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Celluloid Insanity By The Film Fanatic FOR The Film Fanatic

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Legend Speaks!

October 9, 2010 by [admin](#)

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Legend Speaks!

The Mondo Film & Video Guide Interview, with Johnny Legend

*Conducted By: Justin Bozung
Mondo Film & Video Guide Editor*

Ladies and Gentleman, the man you're about to meet in this article is the most interesting man of the last 50 years. Johnny Legend's done it all. He's a Rockabilly music legend. He's an filmmaker, creating such cult classics as – My Breakfast With Blassie and the 70's skin flick, Teenage Cruisers. As an actor, he's appeared in such films as Bride Of The Re-Animator, 2001 Maniacs, and the Milos Foreman Andy Kaufman biopic, Man On The Moon. He's an oddity archivist. Sharing with planet earth, via home video – the brilliant films of Jack Hill – Spider Baby and Switchblade Sisters, as well as a vast series of archival film collections on every subject – including: Weird cartoons, Biker films, Mexican wrestling films, Bela Lugosi compilations, and the early television appearances of Betty White.

Legend's also responsible for providing the public with the best and definitive DVD releases for cult classics like, Arch Hall Jr's The Sadist, and William Castle's House On Haunted Hill. Additionally, Legend was also the creator of the NOW highly sought after out of print videotape series

Sleazemania, Saturday Night Sleazes, Rock n Roll Wrestling, and Incredibly Strange Wrestling of the 80's and 90's.



As a child, he was friends with the warm hearted and monstrous, Tor Johnson. He even met and hung out with Ed Wood. He was the first Ed Wood fan ever. He was practically a brother to Andy Kaufman. He knew the very troubled and talented Beach Boy, Dennis Wilson, and just may have partied with some of the Manson Family girls days before they were arrested for the Sharon Tate murder. He's been involved with amateur and professional wrestling.. As a musician, he recorded and released a Beatles song, before The Beatles did! He wrote the cult classic song "Pencil Neck Geek" for wrestling icon, Fred Blassie. Aren't you convinced yet that Johnny Legend is the most interesting man of the last 50 years?

