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# An Interview with Jimmy ScreamerClauz, Director of *Where the Dead Go to Die*

by **Mike Haberfelner**

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**Jimmy ScreamerClauz** on (re)Search my Trash

Your film *Where the Dead Go to Die* - in a few words, what is it about?

*Where the Dead Go to Die* follows the story of three troubled children all living in the same neighborhood. They are haunted by a talking dog who tries to manipulate them in doing terrible things in the name of God. You're never really sure what is real or what is a nightmare.

*Where the Dead Go to Die* deliberately defies the rules of linear storytelling. Could you elaborate on your narrative approach to your subject matter?

I didn't really do it on purpose, that's just how I write I guess. I never read any screenwriting books or took any classes, so I don't really know what "the rules" are. I know about basic structure and I just try to come up with weird stories and then find a way to present them in different way.

As far as I know, *Where the Dead Go to Die* started life as three separate shorts. Did you always plan to compile them to one single feature film, or when did the decision to do so come about? And what brought the shorts into being to begin with?

I made *Where the Dead Go to Die* completely by accident. *Tainted Milk* (the first story) started out as a joke, I wrote a short comic book that I wanted to include with my next 12" release that was called *The Night Labby Came Home*, and it was a parody of the *Lassie* TV series. I changed little Timmy to little Tommy, a collie named Lassie to a Labrador named Labby, and had it all centered around a well that kids were always falling into and a lady that lived down there and told them to do bad things. Half way through writing and badly drawing the comic, I decided it would be really funny if I made a 3D animated film out of it instead. I re-wrote it a few times until I it as a script instead of a comic. I decided I wanted to have some actors do the voices of the characters inst of just attempting to do all of the voices myself. I wanted to treat it more like I was making a short film instea a cartoon.



When I recorded the voices for *Tainted Milk* with Ruby LaRocca, Joshua Greene, Victor Bonacore and Joey Smack, we actually recorded a second short as well called *The Lovening* that starred just Josh & Ruby. It was about a disturbed man who meets a weird prostitute in a hotel room and had a shot where he looks out the window and sees Tommy looking up the cross and then disappearing, implying that this was Tommy many years later. I decided I was going to make both of them back to back.

*Tainted Milk* was originally made as a comedy. Since I thought it was going to be funny I told everyone to act really over the top and cartoony. For a while it had a laugh track on it and "ooohhss" and "aahhsss" on all the inappropriate parts. I found that after taking them off the movie worked much better as a horror film. I decided after finishing *Tainted Milk* that *The Lovening* was the wrong sequel and I instead wrote *Liquid Memories*. I decided that this time I would make it more serious and gloomy. I recast most of the actors from *Tainted Milk* and added in Brandon Slagle [Brandon Slagle interview - click here] as the main character. I animated on off for roughly a year. After it was finished I just threw it on YouTube. During that time I was also sending the pair to film festivals and they were rejected from pretty much all of them except for the *Dark Carnival Film Festival*. I decided to just send both shorts to any horror related mailing address I could find, one of them being *Unearthed Films*.



## Hot Picks

- The Sweet Hand of the White Rose 2010
- Sirwiñakuy 2010
- Where the Dead Go to Die 2012
- The Devil Walks Among You 2011
- Photographic 2012
- Sweet Prudence & the Erotic Adventure of Bigfoot 2012
- El Monstro del Mar 2010
- Burlesque Massacre 2011
- Wound 2010
- Beware 2010
- The Gruesome Death of Tommy Pistol 2011
- Midnight Disease 2010
- Operation Nazi Zombies 2003
- Shades of a Killer 2010
- Gallery of Fear 2011
- Lady of the Dark 2011
- The Afflicted 2010
- Shackled 2010
- Bane 2009
- Familiar 2011
- Area 51: Confidential 2011
- The Scarlet Worm 2011
- Los Angeles Ripper 2011
- My Name is A by anonymous 2011
- Trantastic 2011

- Lesbian Seduction 1 2005
- House of Shame 1 2008
- Half Moon 2011
- Dead Hooker in a Trunk 2009
- Deep Above 1994
- Star Crash 1979
- Gladiator Eroticus 2001
- Strangler of the Swamp 1946

One day out of the blue I received a phone call from Stephen Biro (El Presidente of *Unearthed Films*). He said he really liked the shorts and that he would like to release them but they only totaled 45 minutes. I told him that I had a script for a third chapter called **The Masks That The Monsters Wear** that was even more disturbing and that it would be about 40 minutes. He said that was perfect and to come back to him when I completed it. Almost a year to the date of the original phone call I came back to Mr. Biro with a feature length film entitled **Where the Dead Go to Die**. I dropped the closing credits of each short and edited them all together as an anthology-style feature film all taking place at the same time told from different perspectives and flashbacks.

