

Panel 1 – The Legacy of Nosferatu

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**Horror Reverie I:
A Symposium Celebrating 100 Years of *Nosferatu***

TRANSCRIPT

**Panel 1 - The Legacy of *Nosferatu*
19 February 2022
(duration 1:16:59)**

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Nosferatu, vampire, grimoire, *Shadow of the Vampire*, monster, death

00:04 - Kristopher [Kris] Woofter

Well, welcome, everybody. This is quite a pleasure to welcome you to this celebration of 100 years and two days since the premiere of *Nosferatu*. I'm just-really quickly there's some feedback, so if people who are not muted can just mute that would be great. My name is Kris Woofter, I'm the editor of *Monstrum*, one of the organizers of the event, along with Gary Rhodes and Mark Jancovich. It was important for us that this symposium featured the voices of both artists and scholars. And we have a terrific lineup of speakers for you today including a very special guest Elias Merhige, director of *Shadow of the Vampire*. Today's symposium is being recorded and will later be published in *Monstrum 5.1*, which will come out in June, along with an accompanying transcript, and an original framing text by Cristina Massaccesi, author of *Nosferatu*, the book for the Devil's Advocate series for Liverpool University Press. So look for that in the future.

Horror Reverie is the first of what we hope will be many such symposia. It's co-sponsored by the collective for research on epistemologies of embodied risk or CORÉRISC. The Montreal *Monstrum* Society, the journal *Monstrum*, Oklahoma Baptist University, the University of East Anglia and the Moving Image Research Lab with funding support from the Fonds de Recherche du Quebec (FRQSC).

We ask that audience members please keep their cameras off. If you have questions for the speakers in a given panel, please send those as a direct message to the chair of

the panel in the session so that that person will identify themselves right off the bat. Our chairs today are Gary Rhodes for panel 1, Erica Tortolani for panel 2 and Robert Singer for panel 3. Before we begin in earnest with some opening remarks from Gary Rhodes, we would like to express our condolences to Mark Jancovich, who couldn't be here today due to the recent loss of his mother. Our thoughts are with Mark and this symposium is dedicated to the memory of Mark's mother and also to the continued recovery of vampire scholar Wayne Stein, who just finished months of stem cell treatment for cancer. We also lost at the end of last year Dracula historian Elizabeth Miller, and so we'd like to add a final dedication to her many years of research. And for now, I'll turn this over to Gary.

03:15 - Gary Rhodes

Thank you very much, Kristopher. And welcome everyone to the first of what, as Kristopher said, we hope will be a series of years of these symposia celebrating anniversaries of important horror films. We want certainly to add to the list of thank-yous Kristopher Woofter himself who so kindly has put in a great deal of time to make today's event happen. And of course, today's event might well have happened at Hallowe'en, given *Nosferatu* that we're here to celebrate...it could have also happened in March, due to the Berlin premiere in March of 1922. We are, as Christopher briefly alluded, we are here today because of the original first premiere of *Nosferatu*, which took place not in Germany, but in Rotterdam. When the film opened on February 17, of 1922, just a few days ago, of course, and this very weekend, 100 years ago, people were in Rotterdam seeing *Nosferatu* the first time. So that's just a bit of explanation of why we're gathered here virtually in February, rather than any other month of 2022.

With that said, I'd like to introduce the first speaker on this panel, that we're so excited to be with us. As I think myself, as a film historian, in about a 130 years of cinema history globally there truly have been 1000s of tremendous filmmakers, in all countries of the world in all eras. But very, very few, a very select few have taught us to literally see in a new way, George Méliès, Robert Vinas...a very select few. And I would aver that one of those very select few is our first speaker E. Elias Merhige, with his 1989 feature film debut *Begotten*. Mr. Merhige is, of course, is well known for his work in theater, his work in music videos, and certainly his other acclaimed films such as *Suspect Zero* from 2003. And, of course, one of many reasons that he's kindly agreed to be with us today is the 2000 feature film *Shadow of a Vampire*. With John Malkovich and William DeFoe, a fantastical alternate history, of course, of the production of FW

Murnau's *Nosferatu*. We welcome him very much, very kindly at this time. So thank you, Mr. Merhige for being with us.

06:11 - E. Elias Merhige

It's my pleasure. Thank you for having me. Before I start out, I just want to say because of the pandemic, I haven't been able to see people that I love... dear friends and family. Some of them, I think, have linked into this conference. So I just want to welcome them and welcome everybody that is here right now. And especially my mom who's turning 91 in this next week. And I know she's mortified for me announcing her age, because she thinks she's the oldest person in the room. But Mom, you're not the oldest person in the room. *Nosferatu* is actually 100 years old. So with that said, I want to say hi to my brother as well in New York. And now I'm just going to jump right in.

What I've decided to do is not talk so much about everything we know about *Nosferatu* already, and everything we know about *Shadow of the Vampire* already, but talk from this sort of interstate from an artist's mind... from my own Interior Laboratory of thinking, when I was working on *Shadow the Vampire* and tried to pull a mosaic of experiences together that somehow makes sense to all of you. So I'm going to take you back to a week before Christmas 1997. I'm on a flight from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, where I'm then going to get a cab to go to New York City. And I'm going to sit down with Stephen Katz and go over the script for *Shadow the Vampire*. But this flight, like a lot of things in life you know, took a different course, because of a massive snowstorm in the New York area. The flight was grounded in O'Hare Airport in Chicago for nine hours. And we had to wait because there was a backlog of landings in Newark. So in the course of waiting, I had brought the script, *Shadow the Vampire* along with me--the early draft--and took it out and was reading through it making notes. But I was also reflecting on *Nosferatu* and my first experience with it as I was reading through the script and trying to access those feelings that I had when I was actually a very small child. What it was, is that my parents never allowed us to watch TV, which I'm actually thankful for now. But when we did watch TV, it had to be, you know, the public broadcast... had to be PBS, had to be educational. And there were a few times when my parents would be out and I would turn on the TV and limit myself to PBS. But there was one time at a very early age that you know, there was, it was like a holocaust memorial. So they had *Night and Fog* was actually one of my first

