



Interview: Dustin Wayde Mills (Puppet Monster Massacre – 2011)

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The Black Saint spends a fair amount of time trying to look for something different, something that isn't just such a tidbit. A month or so ago I lucked up on "Puppet Monster Massacre" & I knew I had to own it. Much to my surprise and delight, I purchased a copy that happened to star puppets instead of people in it. For those of us who like to see the red stuff flying to

I managed to get in contact with the director of the film (via Facebook) & he graciously agreed to answer some questions. What it was like to stick his hand (literally) up his ass. Now, I give you the multitalented Dustin Wayde

HN: Let's start with what got you interested

DWM: I just watched a lot of movies when I was growing up. We had a lot of VHS tapes and I just watched a different movie every day of my life. I remember watching the original "Puppet Master" and after it was over there was a featurette on how it was made, all the stop motion stuff. I became obsessed with stop motion & learning how movies were made after that. It never occurred to me that they were made, I just figured you turn on your TV and they appear from somewhere! I realized that they were the product of a lot of people's hard work & craftsmanship. I became really fascinated with it and I just wanted to learn everything about it. It started really early, I honestly don't remember anything other than making movies.

HN: Well now I'm curious, exactly how old are you?

DWM: 25.

HN: Whoa! You are a youngster! How old were you when you saw "King Ko"

DWM: I was really young, probably about seven or eight I would imagine.

HN: Did you have any formal education in filmmaking?

DWM: No. When I was 12 my family got a VHS-C camera & I started making stop motion movies. I lived out in the country and I didn't have any friends nearby so I had to make my own movies. I had to make my own actors so I made movies with my toys, That's how I started. I did go to Ball State University for a year but I dropped out because I realized that that was not my life & they didn't have a dedicated film department there either. I learned a lot of things from YouTube & from the internet.



HN: What school was this?

DWM: Ball State University.

HN: Did your parents support you in your decision to drop out & follow your passion for filmmaking? Or was there some disappointment on their part?

DWM: They always let me make movies. The camera wasn't mine, it belonged to a hobby of mine to make my little movies. I think when I decided to try to make film I was a little scared a little bit but now that I've got one done & it's in distribution and it's making me a little more supportive now & they think it's really cool. You know my mom made the puppets so I got her involved with the whole process and they're very happy with it now.

HN: Your mom made the puppets? Wow. I'm no "Puppet making expert" but they look really good!

DWM: My mom can sew really well and we got a pattern from off of the internet. I did the construction of the first three puppets & then I would just send her some sketches & she would make them look just like the sketches I sent.

HN: She did an amazing job! You actually just answered my next question & I have other films prior to this one?

DWM: I really just did my little shorts & stuff. I directed a couple of videos for a lot of freelance jobs doing videos for local businesses & such. I made shorts with my friends but no, I never tackled anything as big as "Puppet Monster Massacre" before.



HN: Since you professed a love for stop motion earlier I wonder what made you choose live action instead of stop motion for your first feature?

DWM: I just really wanted to do something crazy & original, that's where the puppet thing we've ever had to a puppet horror film was "Meet The Feebles" I guess & that more of an exploitation film. That's where the idea for using puppets came from. And on a very low budget using the puppets and still have it be convincing and coherent actors. Like some of the backgrounds & effects for instance, I could make the background look better because the puppets are cartoony looking as well. I wanted to tell a big story that has been hard for me to do it with live actors. Plus, at this budget level where you can't really have to worry about disgruntled actors. Puppets are always on set on time & they take their perfect take every time as long as I'm on point when I'm puppeteering them. So it's a lot smoother. I think a lot of low budget/no budget filmmakers would agree that when it's hard to depend on them. And that's not their fault, it's just the way it is. But what about that. When we filmed it was just me & my assistant director most of the time on screen and a camera.

HN: Which leads me to my next question. Who was responsible for all of the

DWM: I did all of the compositing. I did some of the modelling as well. Some of the models were purchased from the internet. I am not a fantastic modeler & I really didn't have time for all of the other duties I had on the film so I got some of the models from online websites like Paradise & Turbosquid. These are sites where you can purchase the rights to use models. I bought the ones that fit in the universe I was creating. Sometimes I would alter the models a bit to match how I envisioned it. That's where the bulk of the modeling came from.



HN: Really? I didn't know you could purchase 3D models on the internet.

DWM: Oh yeah! It's really cool. Say you need a 3D model of a certain car, you just type the car and you can find it. But not all of our backgrounds were CGI. A lot of them were just photos where I just took different photos and combined them to make a new background.

