



Every Other Day is Halloween (2009)

**Distributor:** Brink DVD

**Directed by:** C.W. Prather

**Starring:** Dick Dyszel, Arch Campbell, Leanna Chamish, Tim Davies, John Dimes

**Review by:** Ben Bussey

Dick Dyszel was a Washington DC TV host in the 1970's. A pillar of local television, he presided over children's programming in the guises of Bozo the Clown and Captain 20. But come the witching hour on Saturday night, he took on another guise: that of the vampiric host of Creature Feature, Count Gore De Vol. And it was as the Count that Dyszel captivated a generation of young, impressionable, and typically shitfaced individuals with his overblown pseudo-Hungarian accent, carnival theatrics, and puns cheesy enough to dip nachos in. And in so doing, he inspired a whole new wave of horror hosts, eager to keep alive on the internet this tradition which has sadly long since been buried by television.

Chronicling the Count's rise to prominence in the 70's, descent into obscurity in the 80's, and subsequent resurrection on the fan convention circuit and online, Every Other Day is Halloween is an insightful, entertaining and above all affectionate documentary. There's no mistaking that it was conceived and assembled by a party well-versed in Dyszel's glory days (indeed, Dyszel is himself a producer), but it remains easily accessible to the great many of us who not only never saw the Count growing up, but never experienced the phenomenon of the local TV horror host at all. The backbone of the documentary is an extended interview with Dyszel, interspersed with a deluge of archive footage from his respective roles as the camp and corny Count, the Spock-ish Captain, and (to my money easily the most genuinely frightening of the bunch) Bozo, as well as being a straight news anchor: witness him reporting the details on the death of Elvis. It certainly does make you wonder how the hell the man did it: he mentions having worked hundred-hour weeks. But while the Count may not have been the only thing happening in his career, the film emphasises that it was the role he had the most love for, and put the most energy into keeping alive in the face of declining ratings (Creature Feature went out against Saturday Night Live) and apathy from new executives.

Perhaps what is most touching about this story is the level of fan interaction. Amongst the many in the film who profess to having loved the Count growing up, a great many of them went on to work with him: Eleanor Herman (the Countess), Jerry Moore (Karlos Borloff), John Dimes (Dr Sarcografy). Writer Steve Niles also has many favourable things to say, crediting the Count not only as his doorway into the horror genre but also as the direct inspiration behind his comic Aleister Arcane. Yes, it's only natural that a documentary as celebratory as this would gather testimonies that paint the subject in so positive a light, but although Every Other Day is Halloween might never come close to being a warts-and-all expose, it does not by any means paint Dyszel as some kind of infallible horror icon. Indeed, Dyszel himself admits his genre knowledge is far from encyclopedic, as is made clear from footage of a lacklustre interview with Forry Ackerman; despite having an effigy of Vampirella featured prominently on his set (printed on the inside lid of his coffin!), Dyszel had no idea who Ackerman was, and speaking of it now he comes off genuinely regretful of this. Indeed, whether or not this was intentional, the film does raise some interesting points about how the phenomenon of horror hosting related to a different time in horror fandom, when there was not the same expectation to know the genre inside out. It's notable that John Dimes contrasts the kind of campy monster movies that were shown on Creature Feature with "real horror movies". Creature Feature might have been filmed by a cast and crew sometimes under the influence, boasted guest appearances from Penthouse Pets, and seen the Count flirting with underage girls, but even so it belonged to a time that was just that little bit more innocent. As such, it's little

wonder that old horror host format has failed to endure, in television at least.

Even so, we never get the sense of Dyszel being on any level jaded or deluded, as per Peter Vincent of Fright Night. Indeed, we don't even really get the sense that Dyszel is a man looking to the past. Judging by the sheer number of new internet horror hosts who pop up in the movie – Penny Dreadful, the Bone Jangler, A. Ghastly Ghoul, the aforementioned Karlos Borloff and Dr Sarcofiguy – the tradition is, in its own way, thriving; and considering Dyszel was the first to take his show online ([www.countgore.com](http://www.countgore.com)), he is still at the forefront. And at a time when so much contemporary horror fare seems geared toward harsh realism and general mean-spiritedness, it's rather comforting to know that the more childish, old-fashioned conventions of the genre are still alive. Every Other Day is Halloween offers up some tremendous feel-good entertainment, especially for fans of old-school horror, or anyone who enjoys a good underdog story.



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