#### Sources of inspiration when writing **Where the Dead Go to Die**?

**Tainted Milk** was inspired by the **Lassie** series and old 50's styled sitcoms. I was also watching a lot of the British show **Monkey Dust** at the time.



My main inspirations for **Liquid Memories** and **The Masks That The Monsters Wear** were old Christian Scare films by directors like Ron Ormond who made **If Footmer Tire you, What Will Horses Do?**, **Grim Reaper**, **The Burning Hell**. They were really graphic Christian gore films made to try and scare people out of sinning. Like there's this one scene in **If Footmer Tire you, What Will Horses Do?** where communists take over America and poke out the ear drums of children so they can no longer hear the word of God. I also watched propaganda films and recruitment

movies made by cults, such as **Unarius**, which was led by the crazy 90 old woman named Archangel Uriel. I had a giant beehive hairdo and claimed to be in communication with aliens. I watched the **Heaven's Gate** recruitment videos made by Marshall Applewhite a few times too, I hide subliminal messages of him in a lot of my work. I also studied 80s drug PSA's, I wanted **Liquid Memories** to feel like a really twisted anti-drug PSA with the main character shooting up people's memories instead of drugs.

#### How would you describe the visual style of **Where the Dead Go to Die**, and would you also like to talk about the underlying symbolism of your movie for a bit?

A lot of people describe it as "The Sims in hell" or "Second Life on acid". I suppose that's pretty accurate, mostly because of the nature of the Poser models and looping motion capture that I use. I honestly didn't do too much symbolism on purpose, the nature of the film and religious overtones kind of create symbolism of their own independent of anything I intended. The main thing that I wanted was reality and the imagination of children to be so closely intertwined that you're never really sure what is real. All the stories are told from the perspectives of these three kids and the adults are all just background characters in their world.



#### Could you talk about the animation-techniques of **Where the Dead Go to Die** for a bit, and also the whole process from character creation to animating your characters?



After recording the voices for **Tainted Milk** I was faced with a new problem, I realized that I knew absolutely nothing about 3D animation. A couple of months before recording I had just finished a feature length live action/2D animation hybrid called **Reality Bleed-Through** that was playing in a couple of festivals at the time. In that film I had done a couple of 3D shots in a program called Maya but it was really complicated and I had no idea what I was doing. I don't even remember how I did it but I managed to cheat the program enough to make an edited stock model turn its head a few times. I remember it being really complicated and frustrating. When it came time to do a whole movie like that I knew I had to rethink my whole process. After reading a bunch of articles and watching some Youtube videos I eventually settled on a





program called *Cinema 4D* with the Interposer plugin.

Basically, Poser Models are pre-made fully rigged 3D characters with giant communities that make all user generated content. On these sites you can buy pre-made clothes, hair, poses, etc. for relatively low costs. After getting a bunch of models and programs I just opened up *Cinema 4D* and going down my shot list figuring out how to make the movie one shot at a time. I only had 1 computer at the time (I have 5 now) and I would animate a shot, render it, and then drop it into *Ad Premiere*. I would watch the shot with sound and then go "ok, next shot" and figure out just enough to complete the next shot. After doing that on and off for a few months I eventually finished **Tainted Milk**. During that time I learned a lot about animating and rendering and I invested in 2 more computers. While making **Liquid Memories** I built my own small render farm in my basement so I could now animate on one computer while shots rendered on the other computers. During the making of **The Masks The Monsters Wear** I learned how to do my own motion capture by using a hacked *Microsoft Xbox 360 Kinect*.

**Your voice- and motion capture-cast features quite a few well-known names of the indie horror scene. So what can you tell us about your cast, and how did you get all those people?**

Most of them were just my friends that I met over the years from working on other people's movies or attending conventions on the east coast. Brandon Slagle [[Brandon Slagle interview - click here](#)] I met at a *Fangoria* convention in NJ while he was promoting one of his films. Years later we recorded **Liquid Memories** and **The Masks The Monsters Wear** while he and Devanny Pinn [[Devanny Pinn interview - click here](#)] were on the East Coast shooting a film called **Song of the Shattered** that I worked on, they just so happened to be shooting it in my home town! I met Victor Bonacore through his cousin Eddie Bonacore, who I went to high school with. Through Victor I met Ruby LaRocca and Joey Smack and we were all part of *Chainsaw Kiss* together for a few years. We all did a screening together at the *Anthology Film Archives* in NY which was hosted by Linnea Quigley. At the time I was working on **Liquid Memories** and I asked her if she wanted to cameo, and she agreed! So we recorded a few lines with my shotgun microphone going into my Panasonic DVX100 camera at Jennifer English's apartment in NJ after the event.