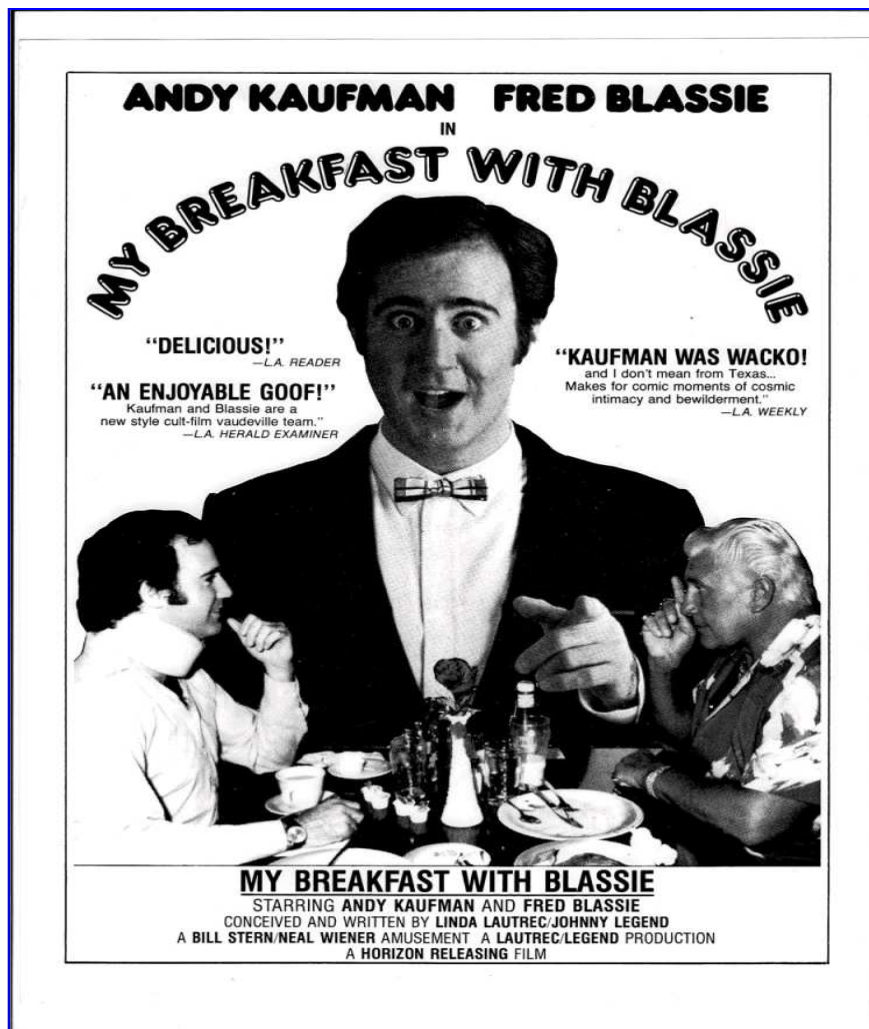


In recent years, Johnny's been busier than ever before. He's writing a three volume autobiography, as well as working on an amazing asian-erotica aviation/martial arts film adaptation of the novel of dropout teen idol, Arch Hall Jr, THE ASPARA JET. He's playing music – doing several live shows a year. He's appearing at movie conventions. He's at the helm of his own DVD label, self producing amazing DVD releases. Over the last couple years, releasing over 25 titles. He's dealing with distribution companies, selling virtually everything on his own, and he wants YOU to contact him today. As the world's premiere mogul of all things odd, we want everyone out there to know his story....

How did you get involved and become friend's with Andy Kaufman?

Well I saw Andy on several occasions at various wrestling events. He was obsessed with Fred Blassie. But our first real encounter was at a Freddy Cannon show. Andy was opening up for him. Freddy didn't even know who Andy was. It was very funny. I was introduced to Freddy, cause he was familiar with my song "Pencil Neck Geek." So Andy was impressed with me I think. So we became friends, but we became pretty close, when my sister Lynne met him, and they got together. Lynne was played by Courtney Love in Milos Foreman's Andy Kaufman movie, Man On The Moon. But here's the background on how they met. I put together a project with my partner Linda Lautrec with Andy Kaufman and Fred Blassie, called My Breakfast With Blassie.

My sister Lynne at that time was living up in the woods. She had no television, had never seen 'Taxi.' I told her I was shooting a film with Fred Blassie and Andy Kaufman, and at that time, she'd never even heard of Andy Kaufman. The only reason she came down was because she was a fan of Fred Blassie from when we were kids. So when Andy hits on her in the movie, it's really happening. That was the first time they'd met.



Lynne was just there really to work in the background.

Cause we figured that when we were editing we might run into a situation during the edit, we'd get a shot of customer's at a table in the background, and then if we cut to another shot, the customer's in the background would be gone. So it was my idea, to stick the girls in the background at the table, purely so we could have control of the background for editing.

If you see the outtakes on the new DVD of *My Breakfast With Blassie* we released last year, there are about another 10 minutes where Andy convinced her to come back into the restaurant and he continues to hit on her. So really, you see them in the film, meeting for the very first time. And after that, slowly but surely, they just got together, and Andy really became a member of our family.



How do you feel about the film, *Man On The Moon*? Is it accurate in terms of Andy?

Well I get asked this all the time actually. I get in discussions about bio-pics. I could gripe about alot of things in regards to *Man On The Moon*. But really, it doesn't matter. All that matters is if the film is good. And it's a good film, for what it is. People get bent out of shape, about things not being accurate. The thing with Andy's work is that it's so scattered, it's hard to scale it down into a 2 hour bio. Jim Carrey was amazing though, he transformed into Andy. So at the very least, I will say that Jim Carrey was very accurate.



Where did your initial interest in rockabilly come

from?



Young Johnny Legend

*Growing up I was highly interested in the music of the 50's and 60's. In Los Angeles, we were scrambling to see as many live shows as possible of groups from the 50's. I saw Chuck Berry and Johnny Otis live. I got to see a bunch of these old rockabilly guys live, and I got in good with them. And then, I started playing with them. Then one night, we were all at this Dick Clark television concert series taping, when he was doing a 50's show. Jerry Lee Lewis was there even.. So that night, I got asked to move in with some of these old rockabilly guys. And when I did, they started showing me all these old recordings, these old recording **techniques**. I knew then that I needed to start a new rockabilly band. There wasn't any rockabilly bands in the early 70's. No one was doing anything like that. It was passe. I put out a cattle call all over Los Angeles for people who wanted to start a rockabilly band. I got this huge response.*

When the smoke cleared, we ended up with 5 lead singers. So we decided we'd call ourselves, the Rolling Rock Rebels. We were the first modern rockabilly band in the 70's. With 5 lead singers, we could only give each singer 3 songs, when we played live. We played some famous shows. We started the downtown all-night movement in Los Angeles. We'd play rockabilly from like 11pm to dawn. After a while, the band started to split up, and I went off to shoot my film, Teenage Cruisers. Teenage Cruisers, is the only triple XXX rockabilly Bill Haley Rock Around The Clock adult film ever created.



