



Interview: Stephen Biro – President (Unearthed Films)

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Stephen Biro is the President of Unearthed Films, the world's foremost purveyors of DVD extremes. Since its launch in 2001, **Unearthed Films** has given the Western world such classics as **Aftermath**, **Slaughtered Vomit Dolls**, and **This Hollow Sacrament**. Unearthed Films was the first label to officially release the Guinea Pig series from Japan in pristine transfers with a generous amount of extra bonus material. Public idiot Number 1, Charlie Sheen, famously believed that *Flower of Flesh and Blood* was a genuine snuff movie, and contacted the FBI, resulting in a prolonged investigation. This gifted the film an unprecedented amount of notoriety

and free publicity, and the Guinea Pig series has long been required viewing for extreme movie fans ever since. Horrornews.net sent along intrepid movie deviant, Phil Russell, to catch up with Stephen and discuss his background in the industry, controversies, and the future of DVD/Blu-Ray. So, ladies and gentlemen, and sleazoids everywhere, we present to you Mr. Stephen Biro...

It has been 12 years since the inception of Unearthed Films. Your early mission statement was to create the “hardest” DVD label on the planet. Do you feel you have succeeded there?

For the most part. I have seen some of the movies on my personal list go to other companies before we bought them, or lost bidding wars for some and was very pissed off that they were released by companies that didn't have the penchant for the hardest films, but for the most part... I think we did our job.

Is it true you started out distributing comic books?

Ha ha! How did you hear that? Yeah, I threw my hat into the ring with a comic book or two but inside back then was hard to break into if it was a gut-buster type of thing. I had the largest comic book shop in Tampa back in the day but was screwed over by a greedy business partner. So I basically left the comic world and jumped into what I knew best... horror films and VHS piracy (laughs).

Tell us about your bootlegging days and Video Mayhem.

It was wonderful. I got to spread the sickness, offer films that you could never find at the time on VHS, made tons of money all in the privacy of my own home, partying like a madman. Those were the days. Back then, horror fans were not unified as they are now, and some of us felt like creeps and outcasts. But in Tampa... fans of horror would come by and they would say, “Steve! What kind of sick shit you got this week?” I'd bust out the trades I did from Chas Balun, Shawn Lewis and others and we would party while watching utter rarities no one had, and people would speak about only in whispers. When DVD just started, that's when the great horror titles I was bootlegging began coming out, and knowing I couldn't do this forever and finding the actual people who owned the rights to some of these tasty tidbits of terror, I opened up a cult video store in Y-Bor City, and phased out the piracy.



What do you like to see in a movie? What is it that clinches the deal and makes you want to distribute the film?

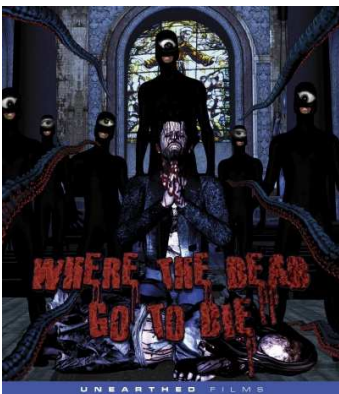
Intensity... acting, camera angles, unseen gore... but mostly intensity. Is it intense? While watching it, do I grip the arm of the couch harder while watching it? Does the film play on two different levels? Does it mess with the mind? Is it fun to watch? Does it have something to say? Would people want to watch this at a party? On drugs? To show people to f*ck them up? I try to follow these when picking films.

What is your opinion on the state of DVD/Blu-Ray and its future? Many in the industry are becoming increasingly pessimistic and feel that the whole enterprise is currently taking its last breath...

Yeah... torrents are killing us, but we are taking care of this, this year. For the readers of this... here is your warning. Stop it... We're working with a tech company that will be protecting our shit from now on. You had a good run, just like I did back in the Video Mayhem days, but it's over. I got legit, now it's everybody's turn to get legit. I know what is coming down the pipeline and P2P sharing and torrents are going to be hit HARD-CORE.