09:25

you know, really bizarre experiences watching bodies being bulldozed into mass graves. And when I tried, when my dad asked me later on, about, you know what I did, I started to describe, you know, what I saw...he actually grounded me for a morbid imagination. And so, a couple of years later--how this ties together with Nosferatu is that a couple of years later on the same public television station there was Nosferatu, and these two films, Night and Fog and Nosferatu, they somehow coalesced, combined. And, you know, led to this kind of feeling of, you know, contemplating both death and immortality and the way the two somehow feed each other in our own consciousness. And, and so these were the kinds of notes that I was making at the back of the script on Shadow the Vampire. But I had the middle seat. So we all know what that means...and in coach. And the person next to me, was just this very nice guy. We didn't talk for the whole flight. But when we were grounded, for nine hours in Chicago, he kind of leaned over kind of reading what I was reading and seeing the kind of notes I was making. And he asked me what I was doing. And so I told him that I'm working on rewriting and making notes on this script that I hope to make into a film. And he asked me what it's about. So I told him about Nosferatu. I told him about, you know, FW Murnau. And he started to light up in a strange and interesting way. And, you know, he was just basically a very, you know, polished business guy, you know, so I didn't think he even knew anything about Nosferatu, or was even interested in the fact that I was working on the script. And so he said, you know, you have to meet my fiancée. When we land, you know, she's going to be picking me up, and you have to meet her. And so I said, okay, you know, I said, that's great. So hours later, it wasn't just nine hours, it was 12 hours, we land finally at Newark, it's like midnight. He wasn't able to communicate with his fiancée, this was before cell phones, and his fiancée's furious. She's been there for hours waiting for him. And so the first thing he says is...he greets his fiancée, then "meet my new friend!" and, and she was not in the mood to meet his new friend. And she just kind of looked at me, like...like, I had just taken the shit in front of her or something. You know, I mean, it was just one of those moments where she didn't want to have anything to do with me. And so she openly said, "I do not want to,

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I don't want to drive this guy. You know, please, I just want to get in the car. I just want to get home." And I said--and he kept insisting, the fiancé, the guy that I was with, kept insisting, so I went up to him. And I said, "Listen man," I said, "I'm going to get a cab. Don't worry about this. I'm totally going to take care of this. You enjoy yourself. Good luck." And so he said, No, no, no, you have to talk to her. You have

to talk to her. So anyway, we're in the parking lot. We get in the car, we're driving, I'm sitting behind the driver, she's driving, she's blowing off steam, she's angry, she's upset. She's looking in the rearview mirror of her car, keeps eyeballing the road, eyeballing me in the back. And so she says, "So my fiancé tells me that you make films, what films do you make?" You know, it's just very pointed, very direct. And I said, "Well," I said, "I've made one film, but I'm almost certain that you've never heard of it." And then she said, "Well Try me." And so I said, "Well, it's a black and white silent film, and I am pretty sure you never heard of it." And she said, "Well, what's it about?" And so I said, "Well," I said, "it's kind of a creation myth, where you have the death of God and the birth of nature." And so I just decided, You know what, I'm just going to unload right now and just get into it and not try to hide anything. And so her face changes. Instead of getting more angry or puzzled, she goes, "Wait a minute, is the name of this film begotten?" And I said, "How on earth do you know this film?" And she says, "You know, I worked for a post production company in New York. And my boss made all of us that worked there watch this film." And I said, that is the most bizarre story I've ever heard. So she so then she started to open up and she was quite lovely. She was great. And she asked me what is it that you're working on now? So I started getting into *Nosferatu*, where I'm now and the whole story that that I'm doing. And she says "Oh my God," she said, "you know, you know, my great uncle was very close to, to FW Murnau." And I said, "Well, who's your great uncle." And she said, "Walter Spies." And I said, that is just incredible. I said--you know, and none of this impacted me until much later because I was more concerned about getting to New York getting rest, and then waking up and fighting with Stephen Katz about, you know, the script, the screenplay, but, but later on reflecting, I realized that that's so much of *Shadow of the Vampire* had these incredible uncanny confluences that relate back to *Begotten*, I mean, you know, it's interesting, because when I wrote *Begotten*, I had, at the age of 19, I had wanted, I wanted to stage it as a multimedia piece of opera, you know, I wanted it on stage, not as a film. But my sense of temporality, you know, and my love of poetry, made me really feel that I wanted to have a permanent record of all of my effort, and all of-you know, what I wanted to create with *Begotten*. So, the first impulse was theater, but then it became a film, not so much...it became a film, not because it was meant so much to be a film, but because I wanted a permanent record. And this, where this feeds into *Shadow of the Vampire* is that it feeds into the, the character of Murnau. And what I wanted to bring to life, on the screen, with his character was someone who was more obsessed with creating a masterpiece, you know, that would outlive, you know, our normal human life and, and create that masterpiece at the expense of life. And, and so one of the

important aspects of *Shadow of the Vampire*, for me was to show that the real monsters are these human beings, you know, and that, that Murnau moves in the story from being, you know, the guy that's making a movie to the guy, who's the real monster in the end, and the monster winds up becoming more human. By the time we get to the...the vampire becomes more human by the end. But I never saw the vampire genre as something that was

