

## **EXAMINER**

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### **Q and A with 70s horror film host Count Gore De Vol**

May 17, 3:59 William Powell

Happy Monday Ladies and Gents, Boys and Girls and all the ships at sea! Today I'm interviewing one of my childhood idols, Dick Dyszel. Some of my more mature readers may remember him hosting kid shows and horror films while playing the characters Count Gore De Vol, Bozo the Clown and Captain 20 on Channel 20 (now owned by FOX) here in DC from 1972 to 1987.

Mr. Dyszel's illustrious career is featured in the documentary "Every Other Day is Halloween", which was recently released on DVD. (You can get an autographed copy at no extra cost here [www.countgore.com](http://www.countgore.com).)

On with the questions!

What acting background did you bring when you came to Channel 20?

None! Actually that's not totally true. I was the Wizard in "The Wizard of Oz" in 3rd grade. My entertainment background was a bit stronger. I was a radio DJ, reporter, TV producer and I did host horror movies for WDXR-TV in Paducah, Kentucky for about 18 months. I finally did take some acting classes between 2003 and 2005.

Explain the origin of your characters, Captain 20 and Count Gore De Vol.

I was the third Captain 20. The first two were US astronauts. I decided to go for something more exotic and became an alien. When M&M/Mars became a sponsor, it was determined that I was from Mars. There was a lot of Vulcan in the character, since I was a HUGE Star Trek fan. I ended up with three different space ships and actually did work closely with NASA on space education.

The Count was my version of Bela Lugosi. I picked that type of character because I owned a tux, a cape, knew how to apply white makeup and could roll my R's with the best of them. The Count has been evolving ever since. In many ways he's a bit like the Homer Simpson of Vampires. He has great ideas, tries hard, but it never quite works out for him.

You inherited the D.C. version of Bozo the Clown role from Willard Scott. How was your interpretation different?

Well, no, I really didn't inherit anything from Willard. I actually took over the role from Tony Alexi, who was also Captain 20 number two. I was on WDCA for almost 2 years before I found out that Willard had done a Bozo show. After talking with him, seeing some pictures and clips, it was nothing like the show or character we had. You must understand that Bozo was a tightly controlled franchise from Larry Harmon Picture Corporation. The costume, makeup show format options and lots more were set in writing. Larry Harmon believed and wanted the world to believe there was only ONE Bozo, so all shows and characters had to look and sound alike.

While this was a wonderful idea, the actual shows did vary based on the target audience and the budgets. Mine was a 30 minute daily game show for kids that also included cartoon material.

As a kid, I remember you saying Channel 20 would "always be here when you need us." Did you do a lot of community outreach while you were there?

Bozo and sometimes Captain 20 were involved with a variety of community projects. Bozo in particular was the primary media person for the Backyard Fairs for Leukemia. The station also participated in a number of outreach events, including the annual Children's Hospital Telethon.

How did the documentary get made?

This is a great question for C. W. Prather, who produced and directed "Every Other Day is Halloween". He had been collecting behind the scenes footage for several years and asked me if I would agree to be interviewed and supply old air footage for a documentary. I agreed as long as it wasn't too long or boring. It's neither. I think the film got its greatest compliment at Comic-Con in San Deigo last year when three British filmmakers told us that the movie made them nostalgic for something they never had in the UK: local kid's show hosts and horror hosts! Very few people can see the movie and not smile while remembering fondly the TV experiences of their youth!

How can fans get a copy?

"Every Other Day Is Halloween" is available through most online outlets like Amazon.com. However, if they buy one from Creature Feature the Weekly Web Program at [www.countgore.com](http://www.countgore.com), they get the DVD box personally autographed by Gore....at not additional cost!

What happened to home-grown, local channels and movie hosts?

They joined the dinosaurs and other extinct creatures. Actually the channels are there, but the local content, if any, is limited to things that make money....like news. TV is a business and businesses exist to make money. The new home for local programming and creativity is the Internet and that's just fine with me!

Will there be a resurgence of local hosts?

It's already here! At the recent Horrorhound Weekend Convention in Indianapolis, there were 83 horror hosts gathered to pay tribute to Vampira! And there were a lot who couldn't make it. I don't think there has ever been a time where there's been more horror hosts and the numbers just keep on growing.

Thanks to the Internet and local cable access, these creative people are no longer limited by the financial considerations of TV stations. Digital cameras, computer editing and inexpensive streaming video make becoming a horror host easy.

Do you feel channels like TCM and AMC are an adequate replacement for the "late late shows"?

For the time being. But beware. Every month more and more Internet content is making its way to the new big screen TVs...without the need for such centralized media outlets. Some TVs have direct Internet access. Almost every new Blu-Ray player has long lists of Internet services to access. I personally pay for and download HD programs off the Internet to watch on my plasma TV, rather than subscribe to various cable or satellite channels. I like pay per program viewing.

I'd guess your favorite movie genre is horror, no?

Well, the truth be told, I really like good science fiction films the best. But there's a lot of overlap with horror. For example, my favorite scary movie is "Alien." But I have very eclectic taste in film. Netflix will never be able to figure it out.

What are you doing now?

Answering your questions! But mostly, I'm trying to figure out where Creature Feature and Count Gore De Vol will be in five years. Things are changing so fast both technically and socially, that it's tough to stay ahead of the game. While I did see the merger of Internet and TV, I never saw Facebook coming. I was totally blindsided by cell phones as mobile viewing devices and 3D....will it ever stop? Wait, I do know the answer to that one...NO!