Has Unearthed Films been hit hard by the recession? Has it affected your business at all?

Fuck Yeah! Since the torrents started at the speeds it has had back in 2008... it's been killing everyone, and the retail stores have been flopping dead every month and every year. Look at it this way... We were going to pick up **Ryûhei Kitamura's No One Lives**... My business partner Paul White, half owner of Unearthed, was going to put ALL of his eggs in one basket to buy this and when it came down to it, it couldn't make business sense. It's a 3 million dollar movie and we had first option to it but our distributor said, "We can only sell about 30,000 units out the door and that's if everyone bought it for the retail market and that was including Target and Wal-mart! The numbers we need was 50,000 units to make it worth our while but there are not enough retailers out there anymore. Figure, Wal-mart and Target is about 20,000 units, and if everyone else took it, looking at 10,000 units. And that's if they took it!!! Target wouldn't and yes... sales could go above that if people kept buying it and for a big film, that can happen but there are no video stores left – Mom and Pops are gone and FYE is close to shell-shocked. My local mall just about closed and is sitting in a state of ruin. So yeah... all of the DVD companies are hurting. Collectors have given up, for the most part, except the die hards (thank God), but with the comic book industry imploding, toys, cards and every other collectible selling for pennies on the dollar and the new breed of youth, stepping in... they don't collect shit. It's all a perfect storm of f*cking chaos that we have been able to withstand... for now. I'm not going to even go into the evil distributors that have f*cked us over and almost put Unearthed out of business more times than I can count.



What's your proudest release on Unearthed Films?

That's a hard one... I would say Guinea Pig or Rock & Rule since it was the most detailed of our releases that took a year to complete, and if you asked me that last year... it would have been **Aftermath**, but now... **Where The Dead Go To Die**. Let's say Aftermath and Where The Dead Go To Die.

Are there any titles you regret not securing for distribution? The ones that 'got away'?

Yes... bastard... reminding me of this shit (laughs). Lucker The Necrophagous, **The Untold Story**, **Nekromantik** (that shit just happened this MONTH!!! AAAGH!!! (But whoever bought it, paid way too much for it. Bidding war casualty). Fist of The North Star animation, **A Serbian Film** (they paid WAY too

much for it) and a couple of others. Don't worry, I have some tricks up my sleeve for 2013.

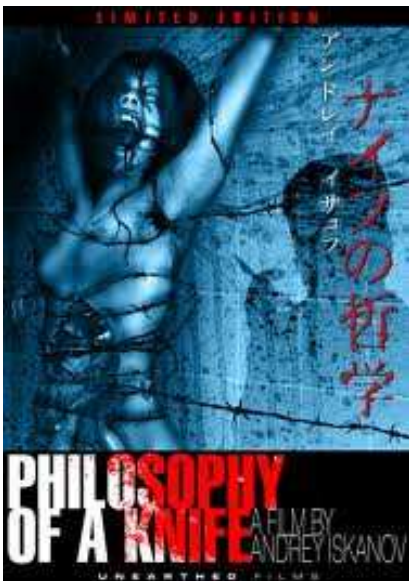
What's your take on the quality of films made in the last decade or so? Do you feel that the horror genre as a whole is in a healthier place now than it was 12 years ago when you set up your label?

Naw, it's worse now. Since sales are so low and everyone and their mother can almost make a film now without spending the amount you should, a lot of crap has been bubbling up to the surface. It's been happening for a while now and I am sorry, some movies should not be made. Some screenplays, are just terrible and some people are not directors and some actors, shouldn't act. But then again... some should. It all depends on who you're working with and if the people can take criticism and say, "Yeah, that is stupid, or hey... I need help with an idea".