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that was really part of the horror genre, to be honest. I always, for me, growing up and thinking about vampires and supernatural creatures, they just seemed like extensions of nature, and even extensions of the darker side of our own humanity. I mean, you know, whether it's eating a meal, we all have to eat something that was once alive, even if we're vegetarians. And, also in life and politics and the way that corporations work and the way business works, you know, there's a lot of vampirism alive and well, in the world. So when I look at *Nosferatu*, I think the genius of that film is really in the motion picture camera. And the fact that at the time that *Nosferatu* is made, you know, cinema was considered a suspicious craft, because it was the Stoker estate that wanted, that thought it was vulgar to make a movie out of *Dracula* and, and that it should be dignified as a stage play in London. And so, that was part of the fight that they had. But going deeper now, one of the things that really opened up for me was a few months after returning from New York from that experience with Walter Spies' great niece. And the kind of uncanny coincidence of that opened up for me an idea that, well, maybe, as I'm building this movie, as I'm thinking about it, as I'm meditating, as I'm...both spiritually and artistically moving into the zone of making this film come to life in material existence...maybe there are things about the film that are actually speaking to me. So what I did is I started watching *Nosferatu* many times. I don't know how many times but it was a lot. And what I kept stopping on was the actual Grimoire. There is this contract that Hutter, you know, shows the vampire and asked to the vampire design. And that was created by Albin Grau. And when you get into Albin Grau's history, it's kind of explosively interesting. Albin Grau was a dedicated esotericist. As I was from the time of 25, to about 36, I was deeply immersed in alchemy and hermeticism. Begotten, you know, after it was seen by a lot of people, there were some very brilliant minds and great people, one of them being Dennis Jacobs, who is Francis Coppola's ghostwriter...who came up to me and said, you made the first hermetic, truly hermetic film. You are an alchemist. And I didn't know enough about alchemy at the time to really talk to him about it. But he turned me on to some to some literature, some books, things. So I just took that and dove

very deeply into it. And I would say that, from my...the way that I create, I don't create for entertainment, I create for transformation. And what I recognized in Albin Grau, not only as a person, but as a producer, as an artist, as a thinker, and an esotericist is that he was interested in transformation too. So I took note of that, and I started looking more. And because Albin Grau not only produced the film, but did the production design, I started looking more carefully at the geometry of the sets and *Nosferatu* and started looking more carefully, not through the eyes of architecture, but through the idea of, of symbolism, of secret sigils and symbolism. And, and one of the things that I want to talk about now is the extraordinary thing of,

22:09

the Grimoire. That contract that Hutter hands over to Orlok. If you freeze frame it, it is a series of symbols, and these symbols, these sigils actually are not nonsense, they actually have a significance. So what I did at the time, in the spring of 1998, was I brought the film to a group of friends that I was studying alchemical texts with, and particularly the *Corpus Hermeticum*, at the time, we were, we were studying the unabridged edition of that, that took a number of years. And I brought it to them. And we all sat down and it was my dear friend, Lee McCloskey, who was both an artist and a great esotericist that, you know, we sat, we discussed the film, but we also looked at the Grimoire in *Nosferatu*. And so I said to Lee, I said, "Lee, do you think it's possible that Albin Grau, is somehow not ...not creating this grimoire for the film for *Nosferatu*, but creating it for the future? For people like us? Who actually can see not that this is just decoration or a prop piece, but something that is actually a conversation through time. And at the time, this was 77 years after the premiere of *Nosferatu* and and so I said, Why don't we create a Grimoire that I will use in *Shadow of the Vampire*. And it was..and so Lee went to work. Lee has the you know, the brilliance and the gift of like, like a Renaissance painter. And at the same time, he has the mind and the gift for understanding and translating exactly what I was talking about and getting at. So I wanted to create a living conversation between *Shadow of the Vampire* and *Nosferatu* through this Grimoire being the bridge to that. In the end the Grimoire was cut out of the film, as were several other very esoteric scenes that dealt with alchemy, that dealt with immortality and dealt with vampirism on a much deeper, more alchemical level. But those scenes just sort of took the film away from what it what it really was meant to be. And but I'm going to put a link to Lee's Grimoire because that even though I filmed it, it's not in the film. And I have...there are scenes of Albin Grau at a séance, played by Udo Kerr, that are not in the film, there is the Grimoire, where he begins to understand that the future is not good for

the making of this film that, that, in a way the crew is doomed. And he understands this through his own Grimoire in the film, in *Shadow of the Vampire*, so it's...it was an interesting process. But what I really want to, to underline is that...God, I lost my train of thought, but ...Lee's, the Grimoire that he created for me, you know, went on and had a life of its own. It became part of the Rolling Stones world tour. It was the imagery that was used during that tour. So, even though it wasn't in *Shadow of the Vampire*, it had a life of its own, outside of the life of shadow. And, and I'm proud that that was created as a collaboration between Lee and myself. And how I want to wrap this up, basically, is to say that I'm very...I feel now that 100 years later, there's something still absolutely indelible and terrifying and visceral about *Nosferatu*. But I see *Nosferatu* and I see vampirism as a kind of way of, of expressing our own sort of genius and dread of the technologies that we create. Because *Nosferatu* could not exist without the motion picture camera. And the motion picture camera is both a blessing and a curse.

27:06

As much as any kind of you know, image making can be. And with that, I will I have like just way too much to to talk about but I don't want to eat up the time of everybody else on this panel. But let me try to post this link to Lee's.... Okay, I just posted a link to the Grimoire that was created for *shadow the vampire*. And you can read about its history there. And with that, I'm going to say thank you. And if there any questions definitely get either a hold of me or one of the creators of the symposium.

28:49

Thanks, thanks so very much for those illuminating thoughts. Elias has agreed to stay with us throughout the panel. So this first panel so we'll be able to take a small number of questions at the end. But we have first two more speakers and I'm very thrilled to introduce Stephen R. Bissette, who is a pioneer graduate of the Joe Kubert School and was an instructor at the Center for Cartoon studies from 2005 to 2020. But of course most of us to know him for his work in so many tremendous aspects of comics as well as some film studies work. He's renowned of course for his work on *Swamp Thing*, *Taboo*, 1963, *Tyrant*. He has been a comics creator, including *SpongeBob* comics, *Paleo* and *Awesome possum*. He's an illustrator. He's an author. I think Steve Bissette does about everything, which is one of the many reasons I'm so glad he's a friend of mine. His short fiction in *Hellboy*, *Odd jobs*, co-writer of comic book rebels, prince of stories, the *Monster Book*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and his forthcoming book entitled *Cryptid Cinema*, which I was so very proud to write the foreword for. I

think the other thing interesting about Steve Bissette as he's known globally, but probably a little less for his being the purveyor of all things Vermont film, and Vermont film history, his state of residence, which brings into focus, Henrik Galeen. And his later life, which was spent outside of Germany, and surprisingly to many of us, in Vermont. And so we do kindly welcome Stephen R. Bissette. Thank you, Stephen.

