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Movie News

AICN HORROR talks with director/writer **Éric Falardeau** about his brilliant body horror film **THANATOMORPHOSE!**

Published at: Feb. 3, 2014, 12:27 p.m. CST [Share On Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)



Logo by Kristian Horn

[What the & is ZOMBIES & SHARKS?](#)

Greetings, all. [Ambush Bug](#) here with another AICN HORROR: ZOMBIES & SHARKS column. One of the perks of this AICN HORROR gig is discovering brand new horrors and sharing them with those who have yet to see them. Case in point: the film *THANATOMORPHOSE*, which I reviewed a few months back and has just recently been made available through [MVD Entertainment](#). The film tells the tale of a woman who inexplicably begins to decompose and we as the viewer follow her the whole way through this horrific ordeal. This horrific vision of body horror was written and directed by French Canadian *Éric Falardeau*. Blown away by the film as I was, I reached out to *Éric* to ask him about *THANATOMORPHOSE*, beginning with its unique title. Here's what transpired...

AMBUSH BUG (BUG): *THANATOMORPHOSE* is one mouthful of a title for a film. What does it mean to you, and is it something we need to know upon going into this film?

ÉRIC FALARDEAU (EF): It is not important to know the meaning of the word before watching the film. When we finished editing the film, my team and I tried to find a catchier title, but none of them truly described what the film was about like this work title. So I decided to just go with it. It truly conveys the tone of the film. It is a French term meaning "the visible signs of an organism's decomposition resulting from death". I stumbled upon the word while doing research on the subject.

BUG: The film follows one woman (*Kayden Rose*) as she literally disintegrates in front of our eyes. Where did the idea of the film come from?

EF: A few years ago, me and my ex-girlfriend were talking and making jokes about someone rotting from the inside. At the same time I was working over my master thesis about body fluids in gore and porn films. I then started putting ideas on paper and working on the



script on an irregular basis (between my thesis, my day job and another film). The script became more and more personal, like a reflection of my inner self and my readings at that time of my life. I was into Kierkegaard, Camus, Sartre...



BUG: How did Kayden Rose react to going through this metamorphosis and being under all of this makeup and slime?

EF: It was hard for her, but she is a real pro. Sometimes, near the end of the shooting, she had to be covered in make-up and liquids for 15, 16 hours and more! But we decided to use that to our advantage. Her body seems tired and it shows onscreen. It is the kind of thing that you can't really get any other way. She did an amazing job.

BUG: For the most part, this looks to be all practical makeup effects. Who came up with the distinct look of the effects in the film?

EF: We had two special effects artists. David Scherer (THEATRE BIZARRE, CHIMERES) was our lead practical effects artist. He's from France, so we had him come to Montreal for the shoot. He did an amazing job on a shoestring budget. He is very creative and understands the impact of the other departments on the success of special effects, like editing or cinematography. Like the film, which is divided in three acts, we designed three styles of makeup ranging from simple makeup to prosthetics and a body suit. David Scherer is the new big name in the field. He is the next Savini or De Rossi. He has that energy and talent.

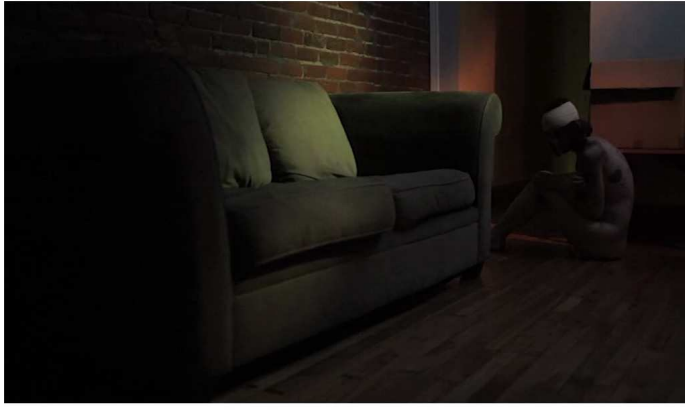
We also worked with Rémy Couture (INNER DEPRAVITY, ART/CRIME) who took care of the liquids (blood, pus, etc.) and some prosthetics while David took care of all the decomposition effects and on-set work.

BUG: Was there ever a time when you wanted to try to go the CG route?

EF: Never. Aesthetic has to support the story and the topic of the movie. It is the only way to be truthful to what you want to express. Going CG would have meant to depart from my goals and intentions.



For me, it was important not to go CG because it is a film about the body. Bodies are real. And we've seen bodies since we are born. They have textures, colors, a certain randomness which practical effects also have because of their materiality. They are real, too; they also have textures, colors, randomness. Same thing for the body fluids that are sticky, messy. They leave traces and marks when you interact with them. CG is an additive/subtractive process that is used after the image is shot. It can't be organic; it isn't part of the image from the start.



