



HORROR HOSTS IN THE NEWS

The following article about "The Horror Host Underground" appeared in ""**Scary Monsters**" magazine #48 in October 2003; this is the first article in a series.



BEWARE, THEY'RE ON THE AIR!: THE HORROR HOST UNDERGROUND IS ON THE MOVE

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Scary Monsters Magazine #48; October 2003

As Horror fans, we all have special memories from our youth that form the people that we are today. There are shared experiences of dog-eared copies of Famous Monsters of Filmland and seeing classic flicks for the first time. But if we're really lucky, there is one experience that sometimes might be unique to the region you grew up in. What I am talking about is the vampire, ghoul or mad scientist who haunted your airwaves as a child. I am speaking of the fiend who popped up between segments of "Godzilla vs. The Sea Monster" or "The Giant Gila Monster" with a bad joke or two or perhaps some trivia regarding the movie you just saw on screen. I speak of that often forgotten, and much ignored, figure of local television, the horror host.

From the time that Vampira took to the air in Los Angeles and when Roland first appeared in Philly, horror hosts have been as much fun for genre fans as the films they broadcast. Sadly, in the mid-eighties in a time of expanding network affiliations and with the advent of infomercials, this has become somewhat of a dying artform. Indeed, at one time, horror hosts once roamed the land and were multital. But by the end of the 1980's, their numbers had started dwindling. But while the people who hosted horror films might have departed, their fans were still out there and they remembered the good times their heroes generated. Efforts were made to keep those memories alive, as is evident in every issue of Scary Monsters. But there are those few out there who have gone beyond just keeping the memories of their youth alive. Some of these fans of the denizens of the late night picture show have actually taken steps to create their own horror hosting memories. Armed with nothing more than spunk and creative energy, some public domain films and a cable access station near them willing to broadcast their unique brand of

shows, the new generation of horror hosts have arrived. What is more, they've organized and banded together in a grand group called the Horror Host Underground.

I first became aware of the HHU in 2001 through my work with Cheryl Duran's Monster News. There I met a fellow named A. Ghastlee Ghoul, aka Bob Hinton, who has been airing his own unique show on cable access for almost thirteen years out of Dayton, OH. I quickly learned how Bob, along with C.W. Prather (the producer of "The Spooky Movie" with Dr. Sarcofiguy (aka John Dimes), New Jersey's Halloween Jack (aka Evan Davis) and Nashville's Dr. Gangrene (aka Larry Underwood) had started working with other cable access hosts to pool their efforts and help to get each other's shows on the air on one another's cable access stations. These four men were the founding fathers of the Horror Host Underground.

I immediately became interested in what the guys were doing and wanted to learn more about it. Thankfully Prather was willing to fill me in on how the HHU came to be. "In 1999, Count Gore created his Horror Host Mailing List, originally as an outlet for fans of the genre to meet," Prather explained as the history of the HHU unfolded. "I was one of the first to post on the list, being both an original Count Gore fan and the producer of the Northern Virginia Horror Host Show, "The Spooky Movie." Soon after, others who were also doing similar [cable access] shows across the country found the list and before we knew it, a support system had been created."

From there, the support group of Count Gore's list grew. Eventually friendships were created and working bonds were formed. Prather enlisted his fellow hosts to create segments for a double feature event that has become legendary in horror hosting circles, "The Spooky Movie Thanksgiving Leftover Special." For this special, eight different hosts helped to host a double helping of "Night of the Living Dead" and "I Eat Your Skin." A year later, the Night Shadow out of Los Angeles would enlist his fellow hosts to assist with a special screening of "The Atomic Brain." The hosts were already working together, the next logical step was to take it up a notch and start syndicating their shows to one another. Prather explains further the genesis of the HHU.

"Twice during the Summer of 2001 I had the opportunity to finally meet many [other] hosts face-to-face. The first time I met any of them was in Dayton, Ohio in the beginning of the summer. [The hosts I met were] A. Ghastlee Ghoul, Dr. Creep, Dr. Freak, Halloween Jack and Dr. Gangrene. An idea was formed then at the meeting, and by the time Halloween Jack, Ghastlee and myself met again in Baltimore, MD at the end of the summer, both Ghastlee and I had come up with virtually the same plan of how to expose our viewers to shows from around the country.

"The conversation, ironically enough, happened in Edgar Allan Poe's graveyard the morning of the first Horrorfind Weekend Convention. As we talked, we realized that not only did we have the same crazy idea, but we both knew, almost instinctly, that if we BOTH were doing it, then we would, by default, have a network!" Thus three of the founding fathers were in place. Soon Dr. Gangrene would join to make this group a foursome. "Dr. Gangrene was one of a number of hosts that had been very successful in distributing his show, "Chiller Cinema", to stations all over the country," Prather says as he explains how the good doctor came into the HHU fold.

"Dr. Gangrene's example proved to be invaluable, as those stars began to align with many of us." Prather explained further, "Dr. Gangrene was always part of the original four, his show being the cornerstone for which most of the HHU Network blocks have been based around."

Thus the HHU came to be, with its four founding members in place, trading tapes and securing airtime for one another on their respective cable access stations. And the ranks of the HHU have only grown since the original foursome started their efforts. So far other hosts have joined including the Baron Mondo Von Doren, Bone Jangler, Doktor Goulfinger, I. Zombi and Professor Griffin to name just a few. All are devoted to hosting films and keeping it real (fun) for everyone.

More important than just keeping our nation entertained as these fiends of mine take to the air wave, the HHU members also care enough to keep the memory of past horror hosts alive and in the conscious minds of the viewers that they reach with their cable access shows. The classic

hosts who have most influenced and supported the HHU include such legends as Count Gore De Vol, Dr. Creep, Baron Von Wolfstein and Humphrey the Hunchback. The greatest thing the members of this new generation of horror hosts has done is to help track down quite a few classic horror hosts and to befriend them. Many of the 'new kids' feel that it is important to let the heroes of their youth know that they had done their jobs well and that they reached so many young people who remember their weekly visits between showings of "Monster from the Surf" and "Return of Dracula." Indeed these folks had done something very important. They had managed to corrupt the next generation of fright fans that watched their show and insured us that we would have a new wave of horror hosts for the 21st Century. God Bless them for that.

In the coming issues of Scary Monsters, I would like to introduce the various members of the Horror Host Underground to you good readers. Some of them you already know. Some of them you will be meeting for the first time. All of them you will find entertaining and enjoyable. In the meantime, the Horror Host Underground invites you all to come and visit them on the web. Drop on by the HHU's official website at www.horrorhosts.com.