30:52 – Stephen R. Bissette

Thanks for inviting me in it's an incredible honor to be here. Gary, you primarily asked me here because of the Vermont Film History Connection. And I am here with some secret information to share with you about Henrik Galeen's death here in Vermont. Like why...why was the screenwriter of *Nosferatu* in the state of Vermont in 1949. But before that, something I hadn't planned. Um, I can't believe...Elias and I have never met we have never spoken. I'm here because Gary invited me in. Everything you said Elias... I did a comic story back in 2008, called *Secrets and Lies* windows and wounds, in which I used the film, *Nosferatu* to talk about storytelling, and specifically to talk about storytelling as time travel. And there's a sequence I drew in here involving Hunter. And those symbols that we do see a *Nosferatu* that letter he gets. Um, and to set up that sequence I talked to the readers about when I was a kid, I would have dreams of *Nosferatu* coming out of our closet and standing over my bed. Those dreams are inspired by-- not by seeing *Nosferatu*... I didn't see *Nosferatu* until a couple of years after that. But because I saw a photo of *Nosferatu* in *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, the monster magazine that so many kids of mine...I was born in 1955, so I'm a monster kid like Gary Rhodes, and no doubt many of you. And I had dreams in which *Nosferatu* came and loomed over my bed. And then when I finally saw *Nosferatu* it was really the character of Hunter that terrified me more than the vampire. And later in the story, I wind up the story with an image of how *Nosferatu*... I then had a dream where he just sat down in my bed and read a comic with me, he became sort of like this, you know, boogeyman friend. Um, and then I was only going to mention this story at the end but this might be something of interest to some of you to seek out. It's in a book called *Secrets and Lies*. But after what Elias said, my mind is blown, because the point of my story is that a cinema, like comics, is a form of secret language. And I relate in the story, how comics that I drew while on the convention trail that my friend Rick Veatch gave to me almost 20 years later, predicted the future of me teaching at a cartooning school. And I have these drawings I did 20 years earlier of me as a teacher in a classroom full of cartoonists, and that's what I ended up doing for 15 years. And I don't know why I chose *Nosferatu* as the vehicle.

But there's something out there going on. After hearing what Elias had to say. Um, I first saw *Nosferatu* when I was quite quite young, I didn't see it on television. I was a collector of eight millimeter films when I was a kid. In the 60s, it was impossible...if a film was on TV, that might be your only chance in your lifetime to see it. You would stay up ungodly hours of the night to watch films that started on late night television at one in the morning because you might never get to see it again. And the arrival of eight millimeter film, specifically Blackhawk films out of Davenport, Iowa, I mail-ordered the first feature film I ever bought, which was *Nosferatu*, and it was whatever version was available to us at that time. It's not the restored *Nosferatu* or I should say series of restorations we've had today. And I not only fell in love with the film, it was one of the first films to give me nightmares.

35:25

But nightmares I loved! The odd thing I should share with you all to end that story about *Nosferatu* coming out of my closet looming over my bed because I'd seen an image of Max Shreck as *Nosferatu* in a monster magazine is that the dreams stopped after one night when a bat flew out of our closet. And I slept as it crawled up the foot of my bed. I shared the room with my older brother Rick who woke my parents up, my father came in, I slept through this whole thing. My father knocked the bat off the bed, caught it in a coat and brought it outdoors and put it in a barrel and burned it to death. Please forgive my father, you know, it was believed back then bats carried rabies. It was the next morning when I was told that this had happened. And I never dreamt again about *Nosferatu* living in the closet. I don't ascribe any supernatural origins or possibility to what happened. But I, like Elias, believe that there are alchemical aspects of dream states of how we communicate as artists, of the work we create and how it resonates through time. And how doing storytelling whether it's through vehicle cinema and film like *Nosferatu*, or the comics that I've had a hand in in my lifetime, it becomes a way of messages in a bottle that are going to live on through time, beyond us. And we've all seen that, as of today, the 100th anniversary of the week in which *Nosferatu* first opened. As I mentioned, Gary invited me here because of my love of film history and specifically, born and raised in Vermont I'm fascinated by regional film history, Vermont film history. And there's some wonderful stories I've uncovered. Some of them involve very sad aspects of people's deaths. And one of my favourite, intimate moments in Elias' film *Shadow of the vampire* is there's this great sequence where Udo Kier as Albin Grau and I believe it's Aidan Gillette who plays Hendrick Galeen. In a film where they're sitting down and they're talking to Max Shreck, they're talking to Willem to follow as, as Max Shreck. And Max Shreck

is bemoaning how terrible it is that in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, that the protagonist in that portion of the story accidentally sees Dracula setting his table, right? He doesn't have servants and how embarrassing this is that an aristocrat would have to you know, be demeaned that way. This is this is something that really bothers Max Shreck about the novel *Dracula*. And I had a similar sensation a number of years ago when my very good friend of Vermont folklores, Joe Citro and I took a pilgrimage to Randolph, Vermont because I wanted to try to find out: How is it that Henrik Galeen ended up in Randolph Vermont? How is it that he died in Randolph Vermont? There are some amazing stories I've discovered over the years related to how certain people in cinema history spend the end of their days here in the Green Mountain State. Charles Bronson and Joe Ireland are buried in the same grave in Brownsville Vermont, you can visit that grave anytime. It's the most visible grave in the local cemetery in Brownsville. But I have not been able to find the grave of Henrik Galeen. In fact, where the records state Henry Galeen's gravestone is supposed to be, it is not there. What we do know is that at some point, Henrik Galeen, either was exiled or self-exiled from Germany, to Sweden, and then move to the United Kingdom. He then moved to New York, and married a woman who I see her referred to as a baroness, but I often see the Baroness and in quotation marks, so I'm not sure. Baroness (il seven shank?). They were married in 1948 in New York City, and the Baroness worked in New York and she was a manufacturer of toys and dolls.