It's hard to say because I see a lot of positioning, a lot of jealousy and bullshit, a lot of people being bought out and mags and websites that used to be about horror, refusing to cover all horror, just who grease their pockets, or if someone was slighted over something stupid like a review or such. Back in the good ole days... (f*ck, I'm sounding old now) (laughs) all horror websites and magazines would cover and talk about everyone and everything... Now everyone is being snooty or egotistical. I used to love the "We're the horror community and we're all in this together!" aspect.

I heard you were interested in securing the rights for Muzan-e for its first official Western release. Is that true? If so, are you still pursuing it?

Yeah, we got it, it's locked up... had some problems with evil distributors but it will happen. I hate lawsuits but if you're going to be an evil bitch... I'm going to treat you like one.



There is a nice array of Japanese films at Unearthed. Do you have a special interest in films from that part of the world, and do you ever have problems with the language barrier when dealing with filmmakers and producers from the Far East?

Paul White speaks fluent Japanese so the language barrier is non-existent for us. Plus... one of our partners is in Japan. Love the Japanese stuff but it seems like the flood of the stuff, people sort of got their fill. The urgency of watching horror films has waned quite a bit and people just say, "I will see them when I get to them." It's all across the board... the newness has worn off folks. Sucks, doesn't it.

Many moralists accuse your films of being socially dangerous, sick, perverted and violent. How do you respond to those claims?

Turn on the news and see what they're reporting on for sensationalism and profit, and then tell me the fake shit I put out is sick, perverted and violent. Just today, I watched a news bulletin where they showed beheaded sheep and chickens, used in a voodoo ritual on nationwide TV at 6:00pm while kids can watch it. Rape, murder, death and crime... did we mention the rape? What about that gangbang rape in India where the woman killed herself due to the humiliation? These hypocrites know that people are making money off her misery and death. Next time you see one of these articles or news bulletins, look at the commercials or banner ads at the side of it. We're talking money baby... dirty, disgusting money, and I don't see any of that. I sell disgusting movies and horror movies to people who need a safe and controlled outlet for their rage at society for all of the above shit. I could go on and on but I think you get the picture.

How involved are you in producing the DVDs? Do you design the covers and menu navigations, etc?

I used to do the covers and menu back in 2002 but I don't have the time anymore and you can sort of tell. Much more talented people help us out now like David Hood and Jimmy Screamerclauz...

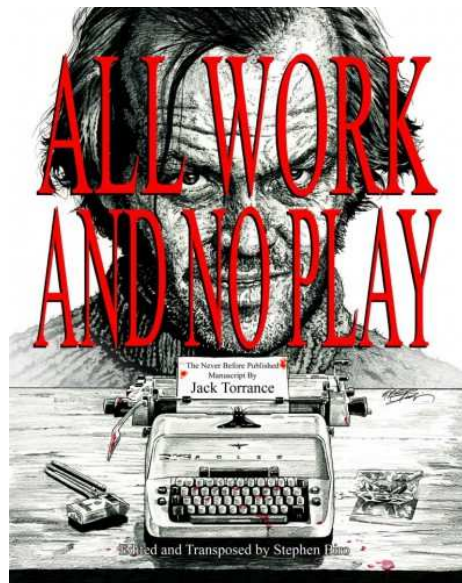
You have recently begun releasing books through your label. Is that something you'd like to expand upon?

Hell yeah!!! You didn't mention The Unearthed Music Group? What the Hell, man? Plug everything we are doing (laughs). I love reading, love writing... some say I'm good at it. I say I'm working on it. Horror is wonderful in all its aspects and bringing Unearthed Books into existence is a dream come true. Working with other writers, have more books lined up. The Masters of Taboo series is doing well, 1st book is called Cannibalism, Digesting The Human Condition... Working on that series, the next installment, Necrophilia, Loving The Human Remains. It isn't called Masters of Taboo for nothing (laughs). We have Jack Torrance's novel coming up that I edited and transcribed called, 'All Work And No Play'. 237 pages of pure madness that I was lucky to finish. It's more than what you think. Hopefully, Stephen King isn't too pissed and enjoys it. Finished a new novel I wrote called, 'Dialogue With The Devil'. It's basically, me and the Devil talking and Him telling me the secrets of reality and how far his manipulations into mankind reach. It's finished and in my editor's hands. I could only write and talk to Him after 12 at night for some odd reason, and He does explain Revelations quite a bit. Much less all of the world's religions and a lot of everything else, from his point of view.