Still From 'Teenage Cruisers'



In your touring days, did you ever encounter any of those old school Southern rockabilly guys from Memphis's Sun Records?

*Sure did. Sonny Burgess, Ronny Dawson, James Burton a ton of those guys. One thing people don't know about my music career is that I'm mis-labeled. It's a proud **accomplishment**. Music is so **categorized**. Somehow, someway I've been labeled in Europe as a 50's rockabilly guy. Not the 70's, I'm linked to the 50's somehow. I was only 10 years old in 1958. Now, it's really funny. I run into these 50's rockabilly guys, and they just associate me with themselves. They even say, "Hey we need to watch out for these young guys, Johnny, their on our turf." They even say they have pictures from the 50's with me in them. It's amazing. I've even tried to explain to them about The Rolling Rock Rebels, and they just accuse me of not wanting to tell them exactly how old I really am. So, I just go with it now.*



Johnny Legend, Jon Agar, and Sid Haig

Speaking of that, how do you feel about getting older?

I'm not feeling it. Mentally, I feel like I'm 17 years old. I grew up wanting to be a horror star, NOT a movie actor, but a horror star. I wanted to be involved in wrestling somehow. I knew I couldn't be a wrestler, but I thought, how about a manager? And when I was in high school, I just decided I wanted to be a rock star. I've been a rock star on one level, I've gotten to be in wrestling, I've acted in horror movies and I've just stuck with it. I've accomplished all of those dreams. I'm still going at it. I'm still working on movies and wrestling. I'm making DVD's. I've produced a few films myself. Right now, I'm starting to get more serious about film stuff. I've always really liked to be involved in multiple things at once. I haven't missed a beat. My live concerts have gotten more intense and raunchy. 2 hour sets. I'm not running out of energy, I'm attacking women at shows. I'm probably gonna get arrested at some point. But I've had no problems. Dry humping a girl at a show, while I'm playing harmonica in bare feet is alot of fun.



What's your take as a wrestling fan in comparison to what you grew up with to what it's become now with for example, modern WWE?

Well the business has really changed. It took me 20 years to crash the wrestling business. By 1990, I was promoting my own shows. I was creating my own characters, bringing in lucha guys. I was trying to combine rock n roll and wrestling. I created "Incredibly Strange Wrestling" in 1995. And I think it was ahead of it's time. Just look how wrestling today is combining music, and now their adding in lucha guys. It's gratifying to see it change, how I'd foreseen it years before. But in regards to stuff like WWE, I do keep up on it when I'm able.

What do you think about stuff like MMA or UFC?