There is only one CG shot in the whole film. It was used near the end to remove Kayden's nose. We had to use CG because our crazy shooting schedule made it impossible to do it with make up.

BUG: Please go into detail about the specific decisions you made in regards to the sequence in which the lead actress began falling apart.

EF: The infamous sequence of Frank's rebirth in HELLRISER was our main inspiration. We decided to take the same road: stop motion animation, puppets and

wax burning. It is a long process, but apart for some reshoots it was quite easy. We simply covered the skeleton with wax and other products, burned it and shot it frame by frame. For the "puppet" part, David, Fauve (Paradis, our assistant artistic director) and me controlled the skeleton with rods. I think it is quite effective.

BUG: There's never really an explanation as to why the woman is decaying in the film. Forgive me for reading into it, but it leaves me asking what you were going for with this film. Is this a metaphor for the toxicity of her life, her relationship? Maybe a statement on how directionless she is in the film? Are you comfortable talking about what you were trying to say here, as it could be taken in many ways?

EF: For me, THANATOMORPHOSE is about a girl who reacts to a physical state, but that physical state means something. The film's main emphasis is not on the why, but the how: how will she react to what is happening to her? It is a film about the body as an object, a commodity. How do we treat our body, and disconnect ourselves from it in the process? And how do we reconnect to ourselves through our body? So it is all you've said...and more. Or less, depending on your own subjectivity.

BUG: What has the overall audience reaction to the film been like?



EF: Really great. I didn't expect it and I'm surprised. I mean, the film is not an easy one. It is a slow burner and we went for unusual framings, out of focus shots, etc. to create the atmosphere. It is not a regular horror film, nor a regular mainstream one. But I think it speaks to a lot of people. It is great. And apart for the overall positive reaction, I'm grateful to everyone who takes two hours to watch my film. It is a privilege, and I want to thank everyone for that.

BUG: Were there any reactions to the gore that stand out as particularly memorable? I guess I'm asking how many people threw up during test screenings...



EF: One great moment was at the Festival de Cine de Terror de Molins de Rei during the 12 hour film marathon. I wasn't there, but the film won the Best Movie award. So last November I went to the festival to be part of the jury, and someone came to me to tell me that the year before one of his friends was so shocked that he had to get out to throw up. But he came back to finish the film!

BUG: What other projects are you working on at the moment?

EF: I would love to be hired to direct a screenplay that I haven't written. I'm looking forward to that. So if you are a producer looking for a director, I'm available! Meanwhile, I'm writing screenplays for both feature length and short films. Only time will tell which film I'll be shooting next. I'd like to shoot at least one of the short films by the end of 2014 or start of 2015. For the next feature length my goal is 2015. There is also a book about softcore erotic film that I'm co-writing/co-directing with Simon Laperrière that will be published this summer. I'm keeping myself busy!

BUG: Thanks so much, Éric. Below the trailer is my review of THANATOMORPHOSE. The film is available now on DVD, and it's a film no gore-lover should miss!

BEWARE: This trailer has decaying boobs! NSFW!

New on DVD from [MVD Entertainment!](#)

THANATOMORPHOSE (2012)

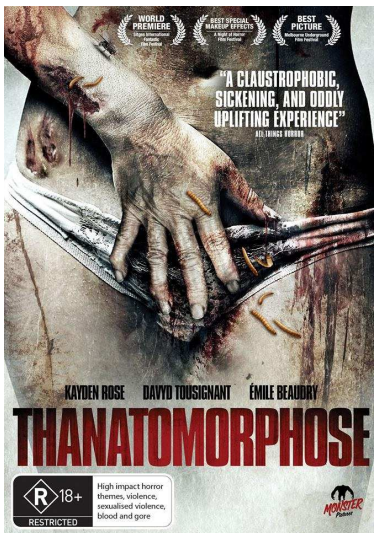
Directed by Éric Falardeau

Written by Éric Falardeau

Starring Kayden Rose, Davyd Tousignant, Émile Beaudry, Karine Picard, Roch-Denis Gagnon, Eryka Cantieri

[Find out more about this film here](#) and on [Facebook here](#)

Reviewed by [Ambush Bug](#)



Disgusting, beautiful, nauseating, surreal, morose, mesmerizing, haunting, morbid, and soul-shreddingly tragic are just a few words I'd use to describe Éric Falardeau's film *THANATOMORPHOSE*, which is equal parts Kafka's *METAMORPHOSIS*, Polanski's *REPULSION*, and Cronenberg's *THE FLY*.

