



HORROR HOSTS IN THE NEWS

The following article about "Dr. Gangrene" and "Chiller Cinema" appeared in the Tennessee newspaper, The Daily News Journal, the Spring of 2003.



THE HORROR

MTSU Alum Hosts Late Night TV

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MTSU alumnus Larry Underwood dons a lab coat and latex gloves once a week in efforts to transform into Dr. Gangrene.

Remember Elvira, the brunette with too much eye makeup and spiked hair who used to introduce horror movies on television?

Well, Middle Tennessee now has its own Elvira of sorts in the form of Dr. Gangrene.

While the two are not similar in appearance, they do share the same occupation as host of a horror movie show.

MTSU alumnus Larry Underwood dons a lab coat and latex gloves once a week in efforts to transform into Dr. Gangrene. Underwood hosts his television show "Chiller Cinema" as Gangrene at 1 o'clock Friday mornings on Nashville's UPN 30.

"I refer to myself as a `horror host,'" explains Underwood during a recent telephone interview from his Hendersonville home. "My show, only being half an hour long, I don't have time to play whole movies. So I show trailers, independent short films, people's collections of things related to horror, interviews with actors and directors and music videos if they have a horror slant.

"I'll show anything that has to do with pop culture, science fiction, fantasy or horror. I do

a lot of fun stuff."

But Underwood is quick to explain he doesn't focus on the serious side of horror. He wants to make it fun. The desire to reach audiences who may not be into horror was the inspiration for Dr. Gangrene. He wanted to make the show seem accessible.

"I like to think of Dr. Gangrene as a mad scientist with delusions of conquering the world," he explains. "He will never be able to do it because he is too inept, but I find silly characters are more popular."

Underwood has been perfecting Dr. Gangrene since his television premiered in 1999. However, Gangrene is not his first visit to the world of science fiction. Before the television show, Underwood had a comic strip. When he decided it was time for a change, a friend suggested a television show on public access.

Underwood says a horror show is the only kind of TV he would consider doing. When he got the green light, he began developing Dr. Gangrene.

"And at the time I created the character, the television show 'ER' was popular," recalls the actor. "I was being stopped constantly and being told I looked like Mark Greene, Anthony Edwards' character. I liked the idea of my character being a doctor and being named after a debilitating disease. I thought that dichotomy was interesting, as well. Plus, it's easy to remember."

Five years into his television show, the success of "Chiller Cinema" has been greater than Underwood imagined. In 1999, his show was only broadcast on Hendersonville's public access, and today "Chiller Cinema" reaches 49 counties nationwide.

"It started airing in Hendersonville in July of '99 and then shows started airing in Nashville in October of '99," he says. "Then I started getting contacted by other cable access networks from all over the country wanting me to send them tapes of my show. I didn't get paid for any of that, but it was good exposure. Now everybody gets it, rabbit ears, cable, the dish, the whole nine yards."

The next year Underwood's entrepreneurship paid off. In 2000, the "Nashville Scene" voted Dr. Gangrene the best horror host and Gear Magazine voted "Chiller Cinema" the 11th best public access show in the country, which the host says blew him away.

But with success comes the discovery that the job title "horror host" no longer fits his occupation. However, that doesn't mean he's hanging up his lab coat and Dr. Gangrene with it. It just means he's altering his title.

"It's a unique show and it's hard to categorize," he says. I've figured out I'm not a traditional horror host, he continues. "It's more like I host horror."