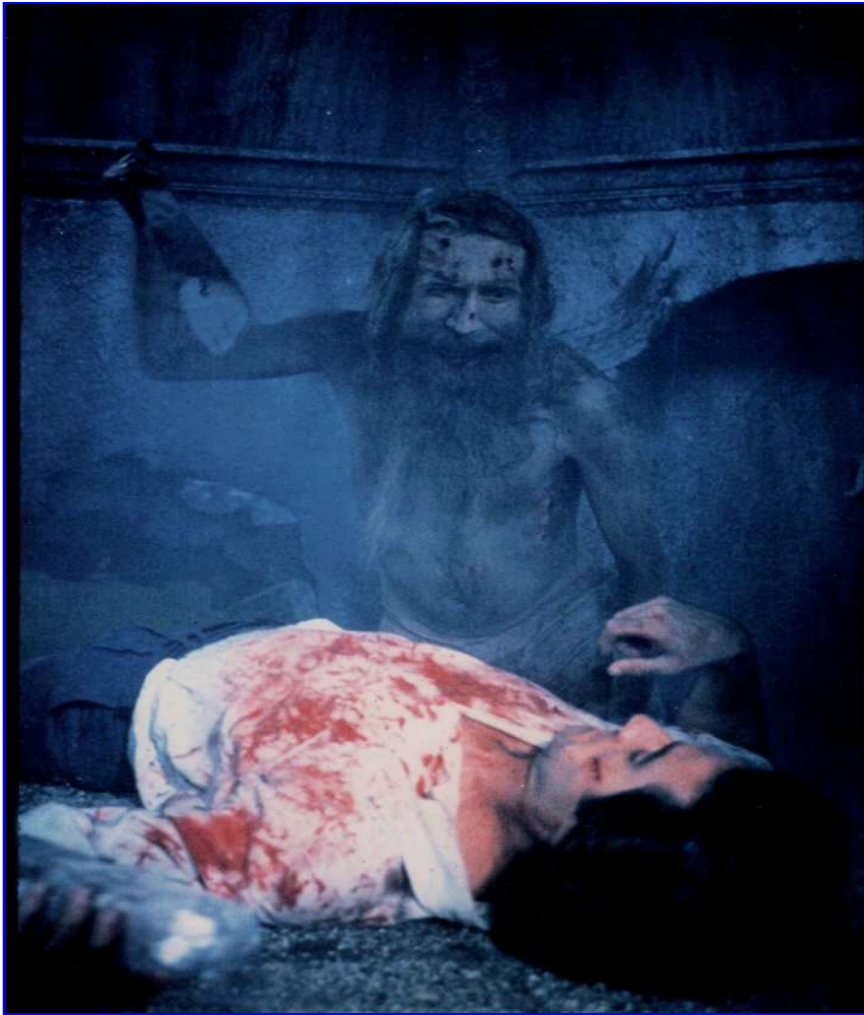
I don't like it. I call it fake wrestling. I relate it to boxing or something. It's not the stuff I grew up watching. I know some of the fighter's names, and I read up on it sometimes. But I don't watch the pay per view specials or anything. I'm really just not interested in it.

How did you get cast in the horror film, Bride Of The Re-Animator?

I had already acted in a few films by this point. A friend of mine was working for Brian Yuzna (director of Bride Of The Re-Animator) at the time, and he really wanted me in the film. The film was already cast however. He knew that I owned the famous original Spike Jonze suit. So he asked me to put it on, and come out to do a sort of screen test. Yuzna loved it, and they wanted to find a place for me in the film, so that's how I got cast as the 'Skinny Corpse'.

In your acting career, you're always cast as a certain type of character, the hippy bum, weirdo, corpse, do you feel like you're being type-casted?

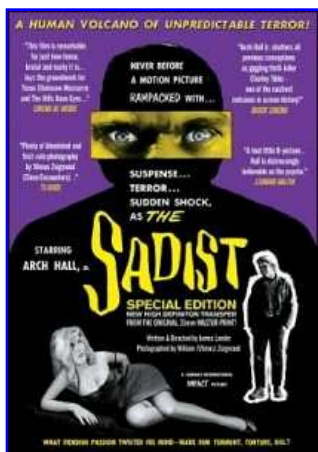
No, not really. I'm lucky. I get cast, whether the film is good or bad, I never get touched. Cause my part usually exists in it's own universe. People hated Severed Ties, but they loved me in it. Children Of The Corn 3 wasn't too bad. I came out smelling like a rose. If I was trying to pursue a career as an actor full time, then perhaps I'd be upset, cause I'm not getting bigger parts. So I have no complaints. In fact, look at 2001 Maniacs. I came out perfect.



Johnny as 'Skinny Corpse' in Bride Of Re-Animator

How difficult is it for you now to distribute films, given the DVD industry's decline?

It's getting very difficult. In fact, over the last 6 months it's gotten worse. As the market goes south, ironically, I'm getting more productive. I have three titles coming out in the next few months. To supplement, I've been trying to get a film going with the great Arch Hall Jr. I put out his movies during the 80's. He's got his novel. And I've been giving it to some of my film friends, trying to get some interest going in it. We've got a script in the works. The book will make an amazing movie. It's an amazing story about an airborne Henry Miller of sorts, that just so happens to be written by a former teen idol. One thing no one knows or remembers about Arch, is the fact that he was in Desert Storm!



Legend's DVD release for 1963's 'The Sadist'

So I'm working on the DVD's, in fact, I have a total of over 25 right now, that are all available through me directly. I'm dusting off some old projects. And I'm shopping around new projects, horror ideas. I've got about 7 or 8 huge projects I'm working on right now. It's really exciting.