40:06

The work on those dolls and apparently on the costuming, I'm still trying to research this as well, was done by independently contracted older women who lived in and around White River Junction, Vermont. And White River Junction, Vermont. For those of you who don't know, the geography of the state, is about 20 to 25 minutes south of Randolph, Vermont where Henrik Galeen ended up spending his last days. Um, the circumstances of Henrik and his new wife- they were only married a year before he died. The circumstances of their being in Randolph was probably connected to a visit upstate to Vermont, to either pick up or drop off work for those women who were doing so much of the work on the dolls. Whatever happened, happened in Randolph, it's possible they were visiting friends. Galeen was admitted into the local hospital in Randolph on June 30 of 1949. The first death notice that I found in any newspaper that was local, was dated from August 4 1949. We now know of course that Henrik passed away, July 30. I went to Randolph Vermont with my friend Joe Citro, and we scoured through the bound volumes of Randolph's still extant local newspaper. Now this is at a time when Vermont newspapers would have notices about

everything that went on in town. Okay, I'm not exaggerating, so and so went to Stowe to bake pies with they're aunt, right. So and so is having a sledding party this Sunday, on the northern slope of such and such Hill. And much to the embarrassment, no doubt of many of the people who ended up in the hospital, the newspaper would list who had been admitted into the local hospital and often gave rather agonizing accounts of what they were going through. Reading the accounts of Henrik's stay at the hospital it read as if he had a form of stomach cancer. He checked into the hospital with abdominal pain that did not subside. He was there in the hospital from June 30 until the day he died on July 30. So he spent a full month in this little Vermont Hospital in Randolph. I then went to the town clerk's office and I will scan and send this to Gary and to the organizers. This is the official town clerk's record of Henrik Galeen's death, this is the death certificate. It said that he was in the hospital for 33 days. The hospital at that time was Gifford Memorial Hospital. It was referred to in the newspaper as a sanitarium not a hospital. His street address at the time where he lived with his new wife was New York City at 680 Western Avenue and I will leave it to any scholars listening to this who might be in the New York area to scout out what used to be at 680 Western Avenue...I'd be curious. Um, it notes that his occupation was "retired movie director," his father's name Aldoph Galeen from Austria, his mother's maiden name was Maria, also Austria-born and under the medical certification part of the form it says that the disease or condition leading directly to death was metastatic carcinoma of the peritoneum, carcinoma of stomach and that there was an interval of one year between the onset of the ailment and Hendrik's death. What is the ongoing mystery still connected with this which I'm hoping once our snow melts and spring arrives, and hopefully it'll be safer to move around in this pandemic...very odd that I'll be moving around in a plague much like that, which afflicts the city in Nosferatu.

44:55

They don't know where he's buried! The town clerk was very confused. When I went back to them with the information that there was no verification from Granville, Vermont that He was buried there. And at that point, the town clerk discovered that on the back of the death certificate since all I was handed was a copy, I never actually held the real death certificate...on the back of the death certificate it was indicated in someone's handwriting: "burial was in South hollow cemetery. Change noted August 9 1949." That's the other end of the state from Randolph. For some reason Galeen was carried from the Connecticut River side of Eastern Vermont over to Western Vermont. His body actually had to have gone over a ridge of the Green Mountains to

get to his final resting place. I'm hoping to find out where exactly that gravestone might be. If it still stands at all. I did contact the town clerk and try to discover where that gravestone might be. But I was told that at the south Harlow cemetery, in Granville, Vermont, there is no listing in the list of headstones for Hendrik Galeen. The town clerk I spoke to in fact checked all those cemeteries and found no names starting with the letter G on any gravestone there. Um, so that's it. That's the best I could find out Gary and gathering. We don't know where Henry galleons body lies, which also resonates perfectly with the 100th anniversary of Nosferatu. Perhaps I'll dream tonight about Henrik standing over my bed. I don't know. So that's what I've got. And it's a real honor to be here.

47:02

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Steve for sharing the various stories and your research on Galeen. We turn now to our third speaker Argyle Goolsby, who is the co-founder of horror punk pioneers, Blitzkid, or whom he has served as bassist and singer for 25 years. When not touring, he is the US label rep for the German record company Theme force records. He's also a resident tattoo artist at Black hydra tattoo in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. And so we welcome now. Argyle Goolsby. Thank you, everybody, how are you?

47:47 – Argyle Goolsby

First, I just want to say Gary, thank you very much for the introduction. I just realized that we have a mutual friend this past week through a gentleman named Larry (Woolf?) of the band Mammals. So he wanted me to tell you hello. So before I forget, first, I just want to say that it's an honor to be here amongst such a distinguished panel of speakers. I really do appreciate the opportunity to hopefully not embarrass myself in front of all of you out there watching and on this panel as well. I do want to say to Elias if I may before I begin, you know, everyone has talked about the inspiration that the Shadow of the Vampire film has given them over the years. I'm included in that, that list as well. There's a song that I wrote that I recorded in 2015 on my album, Darken your doorstep, entitled Shadow of the vampire, which is I know a little on the nose for the title. But the movie was such an inspiration to me during a time when I was practicing as a tattoo artist, there was a small theater down the road from the shop that I worked at. I remember the first time I'd seen it was in this theater on a break and I had the day off...the second half of the day off. And it stuck with me the imagery stuck with me. It resonated and eventually wrote a song about it. So anyway, a little bit about myself. I guess publicly, I'm known as Argyle Goolsby. I'm from the

