



HORROR HOSTS IN THE NEWS

The following article about "The Horror Host Underground" appeared in ""**Scary Monsters**" magazine #49 in early 2004; this is the second article in a series.



"The Horror Host Underground Casts a Mighty Web: The Worlds First Horror Host Wedding Begins the Third Year of the HHU

Article by C.W. Prather

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Ken Kish is a man who really "gets it." While many monster or horror conventions entertain the occasional horror host, Ken is someone who understands that the secret of their appeal is that horror hosts working today do what they do for the love of what they do, and little else.

Because they come to this as fans first, horror hosts at conventions will work harder, enthrall and engage the convention goers more, have the most fun of anyone in the room, and act as a reliable source of entertainment, ultimately making the job easier for convention organizers, such as Ken and his wife Pam Kish, who have put on the popular **Cinema Wasteland** convention outside of Cleveland for four years now.

A number of hosts have made Wasteland an October tradition (soon to also become an April tradition), including video superstar **Dr. Shock**, the master **Son of Ghoul (Ohio)**, the timeless **Dr. Creep (Ohio)**, the king of Horror Hosts, **The Bone Jangler**, and his fiercely protective enchantress, **Nocturna**, all the way over from the Chicagoland area, Horror Host archivist **Doktor Goulfing (California)** and **A. Ghastlee Ghoul** from Dayton, Ohio's long running "The Ghastlee Movie Show," official videographer for Baltimore's "Horrorfind Weekend," weekly contributor to CountGore.com, founder of Dayton, Ohio's "Ghastlee's Scary Camp" monster convention (Memorial Day weekend), and one of the organizers of the Horror Host Underground, a self-syndication and promotional entity to help support current horror hosts whose origins were detailed in "Scary Monsters" #48.

When Ghastlee told Ken early in 2003 that he and his girlfriend, the lovely horror hostess, **Suspira**, were planning to get married, Mr. Kish convinced his friend to have the ceremony be the

first part of a planned “spooky show” at the October 2003 convention. Within days, the word was spread among the participants of the HHU, many of whom dropped their early October plans to be involved in what everyone quickly understood was the largest gathering of horror hosts ever.

And it couldn't have turned out more perfect!

Shortly after the dealer room closed, **Professor Anton Griffin** (Texas), from the “Midnight Shadow Show,” served as spook show barker, encouraging and frightening the guests to join the convention hall to be part of this once in several lifetimes event. As people, including members from the couple's biological families, filled the large room, Ghastlee eased his pre-wedding jitters by playing music with many of his horror host brothers, including **I. Zombi** (Kentucky) from “The Witching Hour,” **Halloween Jack** and his side kick **Bago Bones** (New Jersey) from “The Haunted Theatre,” **Baron Mondo Von Doren** and **El Sapo De Tempesto** (Florida) from “Nightmare Theatre,” and finally Cinema Wasteland and the HHU's favorite brat, **Dr. Freak** (Ohio) the world's youngest horror host, who sang a special, endearing song to one of his true fathers, Ghastlee.

Living legend **Count Gore de Vol** (Transylvania, by way of Paducah), who had been instrumental in bringing many of us together years earlier, was the official “host” of the wedding; **Dr. Sarcofiguy** (Northern Virginia) from “The Spooky Movie” sang the 1975 Jim Croce standard “Time in a Bottle” as the Bride and the wedding party, which consisted of Suspira's real life daughter and friends, including the enchantress **Nocturna** escorted by **The Bone Jangler** (Illinois), two of the HHU's strongest advocates (and both stars of the popular “The Bone Jangler”), came down the isle, lead by a flower girl that looked a lot like The Robot Monster; Halloween Jack gave the Bride away, while the legendary **Dr. Creep** (Ohio) from “Shock Theatre” served as Ghastlee's best man.

Officiating over the ceremony were **Carpathian** and **Kuzibah**, one half of the Patent Creatures – their partners had other roles in the wedding, including driving the Bridal hearse (**Cousin Grim**) and being a member of the bridal party (**Miss Scarlett**). Some of the oldest friends of the HHU, Carpathian and Kuzibah surprised many with a ceremony that will be remembered for its thoughtfulness and tears, as well as its laughter and silliness.

As the Bride and Gloom made their way back down the isle together as Husband and Wife, **Remo D.** (California) from “The Manor of Mayhem,” lead everyone in a special rendition of the song “The Festival of the New Wine” from “Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man,” which prompted an attack by the **Baron Von Wolfstein** (Ohio). An impromptu dance by **Dr. Mor B.S.** (Ohio) signaled the beginning of the reception, which included touching toasts by Griffin and Dr. Creep, Ghastlee's real life daughter catching the bouquet, Bago Bones nabbing the garter, an appearance by convention guest and pal **Tom Sullivan** (special effects mastermind of “The Evil Dead”) as “Batman,” and an amazing red velvet cake, that the couple cut using a trowel given to them by another convention favorite (and friend), **Kyra Schon**, from “Night of the Living Dead,” who was celebrating her birthday that weekend.