I have also been producing Industrial Speedcore Techno for many years under the name *ScreamerClauz* and decided to include a bunch of my other producer friends such as Passenger Of Shit (AKA Bushpig from Butchers Harem), C1B2 (who also helped score **The Masks The Monsters Wear**), and DJ Plague from Canada. When it came time to make **The Masks The Monsters Wear** I decided to go outside of my little bubble and I contacted Trent Haaga, whom I was a fan of from his *Troma* days. During that time another *Cinema 4D* animator named M dot Strange was holding internet auditions for parts in his film **Heart String Marionette**. I sent in **Tainted Milk** as my audition tape and he emailed me back telling me he really liked it! He cast me as the monster tranny killer "Cearlis" and after exchanging a few emails I asked him if he wanted to play a fat doctor with a breathing problem in my new film, he agreed!



**Your film is quite a bit disturbing and controversial to say the least. So what can you tell us about critical and audience reception so far?**

It seems to be a love/hate sort of thing. Many people seem offended by it, which I never really understood. I don't really get how people can be personally offended by a work of fiction. At the end of the day it's just an animated film made by an adult, and nobody was actually hurt in any way. Well except maybe for me!! Haha! It's also gotten a fair number of positive reviews, more than I thought honestly. I

contacted the distributor where they send out a bunch of screeners to critics and I wasn't sure how websites outside of the horror world would respond to it. But some of the reviews have surprised me! I've gotten a couple of bad ones too, one person goes as far as to say the film is "worthless". But bad reviews don't really bother me. So far I've really only heard from critics though so I'm waiting to see what the general public thinks!

**Not only in my eyes, *Where the Dead Go to Die* is wide open to all sorts of interpretation. What are some of the funniest you have heard so far?**

I haven't gotten any really off-the-wall interpretations just yet; I don't think many people have seen it. It's only been out for a month or so and hasn't had a

chance to catch on. Once more people start seeing it I'm looking forward to hearing what crazy shit people have to say!! Actually when I sent the last chapter to Mr. Biro he called me a gave me a long rant and told me "I was surprised, Labby was more of a good guy in this one!" and I laughed because I was like "he was way worse this time!" and then he said something about the main character was going to grow up to be the next **Hitler**, I had never thought about that so maybe he was onto something!



**What got you into filmmaking in the first place, and into animation in particular? And did you receive any formal education on the subject?**

When I was a kid my Uncle Steven used to teach me about movies and filmmaking. He showed me films like **Night Of The Living Dead**, **Star Wars**, **El Mariachi**, and taught me what independent filmmaking was and process involved. After that I read books and watched any documentaries I could find on the subject (I didn't have the internet yet). Every Christmas growing up I convinced my mom to buy me a camera or a new computer to edit films on. Then I just kept at it over the years, learning mostly from watching tutorials and e-features on DVDs. I never went to film school, I attended college very briefly for general education, it wasn't me. I always wanted to do animation as a kid but it always seemed so impossible, and really until recent years it was pretty much impossible. I got my animation degree from the University of Youtube, Lynda, Greyscalegorilla, Video Copilot, and South Park commentaries. On an odd side note, recently my friend Vic Bonacore made a deal with Tina Krause [[Tina Krause interview - click here](#)] to release one of her old films. let me borrow it and one night I was watching it and I heard my Uncle Steven's voice. I looked up and he was acting in the fucking movie!!! Then I had remembered him telling me the stories of working on films with her Life had come full circle.

**What can you tell us about your filmwork prior to *Where the Dead Go to Die*?**

As I mentioned earlier, I make a form of industrial techno music referred to as "speedcore". One of the first I related things I made and released was a short film/music video called "Homicide Is a Form Of Art" where a bunch of us put on celebrity masks and went into the woods and sexually mutilated each other (for pretend, mostly). I knew nothing about editing and just put raw footage of my friends sticking pens and popsicle into dildo squirting blood over top of some of my tracks and called it a music video. The whole thing was like 15 minutes (in reality it SHOULD have been cut to 3-5 minutes tops) and my friend DJ Plague agreed to release on a speedcore DVD compilation he was putting out called *Hardcore Worldwide Vol. 2*. The DVD was distributed through a German Distributor called *Soundbase* and apparently a number of people complained about the video thinking it was a snuff film (I honestly don't know how). The Cops raided his warehouse's thinking he was illegally distributing snuff films and I had to send the German police behind the scenes photo to prove that no one was actually harmed and they eventually dropped the charges. All copies of the DVD were confiscated and he decided not to restock them though!



A number of years later I tried to make a more serious horror feature called **Reality Bleed-Through** which starred Brandon Slagle [[Brandon Slagle interview - click here](#)]. It played in a few festivals and got pretty good reviews, but I was never satisfied with it and kind of embarrassed by a lot of the amateurishness it. I never released it, every now and then I try to go back and do something but it just seems counterproductive at this point. I recently redid the first 4 min or so and put it on Youtube, I'm not sure what the future holds for this one just yet.