One of my first exposures to you was at my local video store in your releases for Sleazemania and Saturday Night Sleazies. Are you aware of just bootlegged those are now?

*Oh yeah I am. In fact, we're taking that into control. I've got a ton of titles I'm working on releasing. A amazing documentary on Jonathan Winters for example. There are no Winter's DVD's in **existence**. The ones that came before where horrible. The Sleazemania compilations are available through me now via amazon.com and Ebay. My DVD's under "Raunchy Tonk" are available, but not through the Raunchy site. That site is dead now. Don't tell anyone to order from it! You have to get them from me directly. Anything else, any DVD releases you may have seen from Legend House, like Johnny Legend Live On The Sunset Strip are still available through me. I'm no longer working with Rkyo on any DVD releases..*

I'm completely handling that entire inventory myself now. Every single title I've ever released you can get directly from me. I'm selling wholesale, I'm dealing with distributors, I'm handing sales to the customers myself. I'm doing everything now, D.I.Y. My release for "House On Haunted Hill" is considered the best, most state of the art version out on the DVD market today. Same thing with Arch Hall Jr's - The Sadist. I'm even putting out Blu-Ray versions of these films now.

The critics are loving them, fans are loving them too. If you haven't seen them, pick them up through me. You'll be blown away. (For questions on Johnny's DVD releases, you can email Johnny directly at johnnylegendrocks@gmail.com)



Going back to Sleazemania...How did you conceive of that compilation series?

Those go back to the early 80's actually. Right during the making of 'My Breakfast With Blassie'. I was at a theater and they where showing all these trailer's that I've never seen before. All these where showing with a couple Ed Wood movies. It was these that we used for the series. It was right when Rhino Video started, and I was helping by giving them projects to release. So I started finding all these trailers. I had a total of like 30 minutes. So then I went to Herschell Gordon Lewis and Jimmy Maslon and then I went to Fred Olen Ray and got that presentation reel for Star Slammer. I was just looking for cool stuff. And those led to Weird Cartoons, Dope Mania, Commercial Mania, Rock N Roll Wrestling. I got all my old master tapes from Rhino back, and have since released everything worthwhile.



Growing up in Los Angeles, what's your take on the recent trend of the last 5 years with celebrity scandal obsession, TMZ ect.

I love it actually. It's fascinating. It's research too. If I see something that's fun, I'll take the scandal or idea, and use it in one of my wrestling shows. I've been feeding off of that stuff for years.

Growing up in Los Angeles in the 60's do you have any crazy stories that no-one knows about? For example did you ever encounter the Manson Family or anything of that nature?

Well..we used to have these big house parties. And we lived pretty close to where the family was living, and I'm very certain that some of those Manson girls were at our party. In fact, we where discussing the murders at the party, cause they had just happened.

Do you ever 'Google' yourself?

Sure, of course. I'm always thinking of things that I wanna see visual evidence of. I like to look up like old posters for concerts that I played. I just found a poster from a show online I played in 1981. On the poster, under my name, playing the night before me – it said – A Flock Of Seagulls.

How frustrating is it, that when you Google, Johnny Legend, and you get search results for R&B singer, John Legend?

Well, it happens. I don't mind it. It's good for me, it's good for him.

Well if you do another big wrestling event, I think you should do a Johnny Legend Vs John Legend wrestling match. What do you think?

Well, I would if he'd agree to it. Actually, years back, his people contacted me once and told me that he wanted to meet me. One of these days, we'll meet up. I've never had any complaints. I've never had anyone show up to any of my live shows asking for a refund, cause I'm not John Legend (laughing...)



So growing up, you were good friend's with the

legendary Tor Johnson of Plan 9 From Outer Space fame?

Yep. He lived in the same city that I did growing up. Eventually we would ride our bikes over to Tor's on the weekend's and hang out. In fact, I met Ed Wood too. I met Wood at Forry Ackerman's house in the 60's. He was nice, and he accused me of being the first Ed Wood fan. When I met him, I had him sign page 1 of my first issue of Famous Monsters Of Filmland magazine, I had Forry sign like in the middle of the magazine, like page 20 or 30. Obviously, it was way before Wood was even well known. I actually got invited to Forry's, cause as a kid, my friend and I made these recreation's of the alien heads from Invasion Of The Saucer men. Forry liked them so much, that when we pulled up to his house, he took the heads and put them right out in his front yard to greet everyone. I was on top of the word that day!