“This is like a real family,” the surprised host **Commandant Gore** (Ohio) from “Gorevision” said at some point to me during the convention, and he was right.

Taking a look around the reception after the ceremony, it was as if the HHU website had come to life, and spilled all over the Holiday Inn. Almost 30 horror hosts were at Cinema Wasteland that weekend (did someone call the Guinness folks?), from every conceivable corner of the United States. With the exception of a couple of missing friends, this family reunion had really happened – this was the culmination of two years of hard work by so many people.

“Boy, you are going to have your work cut out for you when you get back home!” Charles Crowley, from The Bone Jangler's show joked with me. He was right – I didn't want hear it then – but as webmaster and manager of the official website, HorrorHosts.com, I know that to many

people the website was their first, and remains their primary, connection to both HHU, and the world of all current horror hosts.

"Thanks Chucky!"

No time to complain, though – this is what we wanted. From the beginning when the site launched (Valentine's Day, 2002), the HHU website was a necessary public outlet to disseminate the information about what we are doing, where we were going, and more importantly – who the heck we were.

It didn't make sense for us to compete with the established tribute sites to the hosts that have inspired and entertained us, but rather it would be important that people knew where to go for updated information on what's currently out there, to help educate others who thought this was a genre that had died with the invention of cable television, and to act as a beacon for those who needed to find us, whether they were existing or future hosts.

Horror historian, Remo D. was convinced his show was the only one on out there (who else would be this crazy to produce a public access horror host program?) until he discovered and befriended us; **Mr. Lobo** (California) had been cranking out his exquisitely ready-for-primetime "Cinema Insomnia" for two years before he stumbled on HorrorHosts.com and learned of the larger community; and back east **Vlad and Creighton** from the satirical "Ghoul-A-Go-Go" (New York) were excited to find out that there was actually a group of like-minded folks that would play their half hour tribute to kids shows of the past all over the country.

And just as Count Gore had directly (or indirectly) helped inspire a wave of new hosts through his website, countgore.com, so has the Horror Host Underground website motivated folks to go to their local access station, their garages, their basements and their living rooms, and do their own shows. I. Zombi, **Butch R. Cleaver and Joan Cleaver (Ohio)** from "Meet Clever Theatre", **Dr. Fear** (Illinois) from "Creepy Theatre", **Dr. Fear and Trink** (Oklahoma) from "The Mysterious Lab of Dr. Fear", **The Mortician** (Ohio) from "The Mortician," **Gortem-Shreek** (Minnesota) from "**Black Sky Cinema**", and **Madam Mortem** (California) from "The Midway of Madness" are some who have made their dreams realities since we launched, inspired by the knowledge that viewers outside of their own market would be able to enjoy their work.

The central message of helping yourself by helping others resonated with many in this elite community. **Doctor Zombie** (California), for example, from "Halloween Theatre" had about decided to quit being a horror host when we found each other, and now he is one of the Horror Host Underground's most dedicated participants, sponsoring other host's shows on three different cable systems up and down the left coast, and devoting large portions of his internet radio show to the HHU.

Hosts have come up with HHU t-shirt designs, created tribute specials, cut bumpers, broker media deals and, in the case of the great **Dr. Gangrene** (Tennessee) from "Chiller Cinema," explored promotional options as diverse as calendars and trading cards. The web address has been put into print publications, inserted into actual hosted episodes, and even in advertised appearances by the individual hosts in their own markets.

This has not always been easy, though. Whether it's a case of no good deed going unpunished, or simple misunderstandings, the will and determination of the HHU has been tested a number of times the last two years. The primary motivation of most of the hosts is the fun and joy of doing their shows and the pleasure to encourage others in separate markets to do the same, and as long as greed is not an option, the HHU will remain intact.

The future of the HHU is brilliant. The Horror Host Underground Network (the only real membership part of the HHU), like the website, continues to grow organically. Some sponsors and hosts have come and gone in the last two years, but we always seem to regroup stronger

and bolder than before. As of this writing we currently are showing programs on access stations in Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, New Jersey, California, Florida and North Carolina with the promise of many more coming soon. There is even talk of hosts following Count Gore's lead and streaming complete episodes to the internet – one of A. Ghastlee Ghoul's pet projects – making the website even more important.

The wedding between Ghastlee and Suspira last October was yet another milestone with the Horror Host Underground. Not only was there the historic union between two hosts, not only was this first joint convention appearance by so many living legends in the horror hosting community (Count Gore de Vol, Son of Ghoul, Dr. Creep and **The Ghoul**, who made it on Sunday after battling the flu most of the weekend) part of the largest single gathering of horror hosts ever, not only was it an opportunity for many hosts and friends to meet for the first time, not only was the most successful Cinema Wasteland ever (yes, Ken Kish does get it!), but it was the signal of a rebirth and recommitment to all of us who believe that life is too short, and this is too much fun.