I know... not what people expect from me but you can say, theology, religion, reality and psychology is my forte. Having been to the other side will do that to a man.

'All Work And No Play' – I remember glimpsing the manuscript of Torrance's book in The Shining, and it looked a bit same-ish to me: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy". I hope your version can spice things up a bit? It's not 237 pages of that phrase, is it? If so, I can't see it being very popular; the ending is given away in the first sentence for a start...

No... it's different but yet... you only saw the 1st 16 pages in the movie, this is the whole book and it does change and let's just say, transcribing it does make a person insane. I can't say too much more about it but it will be interesting to see the reviews (laughs).



The book, Dead Baby Jokes, caused a bit of a scandal online, with some complaining to Amazon and requesting that it be banned from being sold on the website. What is your take on the matter?

It was even worse than that. It was all over the Irish, Great Britain's and Scottish newspapers. I'm talking front page, petitions signed against it, the Irish PM mentioning it, BBC news and radio shows, death threats coming

out my ears and everyone wanting to kill the writer of the book. Sort of brought a smile to my face. Look it up on Amazon UK and look at the reviews there (laughs). Over 150, kill the bastard, ban it and such. It's actually hilarious... Check it out and read them, horror fans will enjoy the madness...

www.amazon.co.uk/

In fact, it got so bad, the writer fired back and wrote, 'The Ultimate Dead Baby Cook Book'. I know the writer personally... in fact, if you can keep a secret. It was ME (laughs). I kept my name off of it because my wife was afraid of it being published and since, I'm actually writing real novels and didn't want this to be part of my resume... and the wife had a point, so I just published it as Unearthed Books. When the death threats started rolling in and it was all over the news in the UK with mothers wanting it banned and me castrated... I think I did the right thing. It's calmed down a lot now... but it was hilarious.

www.lisburntoday.co.uk/

www.sunderlandecho.com/

www.dorsetecho.co.uk/

This is the best one...

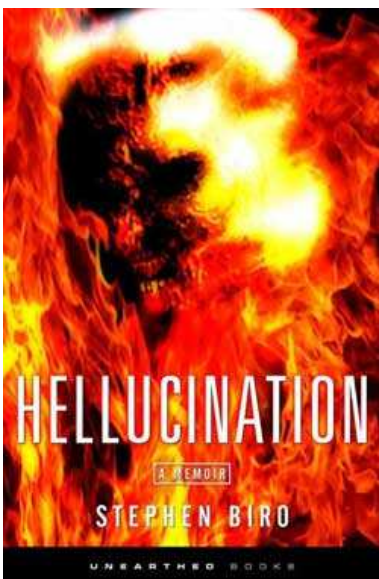
www.thesun.co.uk/

I admire the way Amazon have ignored them and not buckled to their demands. Yes, losing a baby must be an awful thing to go through, but people should see the controversy for what it is: A bunch of silly girls whipping up some Facebook hysteria to keep themselves occupied for a wee while... I also love the way the plaintive ape wails of protest simply bounce off the book like peanuts flicked at a rock...

There are so many anti Facebook pages about my book and petitions... I figured I would get some flak for the Guinea Pig films... not a peep. But a joke book... Holy Shit!

Hey, what's red and pink and travels at 100 miles per hour?... A baby in a blender...

I would say, "A baby with a caved in skull in a catapult."



Tell us about your autobiography, [Hellucination](#).

