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Sunday 5 February 2017, by myDylarama team

Low-budget horror *Skew*, an ambitious first feature with some genuinely creepy moments, has become a bit of an underground hit. We've caught up with director Sevé, whose latest film *Peelers* has finished off doing the rounds of festivals everywhere.

Can you tell me a bit more about your background as a filmmaker?

Ever since I was a kid I wanted to make movies. I always had a camera in my hand, following my friends and family around, videotaping them, making up stories as I stalked them. If no one was willing to participate, I would get in front of the camera myself. I just wouldn't let anything stop me. This led me to film school at York University, where I got my degree in Fine Arts. After that, it was time to work in the film industry, but since they weren't handing out directing gigs on Hollywood Boulevard I had to content myself with a job in post production. I had a knack for editing and became an online editor and colourist. While working in post, I made my connections and networked and saved up enough money so that I could make my first full-length feature film, which was *Skew*. I didn't go after outside funding because I figured it would be a lot of time spent for naught and quite frankly, I'm glad I didn't. Everything came out of my own pocket and while that was rough, at least I got to call all the shots and all the risk was on me and no one else.

What sparked your interest in the horror genre? What were your major influences?

I definitely love all genres of film, but you can have so much fun with horror. What drew me to the horror genre is the challenge to come up with something that really scares people. Everyone has a fear of something and while some fears are universal, others can be very particular. I wanted to delve into my own fears and see if others shared them as well. Which is why I chose to do a psychological horror rather than an all-out gore fest with *Skew*. All-out gore doesn't scare me at all, but mess with the psyche and I'm looking for the light switch and checking under the bed. As for major influences for *Skew*, definitely *The Blair Witch Project*. It was something so different and new at the time, which made it exciting; and at the same time it scared the crap out of me. That film lingered for a long time after it was over. I also just love the old school horrors like *Halloween* and *The Omen*. That slow building sense of dread is achieved so beautifully in these films. I love it.



Can you tell us a bit more about the production process for *Skew*? (Funds, shooting, distribution...)

"It was like being in a clown car at the circus and videotaping the whole thing."

What were your major obstacles and what did you find particularly helpful?

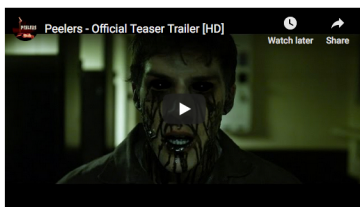
The idea for *Skew* was born of the fact that I was bankrolling the whole project and the funds were few and far between, so I thought to myself, how can I come up with a feature film where I can get away with minimal crew, cast, locations, effects, and fancy, expensive cameras and have the audience accept it as such and not complain about production value, etc.? And so the answer came in the form of a found footage style film. Everyone accepts the fact that the footage in these films is raw and rough around the edges because it's a representation of "reality" as recorded by amateur/unprofessional cinematographers (i.e. the average person). Some of the major obstacles were definitely the long distances we had to travel in order to get out of the city to give the impression of being on a road trip; location scouting was also difficult, as we had to find some very specific types of locations, like a closed down gas station...I didn't realize how hard it was to find one! And probably the most challenging was shooting while driving...trying to fit a director and a 6 foot 4 sound guy in a small car along with the camera and three actors proved to be quite the feat...it was like being in a clown car at the circus and videotaping the whole thing.

As for what was the most helpful, one aspect would be having rehearsals before shooting. This allowed the actors to be prepared on set which was so beneficial, especially when shooting guerilla-style the way we were. Also, having a small cast and crew was amazing because everyone took it upon themselves to help each other out and be there for one another. As a result, we became a very intimate, supportive unit and that was indispensable.

How did *Peelers* come about? How would you introduce it to people who've yet to see it?

My sales agent on *Skew* suggested I make another horror film because they're easier to sell in the indie market. His only two requirements were that it have more blood and more nudity. I was definitely on board for having more blood and gore, but while I'm all for nudity in general, I just didn't want to make a film with gratuitous boob shots. So I thought, where can I have a horror film take place where nudity is the norm? And the location for *Peelers* was born. I then approached Lisa DeVita (Devits), whom I played baseball with and I knew she was working on her own screenplays and pitched her the idea of writing a horror script that takes place in a strip club. Devits used to live in Las Vegas so she had lots of source material and she jumped at the chance to write the script. We both have the same sense of humor and we worked really well together so it turned out to be an amazing director-writer partnership.

As for how I would introduce *Peelers* to people, I would probably say: "If you're easily offended, don't bother watching it. But if you love the idea of being potentially insulted, then enjoy!" Whether people are easily offended or not, they'll be curious enough to check it out. No matter how sick and twisted a person thinks he or she is, there's at least one moment in the film that seems to push everyone's button.



What are your plans with it?

Our plans with *Peelers*? To dominate the world. Well, I guess that's sort of unrealistic... so far. We just want to get the film out for everybody to see. When you've spent this amount of time on a project and the festival reaction has been so good, you just want to share it with the world. I hope to find the type of audience that really digs fun action horror films. We have some distribution happening very shortly and are really pumped to see how our fans dig it.

Any plans for the future?

Peelers 2? Direct the Spider-man movie that I actually want to see (cuz it hasn't happened yet)? Learn Klingon? I think, after some time to do absolutely nothing and rest from this 24-7 experience, we'll see which one of our next projects grabs us. We've got quite a few of them at different stages of development and have to decide what's the best project to move forward on. The writer and myself come from more of a comedic background so we'll see if that's a direction we want to go. We may even look into the dreaded world of outside funding for this go round.

What advice would you give filmmakers starting out?

Prepare to not have a life. If you really really want to make films then you have to live and breathe it 24-7. You have to be aware and work on every aspect of it all the time. Like sports, nothing comes without practice and always trying to do better at your craft. You can't make something truly be the best if you don't give it your all. Also, never give up. This is the one message I have on my phone because in true indie film style, 9 times out of 10 you will have the door closed or the phone hung up on you. You need to have thick skin and not take anything personal. Don't worry, positive vibes and determination will eventually get you that "yes" that you're looking for. Never Give Up.

Skew is available on DVD. More info on *Peelers* [here](#).

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Keywords

- Horror