HN: Well they all look great! And the puppets blended in pretty seamlessly. I'm very impressed. Are you telling me it was just you & one other person behind all of it? I'm very impressed.

DWM: Well, thank you!

HN: I did wonder why you went with CGI though. Wouldn't it have been cheaper to film it that way?

DWM: Actually the stuff that I bought online was very cheap. It would've been much more expensive. It also would have been much more complicated. In a perfect world, if I had a million dollars, I would've built small sets but it just wasn't in our budget. The CGI saved our asses. I don't remember any figures off the top of my head but I didn't spend more than a few hundred on backgrounds. You have to find ways to be creative, for instance I bought a set of trees and I just placed them creatively, use a couple of different ones, flip them, change the lighting of light & play with the shadows a bit and that became a forest! It was just a bunch

put them together right and you add the illusion of depth & you get the colors right lot of tricks like that to save time.

HN: How long did it take to complete the movie from start to finish?

DWM: We started in March of 2010 & we finished in March 2011. It took just abo



HN: What was the final production budget?

DWM: The shooting budget..what you see on the screen cost about \$3500. And computer, camera & software to do the effects. That was the bulk of the budget. really cheap. Each puppet cost between 20-40 dollars to make. The most expensive because he was made entirely from foam and using foam is expensive.

HN: Did your mother build the monster as well?

DWM: No, I did the monster actually.

HN: One of the extras on the DVD was some test footage of different monsters using. I like the choice you made regarding the monster for the film.

DWM: You know the one I thought was really cool was the one that sort of looked liked that one a lot. But it just didn't have the same kind of look or personality that think going with the hand puppet for the monster was the best choice in the end.

HN: The first thing I thought of when I saw the monster was the “Zuni Fetish Terror”. I don’t know if you’re familiar with that film or not.

DWM: It’s funny you say that. When I was making it I was trying to make a sort of a Gremlin & a Xenomorph from “Alien” but now that I look at it..especially with all like the “Zuni Fetish Doll”. I never thought about it while I was making it, maybe it really does look like that doll.

HN: When I saw the teeth, the “Zuni Fetish Doll” popped right into my head because I’m terrified of that movie & that little angry doll. As a matter of fact one time it premiered on TV & I haven’t seen it since. It scares me that much.

DWM: I just read an interview with Guillermo DelToro and he talks about how size you make something big enough it’s automatically scary but if you make something that’s not afraid of you despite it’s size...that’s really scary! And that “Zuni Fetish Doll” once it came after you it didn’t quit till it got you.

HN: Let’s talk about the voice work in the movie for a bit. I know you performed yourself for the movie but I think once people start to watch the movie, they’ll be everyone’s favorite.

DWM: Yeah, Raimi & Gramps seem to be the most popular right now.

HN: Gramps was very funny also but I really dug Raimi, especially his voice. How did you give him that particular voice? Was there something you drew on to make him sound like that?

DWM: I have a very good friend who actually helped out a little bit on the movie in the finale. We were joking around with him & we would do a voice for him. He almost sounds like “South Park”, so I kind of took that voice & gave it a lisp. The trick to making Raimi sound like that is changing his pitch. His voice goes from very low to very high depending on what he’s excited while describing a movie to someone his voice goes very high pitch but if

he's being mean like when he tells Mona to go "Wash Her Ass", his voice drops t has that lisp so he can't be threatening because he sounds so silly. It's really just added on really.

HN: How has the film been performing critically & financially so far?

DWM: You know we've been doing pretty well critically. I've seen a few bad review who wrote those reviews aren't the people I made the movie for.

HN: I read one very negative review & I agree with what you're saying. I think it's a preconceived notion of whether the movie is going to be bad or good from hear the cover. And if they watch a movie with these notions already implanted into th to be fair to the movie. Even if somewhere deep down inside of them they liked it review every movie they see on it's own merits. Don't get me wrong here, if I see I'll say it's bad. But I always go into each movie I watch with a clean slate, so to s see a chance to impress me. Even the ones I end up not liking.

DWM: I think it's important that every time you watch a movie that you watch it or didn't set out to make a cult classic or the best horror film ever made. I just wante that horror fans would think was cool because that's who I am, a horror fan. I go to make a movie that these great people I meet at conventions would think was c it's goofy fun. It's jokes, tits & blood. The movie is sort of my "Love Letter" to 80's horror films were so much more fun than they are now. It's not that horror films a horror films out there now but take a film from the 80's like "Night Of The Creeps" "Re-Animator" which is another of my favorites. You can tell they were having so That's what I wanted to achieve, somebody called me and said that a lot of the m the eighties. That wasn't really the point, the point was to make a movie that felt l that sense of fun, the gore, the ridiculous nudity & the character cliches. That's w



**HN: Yeah, I got a big laugh out of the sex scenes in the movie. The one in the
laugh out loud!**

DWM: (Laughing) Thanks!