After that I started shooting another feature called **Dogshit** that I was making at the same time as **Liquid Memories**. But it came to the point where I had to choose between shooting the other half or making **The Masks The Monsters Wear**. I'm glad I made the choice I did because I went back and re-read the **Dogshit** script

recently and I didn't really like it. It's not possible to finish it at this point, for a number of different reasons. I'm thinking of throwing out the old script and editing a whole new movie out of what I already have, but I'm not sure just yet.



**Any future projects you'd like to talk about?**

Currently I'm building a new motion capture space in my basement and writing my next feature. I hope to have the script in another month or so and then jump right into recording and animating. I want to see how long it takes me to make a feature from start to finish instead of three shorts over three years. I think if I really crack down I can do it in a little over a year, I just have to finish this damn script first! I eventually want to do a follow up movie to **Where the Dead Go to Die** as well, but I want to try something else before I go right back into



**In general, do you see a big audience for your style of animation?**

I think if more homemade animated films come along a whole new genre could form! They don't have to be as vile as mine, that's just where my interests happen to lie. I know my animation is far from the level of *Pixar* or *Shrek*, but hundreds of people work on those films. I did this one alone in my basement with hacked video game parts and computers I built myself. I scraped together just enough cash every month to just pay the rent and the high electric bill from 24/7 rendering. I lived in a small house in

Minneapolis, PA, with two other people in an isolated old age community. I didn't always have the time or the money to re-render shots because of tiny glitches and such. So the lips might not always match and the head might twitch for a few frames, just think of it as seeing the zipper on the monster's costume, just let it go. Movies like **Evil Dead** and **Basket Case** had hokey effects at the time and now they're considered legends.

**Artists, animators, directors who inspire you?**

Let's see, as far as animators go, Trey Parker & Matt Stone, Mike Judge, M. Night Shyamalan, Emily Young, David Firth, the people who did **Moral Ore**, the people who did **The Maxx**... I really don't know haha. Directors, I don't know, this part is always hard for me because there's a fine line between "directors who inspire me" and "directors whose movies I consistently like" - are they supposed to be the same thing? Haha sorry, I guess I should be less difficult.

**Your favourite movies?**

I never know how to answer this question, I don't even know what I like or why! **Brain Damage**, **Beverly Hills Cop III**, **Maniac**, **GI Joe**, **Phallus In Wonderland**, **Taxi Driver**, *The S.O.S Music Video Collection* made by *The Children Of God Cult*, *Cooking with Huck Botko*, **Clockwork Orange**, **Clifford**, **Garbage Pail Kids**, **Natural Born Killers**, **The Wizard**, *The Merrill Howard Kalin Cooking Show*, **Texas Chainsaw Massacre**, **Menace II Society**, **Cannibal Holocaust**, **Bad Boy Bobby**, **Toxic Avenger**, **Official Rejection**, **American History X**, **Orgazmo**, **They Live**, **Robocop**... Is that enough?

**... and of course, films you really deplore?**

Pretty obvious stuff that isn't really worth mentioning, it would just be a list of mainstream romantic comedies and other bland mainstream things that I would tend to stay away from in the first place. If I watch something and I don't like it I just stop watching it and forget about it. I honestly can't think of anything I really hate though. Most of the time I'm just happy sound is on, and if its sound I can have on for a long period of time without having to change it, then that means its good.

**Your website, Facebook, whatever else?**

Website - <http://www.screamerclauz.com>  
 Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/screamerclauz>  
**Where the Dead Go to Die** Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/wherethedeadgo>  
 Forever Alone Film-Making Podcast - <http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/forever-alone-filmmaking-podcast/id506556243>  
 Youtube - <http://www.youtube.com/user/ScreamerClauz>  
 Vimeo (Banned-from-Youtube-content) - <http://vimeo.com/user10197169>

**Anything else you are dying to mention and I have merely forgotten to ask?**

Buy the DVD and/or Blu-ray and/or Limited Edition VHS so I can make more animated travesties of humanity and beyond the universe where evil alien Gods lord over us waiting for us to float up to the cosmos and

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then like, when we're floating we have angel wings and harps and we're singing songs and the angel wings are flapping creating some sort of new beat that human brains can't even comprehend so they file it under "the noise section" in their local heaven record stores that nobody shops at cause everyone just downloads shit up there cause its heaven and it's a cashless society and the recording industry hasn't quite figured out how to crack the dead people demographic. But that doesn't even matter cause we never make it up there cause the douche nugget aliens come and knock our wings off and we fall back to earth and God's hand quickly catches us and then he's all like "see I told you I loved you" and then we're all like "well then how come our eye is black and you haven't called us in 2 weeks." Then God doesn't really have a good excuse, he never really does actually.

**Thanks for the interview!**

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