*In fact, back in the early 80's I actually wrote an article for Fangoria magazine about growing up with Tor Johnson. If you can find it, the whole story is there. On a side note, the house that Tor Johnson lived in, was the same house that Ed Wood used to shoot those final scenes of Bela Lugosi that you see in Plan 9 From Outer Space, after Bela died. And of course, even though I didn't get much thanks for it, I did a ton of work as a sort of Ed Wood advisor on the Tim Burton Ed Wood movie that came out a few years back. **TO READ JOHNNY'S ARTICLE ON TOR JOHNSON FROM FANGORIA #22 - [CLICK HERE - THEN CLICK THE IMAGE TO EN-LARGE.](#)***

Are you the most interesting guy you know?

Pretty close I think. But I don't know, I've met a ton of interesting characters in my life. I can't think of them right now, but I probably will after we're done here.

Do you ever feel like one day's you'll retire or pass the torch, to perhaps, a – Son of Johnny Legend? Do you think there will ever be another Johnny Legend once you're gone?

I don't know to be honest. I run into fascinating people all the time. I've run into people that obsessively cover horror movies, music and wrestling. That covers a fair amount. Unless you can count wrestlers who have transitioned into movies. Chris Jericho, he has a band, he's a wrestler, and he told me when I met him in the 90's that he grew up watching my Sleazemania series. I've met a bunch of wrestlers over the years, that have told me they where inspired to become wrestlers, cause of my Rock N Roll Wrestling show. But time will tell I guess.



What's your favorite film of all time?

That's a tough one. I guess right now, it's probably 'American Hot Wax'. I've literally seen it around 2 or 300 times. I can watch it over and over, I never get tired of it. It's like listening to an album over and over.

What's your favorite album of all time?

That's hard to say. I just like the things I like. I'd have trouble answering that now. Back when I was younger, I was huge fan of the first Pink Floyd album, the first couple Leonard Cohen albums, the Fugs, stuff like that. As a young kid, I love Elvis's Greatest Hits. I love Doo Wop, old rock n roll. Oh..Self Portrait in Red by Lee Harvey Oswald (laughing...)

So why the hell haven't you ever written a book?

Well, I've been approached. But nothing's come about lately. I wrote a book about the 'Pen Neck Geek' phenomenon back in the 80's. It's not dated. I'd love to put that out, it's a real 'Geek' almanac. It's got geek recipes in it, geek fiction ect..

If I wrote an autobiography, I'd have to write three. One on wrestling, one on my music career, and one about the stuff I've done in film. I have alot of writer friends, but I've never been able to make any connections in the publishing world. So maybe. We'll see what happens..

I've contributed to anthology books and magazines in the past. I wrote that Tor article, I grew up down the street from country music star, Wesley Tuttle. I've contributed to the "Country Music Changed My Life" book. You can Google that, and read it for free. [YOU CAN READ 'COUNTRY MUSIC CHANGED MY LIFE STARTING AT PAGE 46 BY - CLICKING HERE](#)

We're pitching right now a story about how I released a Beatles song as a single before The Beatles did. Under the band name "Lightmyth", we put out "Across The Universe" around 1970 before the Beatles released it, and they wrote the song! It was produced by Bill Cowsill and Gary Usher, who worked with the Beach Boys. Just Google it, or look it up on Youtube and you can hear it today.



When are you gonna shave and cut your hair, you dirty hippy? Are you really Jimmy Hoffa under there?

laughing...When I lose that hair match at Wrestlemania 69. It could stun the world. It's gonna need to have a 100 K+ payoff. I have wrestled for it before.. I had a match against a female wrestler.. It was a beard vs. dogfood match. Meaning, that if she won the match, I'd shave, and if I won, she'd have to eat dogfood in the ring. Guess who won?

Johnny Legend is currently selling his amazing line of DVD's. You can purchase them directly from him, by contacting him via email at johnnylegendrocks@gmail.com Johnny will be appearing at the 'Weekend Of Horrors' in Burbank, California through October 15th – 17th. For more information - [Click Here](#). Johnny will also be appearing Halloween weekend, at the annual Chiller Convention in New Jersey. More information on the Chiller Con, please [Click Here](#).

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