rock and roll part of the forest, which means I should probably preface all this by saying that I'm not so used to public speaking as much as I am public screaming. And I won't promise that the next seven minutes of this will be heaven. But it should at least be interesting watch. Basically, I'm used to at this point, everyone's drinking Heinekens and shouting Freebird at me. So if you want to do that, that's totally cool. It'll make me much more comfortable. Um, basically I stumbled my way into a band during my first year of college. And by the time I graduated four years later, that band Blitz kid had graduated to playing shows for more than free beer. And this was basically enough for me to hang up my pursuit of a master's degree and jump headfirst into a smelly van. Basically, from the beginning my band like myself had drawn inspiration classic horror movies and gothic literature as well as cryptozoology. Being from West Virginia. We have many of them there, we had the Flatwoods Monster, the Mothman, you name it. But aside from a few obligatory songs that basically snubbed the local stockade of rednecks continually hunting us down, there really wasn't a song that my band could play that didn't involve ax wielding, coffin rising or premature burials. But yeah, that's enough of my misadventures. I just want to talk a little bit about Nosferatu and my connection to it. It definitely, to me is one of the most potent spirits ever distilled into celluloid. I think my hardest part for preparing this for the symposium was trying to find a way to concisely share examples as to why I love this film so much. The first time I saw any imagery of Nosferatu was in a library book at my elementary school of all places. I don't remember the title of the book. But I do remember seeing the image of Max Shreck on the deck of the (Impreza?) looking down at the captain with his arms all straightened out and looking menacing as possible. And there's something about that image that it just resonated with me. It's stuck with me. I was already an artist as a kid, I was the one of two kids in my class that drew and painted or did anything artistic like that. So I just spent years and years with that image, drawing it and just hoping one day that I could see the film that produced it. And that didn't happen for a very long time. Because I'm 45 now so whenever that first came to me I was I mean, it was like the 80s. So there was like, I think Mr. Bissette said earlier, you didn't see these movies unless you saw them on TV and I would see them on AMC MonsterVision from time to time but never Nosferatu. Anyway, basically, my point here is you can bring up the pros and cons of drop D tuning on a bass, and I'll show up with all the pieces necessary for a coherent conversation. If you light the Nosferatu fuse, I'm suddenly blindfolded and the gas pedal is fully down. There's a slim chance I'll keep it between the lines, but most likely the conversation is going off road and maybe even down the mountain. That's where

the best most beautiful art takes you in my opinion. And that's where Nosferatu has taken me.

52:29

I feel like there's an indefinable mechanism within this film that keeps me feeling it, no matter where I'm at in my life. And that's saying something because time has a way of blunting the sharp edges of inspiration. Songs you want to love lose their meaning. Hobbies you once loved snuck out the back door when you were filing state taxes for the 900th time, and took all their inherent magic with them. You remember why you love these things, but the once wild spiritual thrall that they held you under is dissolved into some watered-down cerebral process. Nosferatu on the other hand, for me hasn't loosened its hooks one bit. It's still inside lighting, creating fires and throwing sparks into the dark. And this experience isn't entirely unique to myself. And that's an example of what makes this film so special. It's lit a fuse to an unprecedented amount of art and homage spanning nearly 10 decades now. I feel like it's escaped the tropes of the time period in which it was made. And such tropes don't necessarily make movies bad or anything. But very often you have to make a conscious effort to connect with them. You watch them through the lens of their time, which is cool. But that lens becomes a subconscious barrier between you and spirit of the film that brought it into existence. I feel like you're not a spectator when you watch Nosferatu. You're not watching a film made in 1922. You're watching a film outside of time, much less any era. For example, I've seen the movie *Step Brothers* 765,000 times and it's exactly the same movie every time. I know exactly when and where I'm going to laugh. It's predictable. And that's cool. That's the charm of a movie like that. A movie like Nosferatu on the other hand sidesteps all of that. For me, it's been a roulette, where I'm going every time I watch it. And that's saying something. Because by all intents and purposes, I should be totally burnt out on this movie, especially after scoring it. I'll talk a little bit about that for a moment. I'll digress from my little notes here. I apologize for those. I don't do this very often. Um, I moved to Connecticut from West Virginia in the year 2015. And a mutual friend of mine and my guitar player...the guy by the name of Mange had contacted me and said, Now that you're a resident of Connecticut, you need to check out this place called the Witch's dungeon. And I had heard of the witch's dungeon. But I've never been. A little bit about the witch's dungeon. What it is, is it's a museum that's run by a gentleman named Cortlandt Hull who has been running it since 1966. He started it when he was 13 years old. Cortlandt is the great nephew of Henry Hull, who was the actor in *Werewolf of London*. So I believe that had a little bit to do with why he got into horror movies

and films like that as a kid. Basically, I started going to the Witch's dungeon to visit and Cortlandt would show 16 millimeter films twice a month for like \$3. So my wife and I would go up there, my fiancée at the time, and we would watch these films. So in time, the conversation Nosferatu began and I explained to Cortlandt that through my band I've been to, fortunately Orava castle in Slovakia. I've been to Murnau's grave, I was actually at Murnau's grave the week after someone grave robbed it, which I didn't even know about until the officials of the cemetery who are haranguing us the entire time came up and explained to us why they were haranguing us. I've been to Alexander Granach's grave, I basically taken every opportunity I can to commandeer everyone's travel plans to do anything while I'm on tour...to see anything that had to do with the movie. Nosferatu. So I was telling Cortlandt about this. And he explained to me that he had a 16 millimeter print of the film Nosferatu that he had gotten as a kid from the Museum of Modern Art, and that it had never been transferred that particular reel. And he had wanted to do so but it had no music. And that's where the discussion of me scoring Nosferatu came...to be. I'd never scored film, I'd only ever really written rock and roll music, stuff like that. But, you know, I wanted to give it a shot. So I came home, I blocked myself basically my room for three months and started writing, what I hoped would be a score for Nosferatu. And I entered the studio. Not long after that, and begin, you know, the whole recording process. And that kind of takes me back to what I was saying earlier, I must have watched this film 100 times within the course of time, it took me to write record, mix and master everything, because I needed to watch it through a different lens than I'd ever watched it through before. And this is not counting the other 100 times I've already watched it over many years leading up to that for no other reason than just watch it and write 18 more songs about it for my band. But the amazing thing for me is that despite the complete and utter dissection of this film that I put it under,

