first feature I directed, and had a speaking role in.

- **Any future projects you'd like to share?**

- I am currently in production of my second feature... I am trying to keep it as hush hush as possible. But all I can say is: think ***Death Wish*** meets ***Dario Argento's Tenebre***. So far we got 30 percent of the script shot, and are shooting with some of the best equipment. Schooly D is in it too. Ok, that's enough about that...



- **How would you describe yourself as a director?**

- I don't know. Ask me that when I have a budget to just be the director.

- **Filmmakers who inspire you?**

- Oh shit were do I start? Mario Bava [***Mario Bava bio - click here***], Lucio Fulci [***Lucio Fulci bio - click here***], Federico Fellini, Stanley Kubrick, Alenjandro Jodorowsky, David Lynch, Michael Winner, Enzo G. Castellari [***Enzo G. Castellari bio - click here***], George Romero, Frank Henenlotter, John Carpenter, and Park Chan-wook .

- **Your favourite movies?**

- I think my favorite flicks are: ***Old Boy***, ***Once Upon a Time in the West***, ***The Good The Bad The Ugly***, ***Keoma***, ***Death Wish***, ***The Shining***, and ***The Beyond***. That's not in any order, just off the top of the head.

- **... and of course, films you really deplore?**

- Oh shit, there are some really bad fucking movies out there. From what genre? What decade? Was I in them? Hahaha. Umm... Let's just go with three crappy films from talented directors? I mean we all know ***Zombie Chronicles*** is garbage, and almost everything from the 90's is pure garbage. yeah, we'll go with directors I really love, but the films I really hate by them. 1: ***Season of the Witch*** by George Romero 2: ***Lolita*** by Stanley Kubrick 3: ***Muholland Drive*** by David Lynch.

- **Your/your movie's website, Facebook, whatever else?**

- Buy ***Bloody Christmas*** at <http://mvdb2b.com/s/BloodyChristmas/MVD5477D> - and check out the FB for updates and news. <http://www.facebook.com/BloodyChristmas>

- **Anything else you are dying to mention and I have merely forgotten to ask?**

- No you pretty much got it covered. I just want to give thanks to everyone, for really giving ***Bloody Christmas*** your all. All the Bob's, Steve, V Nova, Brooke, my b queen b Geretta, Mary Arden, everyone. Thank you so much. And a big thanks to Big John Thorburn, thank you for looking from above and thank you for keeping me out of trouble.

- **Thanks for the interview!**

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