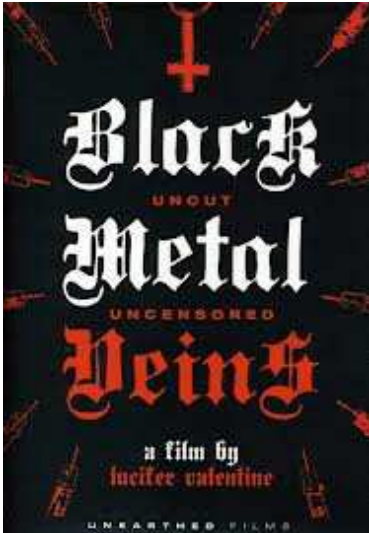
Um... how do I explain it? I've done enough LSD and nitrous oxide to be able to peer behind the veil of reality. I've met God, the Devil, been to Hell, and in doing so it changed everything about me – my personality, spirituality and emotions, and opened up a new realm of possibilities to me that I opened up my cult video store with no money and Unearthed Films fell in my lap. The book is my memoir and follows me from being an atheist while a kid, a hallucinogenic astronaut and finally a believer in Christ. I know... I know... hard to swallow. The book has been doing great. Everyone who reads it loves it and only a couple of people think I'm a madman, but that is to be expected. Let's say, it's a cross between Jacob's Ladder, Dante's Inferno and Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.

It's been optioned to be made into a major motion picture and meetings are happening with some big Hollywood people, so let's hope it's made. It's my life and it's unique but isn't everyone's? But I do have to say, it's not everyone that says they have met God, Satan

and have been to Hell. The Hell Journey I experienced has been freaking everyone that reads it. Hitting home so to speak and twirling around in people's heads, months after they finish it. I guess that's why I did a follow up with my new novel, 'Dialogue With The Devil'. Once you have been to the other side, you tend to stay in contact with those on the other side. I just dropped the price for the eBooks to \$1.99 for celebration on Hellucination being optioned for the next two months. Check it out...

<http://www.amazon.com>

I guarantee you will never look the same way again at Unearthed Films, or me for that matter.



I've noticed **Black Metal Veins** has finally been released on DVD, and this is good to see. It looks to be a change of direction for Lucifer Valentine after his 'vomit gore' trilogy. What is he like as a person? In interviews, he seems totally at ease with his perversities and doesn't give a f*ck who knows it. I also get the feeling he enjoys freaking people out with his frank descriptions of what turns him on. Is this an accurate description of him?

He's usually a happy go lucky guy. I owe him some cash due to a screw over from our last distributor, but it's being fixed now. You're right about your description but it doesn't bother me because I know people that make his quirks, nothing to freak out about but then again, I'm am a different beast entirely.

Hopefully, he moves into new directions. I have had fans of ours that refuse to touch the Vomit Gore Trilogy but watched and enjoyed Black Metal Veins, so that is great for him.

Tell us about The Unearthed Music Group

We specialize in speed core which is horror based 360 bpm techno music. Our first release was Screamerclaus, "Planetary Evacuation Recruitment Tape" Pretty hard core stuff, if you like Metal, this shit will blow your mind. We have a couple of music videos out for it... Have fun and check one out...

Mutwa From Screamercluz NSFW

This is a vid made by Screamer for one of our other bands, Butchers Harem NSFW SERIOUSLY!!!!

Clinical Sodomy

Tense and Neverminds new album Mental Rot was just released and we carry Slaughtercore Entertainments whole line of music and just release Mastamind's "Mastapiece" and Wyzae's "Momento Mori" that just came out on December 25th



You must have many stories to tell from your time at Unearthed...