HN: Have you ever heard of a film called “Mad Monster Party”?

DWM: OH yeah! I have the DVD actually. I love that movie!

**HN: I was thinking about it while watching your movie because the whole principle characters in the film getting the invitation to go to the castle rem
Monster Party” started out. Was that an influence while you were writing th**

HN: That and “House On Haunted Hill” actually.

DWM: “House On Haunted Hill” was a direct reference but I love “Mad Monster F
leaked out onto the final product, perhaps subconsciously. But I do love, love “M:
some of it is in there.

HN: What can you tell us about your next project?

DWM: Actually we're right in the middle of production on a new film. We had to take a break because of appendicitis. So we had to wait for him to get his appendix removed & for him to get back on again on August 27th. The movie is called "Zombie A-Hole" & it's live action. It's a sequel to "Puppet Monster Massacre" had no budget, this is being produced on a percentage of our friends are trying to make a fun little grindhouse movie. We're not taking anything serious, we just want to have some fun. I think at this point the budget is less than a thousand dollars. It's a live action film and we had to make a cool silicone mask for the main monster and that cost the most money we've spent on it so far. We have a Facebook page up for it.

HN: Oh really? What's the title of the page so our readers can look it up?

DWM: It's Zombie-Ahole or something to that effect.

HN: Don't knock yourself regarding your budget. Have you heard of a film called "Road"?

DWM: I've heard of it but I haven't seen it.

HN: The word is they got that film done for \$40 dollars. It was made in England that is in Euros but it's really well done & a very good movie. It's streaming on YouTube.

DWM: I'll have to find it. What we're doing is like a "Road" movie & every other sort of movie, it's a "Girls, Boobs & Blood" sort of movie.

HN: There's nothing wrong with that! I like it already!!

DWM: We just want to make something that's fun to take to conventions that people can do with a small amount of money & some imagination. There will be some puppets, but in terms of action, real actors...real boobs!

HN: Will there be a sequel to "Puppet Monster Massacre"? The ending left it open.

DWM: We're actually in the planning stages and hope to get it started by the end of the year. We've sold over a million copies of the first movie but we did really well & made our budget back right away. We're feeling good by the way.

HN: I'm sure it is!

DWM: I have a lot of ideas and I think I'd be OK being the "Puppet Guy", you know making quite a few puppet horror movies & not all of them "Puppet Monster Massacre". I want to do different styles of puppets, more serious subject matter. It's fun to make these movies and people seem to like them so I think we're going to keep doing them for a while. I don't care about the money but I like this level of filmmaking. I've met people who want to work with \$100,000 that's fine. But I like making movies with my friends, I like not having producers. My dream is to make this my day job.

HN: What do you do for a living now?

DWM: I'm a graphic designer but my dream is to have enough films in circulation to take care of myself & my girlfriend. And I can just make movies 24/7 wherever I want, not necessarily in Hollywood. That's what I want to do, just make fun, low budget movies with good friends along the way. That's what I want to do.

HN: Before we end this I'd like to know what you're favorite horror movie is

DWM: That's such a hard question for me to answer but I would say Fred Dekker's "The Monster Squad". I want to make movies like that anymore with all of the Universal studio monsters in them. Kids, the threat to them is real. You just don't see that in movies nowadays.

HN: Least favorite horror film?

DWM: I don't understand the appeal of the "Saw" films. I don't find them scary. I don't get them.

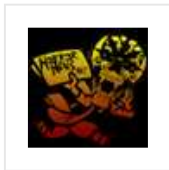
HN: I appreciate you sharing some time with me Dustin. Thanks for sharing waiting for your next project!

DWM: Thank You!

If you haven't seen "Puppet Monster Massacre" yet, what are you waiting for? You could be the first in a series of great little movies from Dustin who only wants to entertain while he's doing just that. See it now!

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About The Black Saint

Those of you who don't know of The Black Saint & have yet to commit yourselves to him are in a most uncomfortable position when my army of acolytes is complete & ready to wreak havoc on. Oh, I really like horror movies as well & will take on all comers in a horror trivia contest.

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