57:30

I'm still able to find new angles and experiences within it. And I'll give you an example of that. This is probably purely anecdotal, someone could probably cite this as either being true or false. But I had read somewhere that Murnau had a tendency to film to a metronome. And that always intrigued me. And I really wasn't sure if that was true or not. But one thing that I discovered when I did start scoring this was it does fall into a consistent rhythm, a four four beat from start to finish. And that was extremely helpful for me because one thing that I feared was the pieces of music that I was creating, overlapping, like, like a scene would end and maybe the music from the prior scene is still carrying on...like it needed to stop at the right points. And I was able,

because of this time signature to write everything in a way where it stopped precisely where it needed to stop. And that was amazing to me. So I don't know if there's any real relevance to that. But that's something that I did notice. And another thing that kind of jumped out to me after so many times of watching it was...Nosferatu's abode, you know, in the in the abandoned *Salzspeicher*, or however you say it...there's one scene where, um, well, I mean, there's many scenes where you see it in the background. It's kind of while Hutter and Ellen are engaged in dialogue. It's almost like this third party watching them spying on them. And it occurred to me that of all of the spider and fly references made in that film what you see when Alexander Granach is in the jail, he's watching spider spin the fly into its web, it occurred to me that that house looks like a spider. It has the stacked eyes, unmoving, like a spider watching them almost the entire time. So it's as if they themselves are in the thrall of Nosferatu's web without having even noticed it. So it's little things like that, to me, that still, I guess, reveal themselves and make this film...fresh every time I see it. I think if I could give one more example of that, um, I watched it last night. I didn't get to finish it. But another thing that I noticed is there's the scene where Professor Bulwer at the very beginning says to Hutter, you can't escape destiny by running away. And it occurred to me from the very beginning of this film, that's all he does is run. The very beginning, he's imposing himself upon nature breaking the feminine breaking the flower, taking it to Ellen and running to her with it. Encountering Bulwer on the way, poking his head into the room very forcefully, running around the room, running, packing his bag. It's-he's on the run the entire time. And it's not until the point that Orlok backs him up against the fireplace that it starts going in reverse to me. That's where he becomes reactionary to everything that's happening to him, that's where his course changes, and Ellen becomes the person driving the action. You know, he runs and runs and runs. The final scene, you have Bulwer standing next to the deathbed of Ellen while Hutter's standing next to her. And it's almost like it's bringing it full circle this statement, you can't escape destiny by running away. The one time he stops, the one time he collapses and lets go and accepts everything that happened, that's happened to him, she's gone. So it's little things like that, to me. Um, I don't really have a whole lot more to say I'm sorry, again, I truly am very appreciative of being invited to be a part of this. But in closing, I would like to say that, despite no real poignancy, maybe being made in any of these observations whatsoever, it's poignant to me in the sense that a hundreds of watches later, it's still making me think it's still making me as an artist want to create. It's still stirring thoughts in shadows. It's my personal muse, no matter how many times I tap into it for inspiration. And it never comes up short. Still commanding me to detour as I said earlier, other people's travel

plans, so I could stumble around castles, ruins and all the cemeteries connected with it. And I'm truly grateful for all is given to me and revealed to me artistically. With that, I really have nothing else to say. So, again, it's just been an honor. Thank you very much.

1:02:03

Well, thank you so much, Argyle for those illuminating thoughts. And to the entire panel, of course. We have time before our break for three or four questions. And so if anybody would like to send them in the chat, I'll be happy to read them to the panelists. And so, so I'm now on pause, I think briefly waiting to see if there's any, any questions. There's certainly a lot of wonderful feedback.

1:02:36 – Question period

And I'm seeing a question for Elias, from Julia F. asking, is it possible Shadow of the Vampire created a more human vampire, while humans became the real monsters in the narrative?

1:02:55

Thank you for that question. That is- that was consciously the, the way that I wanted to move the narrative arc for the vampire where the vampire starts out as the monster- he's terrifying, he's otherworldly, he's supernatural. And it's Murnau, who starts out as the urban, you know, film director that eventually becomes the monster, and the monster is the one that we start to really feel, you know, deep, deep feeling for and, and so yes, I would say that that is...that is the arc of the film. I mean, there's a lot of different levels, like I wrote a script just for the color, the use of color, the esoteric use of color in light...everything from lensing this film, to the compositions, to the production design, which is a whole other aspect of the film was done from an alchemical hermetic intention. So there's symbolism that's laden into the sets of Shadow of the vampire that you can unearth and discover within the film, but you need to freeze frame the film.

1:04:17

Wonderful, thank you. Thank you for that Elias. We also have a question from Abu in India, for Elias and asking what it was like working with John Malkovich and Willem Defoe...were they method actors, what was the casting process? Perhaps a few thoughts there would get to Abu's question?

1:04:40

Yes, well, I had the rare luxury of, of spending a month with John Malkovich in Paris while he was shooting a film at the time. So basically, when he got off work, or if he didn't have days that he was shooting, we just would walk around Paris just talking about *Shadow of the Vampire* and I just kept haranguing him with, with ideas. Now, John is a brilliant, he has a brilliant intellect. So the way to reach him as an actor is through his mind, if he respects and understands deeply, you know, the kind of novelty with which you are pursuing, you know, an emotion, or a moment within his character, he is ready to drink it up. And I also, when we were in Luxembourg, filming *Shadow of the vampire*, he, I got him to...there was a cottage just outside my apartment, in the courtyard in the back of where I was staying in Luxembourg. And that's where John...I put John. And so every evening, I basically would walk to his cottage and we would have dinner together, we took turns cooking. And, and, you know, the problem that I had with the script was that the big disagreement was that, you know, Steven saw the film as a, as a vampire film. And I kept telling Stephen, that I don't really think he understands his own script. Because, you know, I really with a lot of love, and a lot of articulation tried to get Steven to understand that the real beauty of *Shadow of the vampire* is about