Too many actually. We were ripped off by our 2nd major distributor for 1.4 million dollars. Luckily I can squeeze a penny by rubbing two dimes together and we stayed in business. I've had to sue three distributors so far for ripping us off. The third one is ongoing and should be settled soon unless they're total asshats, but they were to begin with. We were in the movie making biz back in 2006 and I wrote the sequel to Brian Yuzna's Society and a gore-tastic comedy called Drunken Master Vampire Priest. It was a ten movie deal, for ten million dollars... We were in charge of five of the films, had everyone lined up, directors, music, KNB... everyone, then the company went bankrupt. Optioned Drunken and Society 2 to another... they went bankrupt. Bounced around from distributor to distributor, getting ripped off almost everywhere we went... We're now at MVD Distribution, and they're honest. Shame of it was... they were the 1st company we were with and now we're back there. They're good people so I think we will have a home, finally.

A lot more, petty squabbles with other DVD companies, bidding wars, crazy actresses and directors, over-budget on this, under budget on that. Some films flop, some rise to the top. I think one of them I am really proud of is Gareth Evans. We released his first movie Footsteps but costs back then were high and sales for a normal, good horror film just meant we broke even but he continued and made 'The Raid, Redemption' in Indonesia.

With that, we made him some money with Footsteps and now he's going to be kicking ass in the Hollywood system from now on. I hope that he remembers me and lets me be the coffee boy on his sequel and remake in the works (laughs).

Society 2 – I loved the first one! How will the sequel take shape, and what's the storyline?

It got dropped since the companies that were supposed to produce it went bankrupt. It's a shame because the company was supposed to bring another screenplay of mine called Drunken Master Vampire Priest as well. Both films were slated for a million dollar budget and it would have been killer but Hollywood is a fickle and pricey bitch.

The story line is hard to explain. I explain where the actual creatures come from, body modifications, secret societies and even what happened to Billy since he was part of a bloodline that was hunted down after the first Society. Richard Stanley was supposed to direct it and it got Brian Yuzna's seal of approval but it didn't happen.

What's the premise of Where The Dead Go To Die?

Almost impossible to tell you. Sort of like a fever dream and it has been showing up on a lot of top ten lists as best movie of the year. It follows three kids, a junkie and a murderous, satanic dog named Labby. Rue Morgue reviewed it and said it was worse than A Serbian Film so we can leave it at that (laughs)

What's the most shocking and disturbing film you have ever seen? And what was it about the film that disturbed you?

That's a hard one but to be honest... probably, "DR. CALIGARI" on 7 hits of acid with a 20 pound nitrous tank. If you know the films and the mixing of the two drugs, you will know and understand why.

You mentioned having tricks up your sleeve for 2013. What can we look forward to from Unearthed this year?

We have some movies lined up in contract negotiations and as soon as they are signed, then we can announce them, will let you guys know. I also have some films lined up that Unearthed will be producing so we're moving into the production phase. I will be directing two films this year. One of them is a series that people would expect from Unearthed. Once the last contract is signed, we will be good to go.

I can say this... we signed the rights to **Bubba The Redneck Werewolf**. The comic book series written by Mitch Hyman. I will be directing it, Marcus Koch will be doing the FX, director of 100 Tears and Fell with over 40 names to his FX credit and we have a very special FX person for the actual werewolf that I cannot mention and since Bubba is right up and center... he's going to have to look kick ass. Bubba The Redneck Werewolf was almost made into a movie three times, so I am thrilled to be able to bring him to the screen. This will be the second movie I'm directing in 2013 and we have some more slated that we're going to help produce so it's going to be a big year for Unearthed and me, personally.

Thanks for joining us, Stephen

No problem

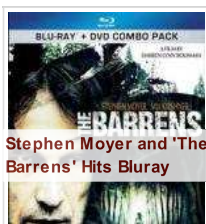


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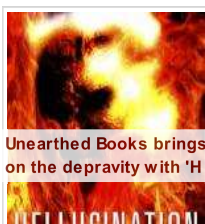
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Beware 'The Tall Man'
on Bluray Sept 25



Stephen Moyer and 'The
Barrens' Hits Bluray



Unearthed Books brings
on the depravity with 'H



Book Review:
Hellucinations - Author

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