

An Interview with Shaun Donnelly, Director of *Tight*

by **Mike Haberfelner**
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Films directed by **Shaun Donnelly** on (re)Search my Trash

Your movie *Tight* - in a few words, what is it about?

Tight is a mockumentary about the world's only all-girl porn star rock band.

How did the project initially come into being, and what was the main inspiration for it?

I was looking for a follow-up to my *Playboy* TV series *The Boy Next Door*. I had always wanted to do a movie about a band and through my work at PBTV and my previous *Starz* series *Make Me a Porn Star* I knew a lot of porn stars and thought it would be an interesting twist to combine rock stars and porn stars.



Monica Mayhem

How easy/hard was it to actually cast the film, to find porn stars who had the ambition and skills to actually play in a band/make music?

It was very difficult casting the movie. Most agents don't care if their girls have any talent aside from the obvious sex skills, so we had to go directly to the girls. Finding a singer was easy and we had several applicants before selecting Monica Mayhem, but guitar and bass were much harder and we couldn't find a single drummer and had to create our own. Luckily, Alicia Andrews was willing to spend two months with a drum instructor. And my co-producer, Jason Danilak, had worked with a guitarist - Layla Labelle - and bassist -

Tuesday Cross - at his adult studio *Real Productions*.

Bree Olson as the girls' manager - to what extent was she actually involved in the movie?

Bree didn't know the first thing about music (as evidenced by her *Hollywood Doucherap* video!), so she wasn't involved in the selection of musicians or the music itself but did consult on the band's image and had some good ideas like the golden condom toss. The band threw condoms into the crowd instead of guitar picks and drum sticks and Bree had the idea to paint a condom gold and whoever caught it got to go backstage and party with the band.



Bree Olson (center) and the girls

Touring with the girls - what was that experience like, and what were the girls like when the cameras weren't rolling?

We joked that it was the 'tour from hell'. As shown in the movie, everything that could go wrong did go wrong and the girls ended up hating each other and fighting a lot. We hadn't expected the physical violence that ensued or the emotional toll it took on a couple of the girls, especially Layla who was very nearly having a nervous breakdown by the end.

Any good sequences that did not make the final cut you'd like to share?

We shot this reality TV style over 39 days, so there's a ton that didn't make the 2 hour movie (the disc features a lot of deleted scenes!). There was one scene in Phoenix that we decided was too controversial even for a deleted scene. The girls were behaving so badly I mentioned to Tuesday Cross that she was coming across as the nice one in the band. Big mistake. Tuesday doesn't want to be seen as nice in any way. A couple hours later I was walking across the motel parking lot and noticed a fire. When I got closer I saw that Tuesday was burning the motel bibles. We had a couple Haitian cameramen who



Tuesday Cross

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Lemmy
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Lone V
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Marx
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refused to film this so I grabbed their camera but in the end we decided not to use it. And I never again called Tuesday 'the nice one'!



Layla Labelle

Honestly, what did you think about the girls' music?

Their performances are very inconsistent. One night they'd sound good, the next they'd be awful. I liked the music (it was written by a Vancouver band called *The Crawl*) but the girls never really made it their own. I don't think they ever really lived up to their potential. Part of it was the other demands we made on their time. Part of it was their own laziness. Early on the guy who ran the rehearsal space we'd rented offered to help Layla tune her guitar and she told him to fuck off. Later we took them off-tour early to go back into rehearsal and he offered to help again and they let him and the improvement was amazing. Overall the movie shows the ups and downs of being a bar band.

As far as I know (and I might be totally wrong of course), *Tight* was originally conceived as a reality TV series. How did that evolve into the movie at hand, and your thoughts about reality TV as such?

We did do a TV series version and had tons of interest from major networks like *MTV*, *NBC* and *VH1*, but in the end each decided their advertisers wouldn't support a show about porn stars so we went the movie route instead.

Based on your experiences filming *Tight* - could you ever be persuaded to make another documentary/mockumentary about a touring rockband (pornstars or no pornstars)?

I now own a *MMA* television network called *Aggression TV* so wouldn't have time. But I might consider doing a similar show with mainstream musicians. Porn stars? Never!



One of the films *Tight* is almost invariably compared to is *This is Spinal Tap* - at all a fair comparison, and why (not)?

I think it's a fair comparison. Both are funny movies about a band formed exclusively for the movie. I'm not sure how they filmed *This is Spinal Tap*, but *Tight* was done as real as possible.

What can you tell us about audience and critical reception of *Tight* so far?

The response has been amazing, much better than I had expected. Reviews have been very positive and most people who see the movie love it. I had the opportunity to watch it with a real audience at the *Vegas Cine Fest*, and the response was great.

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?



I started in advertising where I wrote and directed TV commercials. Later I owned an ad agency and it was there I was approached by an adult company looking for ways to market themselves. I came up with the idea for a TV series which became *Make Me a Porn Star* and aired on *ITV* channels in the UK and *Starz* in the US.

What can you tell us about your film and TV work prior to *Tight*?

Following *Make Me a Porn Star* I produced and directed a television doc called *Sexability* about the sex lives of the disabled. Then I did *The Boy Next Door* which became a very popular series on *Playboy TV*.

Any future projects you'd like to talk about?

I am in the process of launching a *MMA* network called *Aggression TV* and have several original series in production, all with a *MMA* theme.

Going through your filmography, one can't help but notice a certain porn-theme popping up every now and again. A fair analysis? And would you at all like to elaborate on it?

Definitely a case of typecasting! When you do a certain type of series and it does well, other networks want you to do something similar and that's how it happened. I really don't have a one-track mind, honest!



How would you describe yourself as a director?

I'm very collaborative and enjoy the creative process and what each person brings to it. Until **Tight** I would have described myself as a director who gets along with his actors but **Tight** was definitely trying (Alicia called me 'evil' one memorable night). I'm a night owl so my greatest claim to fame may be the fact I've never shot a second of footage before noon. Actors and crew definitely like that better than the usual 5 am call times!

Your favourite movies? ... and of course, films you really deplored?

My favorite movie is **The Usual Suspects**. Honorable mentions to **Tombstone**, **Serenity**, **Aliens** and **The Fly**. Of course I'd be remiss if I didn't pick at least one mockumentary so I'll give the nod to **Best in Show**. As for films I really deplored, I have a stupidly huge DVD collection (approx. 1500 titles). I watch these in alphabetical order and sort of hope I die before I have to watch **Saving Silverman** again.

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

Our official web-site is www.facebook.com/tighttv. The movie is available at *amazon*, *See of Sound* and most other on-line DVD-sites. It's also on vod through the *Gravitas* and *Availtvn* systems.

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

You are very thorough!

Thanks of the interview!

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