This is not a film for the squeamish. I repeat, this time with feeling: this is not a film for the squeamish! *THANATOMORPHOSE*, which I believe roughly translates into "becoming death", is a film unlike any I've seen. In many ways,



it's a triumph—in practical special effects, in simplistic storytelling, in metaphorical storytelling, and in the depths and levels of tragedy it falls into and rots in. The story follows a young struggling artist (Kayden Rose) who is in a relationship with a brutish boyfriend that is going nowhere and is obviously extremely unhappy with her life. The film opens with a montage of oversaturated imagery which only after a while I was able to piece together as a surreal sex scene. Soon after, the young woman (Rose) sees a bizarre bruise on her arm, but thinks nothing of it. Thus begins a literal decomposition of the poor young thing and it plays out minute by meltingly painstaking minute.

There are people who will absolutely loathe this film for the depths to which it goes. Falardeau pulls no punches here and gives no shit as far as what he will show and won't show. Vomit, blood, guts, gore, piss, shit, pus, bile—there isn't a body fluid that isn't addressed on screen in the most vile of manners as the woman decomposes in front of our very eyes over the hour and forty minutes of this film. For many, the simplicity and gratuity of the story is going to be an utter turn-off because, basically, that's really all there is to this film—one woman completely disintegrating mind, body (especially body) and soul before our eyes. For some it's just going to be too much, and while I respect the opinion of those folks, I can't help but wholeheartedly disagree.

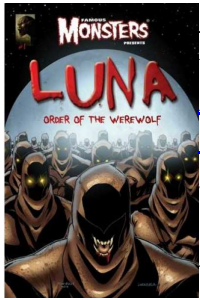


What Falardeau has given us here can be seen as metaphor for the struggle any young woman goes through when trying to find herself and her way in life. The scope could be broadened a bit to be a comment on the death of art, since the main character is an artist who, even as she is falling apart, still tries to create. The view could even be expanded to evoke some kind of commentary about the inevitability of death for all of us. Whatever the metaphor at work here, this is my kind of film. Sure it's artsy, but it's definitely not insubstantial. My heart ached watching this poor woman try her best to literally keep herself together with thread, gauze, and duct tape as her world and body falls apart around her.

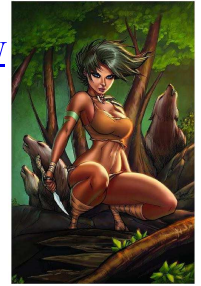
A lot of that has to do with Kayden Rose's courageous performance, as she is nude and exposed for 95% of this film (aside from all of the decomposition makeup, that is). The palpable torment she goes through in this film will leave your soul stinging.

From a practical effects point of view, I haven't seen anything like this. In an age when CG shatters all semblance of reality in most films, modern horror makers should take note to see how tactile and effective practical effects can be. The makeup isn't bulky or cheap. Rose is covered in slime and ooze, and her flesh actually falls off the bone by the latter portions of the film. There are effects in this film I have no idea how they pulled off, but somehow they do it and it feels all the more nauseatingly effective that they were done in the scene rather than added later with CG.

THANATOMORPHOSE is definitely not a film for everyone. If you have a strong stomach, an appreciation for the more artsy films, and can steel your soul in preparation for watching, you just might be ready for this film. I've warned the rest of you. This is a vile and disgusting film sure to cause feelings of unease, loathing, and utter urp-itude. It's also one of the most tragically beautiful films I've seen in terms of effects, simplicity, and sheer guts on director Falargeau and actress Rose's part. This is a film I most definitely will not forget.



Ambush Bug is Mark L. Miller, original @\$Hole/wordslinger/writer of wrongs/reviewer/interviewer/editor of AICN COMICS for over 12 years & [AICN HORROR](#) for 4. Mark's written comics such as [THE TINGLERS](#) & [WITCHFINDER GENERAL](#), [DEATHSPORT GAMES](#), [NANNY & HANK](#) (soon to be a feature film from Uptown 6 Films), [Zenescope's GRIMM FAIRY TALES Vol.13](#) & [UNLEASHED: WEREWOLVES – THE HUNGER](#) and a chapter in Black Mask Studios' [OCCUPY COMICS](#), [FAMOUS MONSTERS' LUNA: ORDER OF THE WEREWOLF](#) (co-written with Martin Fisher) will be available



soon in trade. Mark also wrote the critically acclaimed [GRIMM FAIRY TALES PRESENTS THE JUNGLE BOOK](#) and its follow up [THE JUNGLE BOOK: LAST OF THE SPECIES!](#) Follow Ambush Bug on the Twitters @Mark_L_Miller.



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