1:06:35

you know, that the, that the real vampire is not the vampire, it's, it's, it's the director, it's the artist, and the exploration of the artist, as someone who transgresses, as someone who does not, you know, tether himself to any kind of moral code, but is only after the unknown, and bringing out of the void, something that is so awful, so ecstatic, so beautiful, that it transfixes the audience in such a way that it is eternally, internally and eternally moved by it. Now, Willem was a completely...so I would say that John, you know, reaching him through his intellect, talking to him about ideas, we would talk about everything from Goethe's theory of colors, to, you know, Holderlin's poems, you know, as inspiration. And we played a lot of music, which is something that Murnau I believe, did on the set, you know, he used music, and talked a lot during production, which I, I sort of love...I wish that that films remained silent, that sound wasn't invented until 1940. Because I really feel like-not feel, I know-that a grammar, a film grammar would have evolved, that would become quite sophisticated, because if you look at the photography, the special effects, the camera movement, the moving of the camera, from Napoleon to, you know, a, you know, Murnau's *Faust*, or, you know, it's just...you could see that there was this voracious appetite to invent new ways of seeing, and instead of falling back on dialogue and

words and everything else. But Willem was very different, Willem was acrobatic, he was...he was very, he's a very physical and very talented man in that regard. So, so Willem, we would rehearse. And, you know, he was not method at all, you know, he just wanted direction. And he just wanted you to just be on point with that direction. The problem that I had with Willem was that he moved too gracefully, so I had to create difficulties for him to move. So I had my costume designer, put together a corset that restricted his mid-body movement, making it awkward for him to take steps forward or backwards. And then I put him on very high platforms, you know, boots that made it difficult for him to walk. I also made the boots slightly too tight, even though I didn't tell him and, and so...to restrict his movement actually made him better. And, and, you know, and more inventive. And, and so, so the two were very different. So talking to John was completely different than talking to Willem. And the last 20 minutes of the film...the closing of Shadow of the vampire was entirely written over two bottles of wine and cocktail napkins being passed between Me and John Malkovich. And because in the original script, there's a very campy sort of ending where the vampire dies, and they wind up making their film. And everybody's kind of slapping each other's backs and congratulating each other. And I didn't want the film to end that way, I just felt like it was just cheap and actually wrong. And so, so that last portion was in a very high pressure situation, work done, you know, just four days before shooting. And basically what it was was I would be writing down ideas, lines, passing them to John, he'd be eating and drinking, he'd look at the line, he'd crumble it and throw it back at me, meaning, you know, forget that, you know, bad idea. And then I would pass another one along to him. He'd read it. And it gets like that little John Malkovich smirk, like, like, okay, kind of you didn't know whether he liked it, hated it, or was completely in love with it. And, and so that's the way I began to piece and structure, the end of the film.

1:11:07

Wonderful. Well, thank you so much. for that. We have time for just one last question. There's been a few for Argyle about his score. And you may have seen these in the chat, a lot of great comments in the chat. And of course, thanking all of our panelists, and excited about the. Argyle I think one way to maybe look at some of the questions that have been asked would be your score for Nosferatu in relation to some of the others that have been done, such as by James Bernard, who was obviously associated with Hammer Horror films, Type O negative, etc, perhaps you could speak to that for just a couple of minutes before we then we'll take a break.

1:11:45

So in regards to, you know, in the old silent films, you primarily had just needle drops scores, you don't I mean, like people who had distro-ed these, they would just put public domain music on top of the film. And it really had nothing to do with the emotion or the direction of the film or what it's meant to invoke. So you know, like, in the case of 'Type O, which you'd mentioned, that's not necessarily, I think, something that was written by them as much as it was an amalgam of their music put together for that film. For my film, I wanted to do something from the ground up. I'm in no way a composer, I don't have any formal training when it comes to music or when it comes to theory or anything in that regard. But I think that that actually was advantageous to me in the case of Nosferatu, because it is such a visceral movie. And I have such a personal connection to it, I think that if I cerebralized it too much that I probably wouldn't be able to, I guess distill the emotion into it that I wanted to. Um, my process was basically this, I watched the film. And I knew that I needed to break it up so it wasn't 160+ minute piece of music, I wanted it to be something that could be digestible in increments. So I started looking when the iris would open when the iris would close to me that was a song. And that was a change of a scene. So each scene became a song, I would write down all of the emotions, everything that I felt in scene to scene, and I would start piecing those together through color, through just imagery, things of that nature. And then when I had all that left, I more or less just had a big sheet, a big mess of words and things that I needed to decipher into music. The only real structure that I knew that I wanted going into this was I wanted to start out whimsical, very bombastic, full of hope. And, you know, just beauty to reflect that period. To feel like you're in the Biedermeier era. And that's why the opening scene everything is very upbeat. There's a lot of stringed instruments, a lot of natural, woodwinds, things like that. As the film progresses, and it gets closer and closer to the land of phantoms, that's when I started introducing more and more atonal and abstract instruments, but not in a way that it's just a mess of sounds, like I wanted there to still be some type of, I guess, harmony and some melodicism to what I was doing. By the point that he reaches the capital, all of the prior instruments, all the natural instruments are gone. I want to be, you know, an alternate world, another realm. And that's more or less where I went with it, from that whole process. And I just carried it through to the end. And thank God, I didn't really think about the, the weight of what I was doing, because it wasn't until the end that I realized what I was trying to accomplish. You know, like, I realized once it was all done, like, I may have just ruined the best movie ever made by putting this music on it, like, you know. But it's my love letter, you know what I'm saying, to that movie, to my experience with

that movie, and to everyone else who's shared that experience. And if I may, I just want to like point this out...this isn't anything that I'm trying to do like a cheesy promo on. But all of those notes that I took, ended up becoming more like prose than anything as I started putting it together. And I took all of that and I created a book called 'The Book of the vampires. And I wrote all of my, I guess, my personal experiences watching it and the feelings that I said I had earlier, and I put those into art as well. So there's obviously the picture of Knock reading the letter, and I have it all broken down into scenes, again, like there's, you know, Orlok reading the ciphers and whatnot. And the great thing I just want to say, I want to end with was we did have the opportunity of having Mark Hamill, you know, Luke Skywalker, of all people do a foreword for us on this little intro by Mark Hamill. Um, he was great. We asked him if he would be interested in doing something for it, should we write it up for him? And he was like, no, no, absolutely not. I love this film. I'll be more than happy to write my own foreword for it. And he did. And it's really special. So I'm very thankful for all these things that I've really been given through this movie.

1:16:21- Gary

Wonderful. Thank you so much for that Argyle and we are all here today from across the world, all of the audience members so thankful to the panelists that we've just heard from. Elias Merhige, Stephen R. Bissette and Argyle Goolsby, we thank all three of you so very, very greatly. We are going to take a five minute break before panel two starts with the chair Erica Tortolani chairing that panel, we'll take a five minute break. So wherever you are in the world that will be 25 past whatever hour whatever time zone you're in in five minutes, thanks.

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