

been captured in curious ways. In the end, these repeat screenings of the *NT Live* production of *Frankenstein* continue to provide a record of an ambitious production that was not entirely perfect, but which did boast some impressive performances (off-set by some decidedly mediocre ones), striking visuals, and a set that most likely looked incredible, from the right seat in the theatre itself. Ultimately, in its reanimation of that recorded performance and theatrical space, it makes for an intriguingly haunting (and at times haunted) viewing experience.

Jenny McDonnell

INTERVIEW

***Jug Face* (2013): An interview with writer/director Chad Crawford Kinkle and producer Andrew van den Houten**

Jug Face, released on DVD and Blu-ray last October, is an indie horror film and winner of Best Screenplay at Slamdance that has been widely acclaimed following its numerous screenings at film festivals last year. It tells the story of a cult-like community living in the woods of America's Deep South, in rural Tennessee. These people are bound by their fearful and devout worship of a naturally formed pit, to which they ritually sacrifice members of their own community, in return for their continued physical wellbeing. The victims are chosen by a selected 'seer', who is guided by the pit to create on clay jugs the physical likeness of the intended sacrifice. The film follows especially the story of Ada (Lauren Ashley Carter), who discovers that she is next to be killed, before hiding and burying her jug face, with devastating consequences.

Chad Crawford Kinkle, the writer and director of the film, is known also for the short film *Organ Grinder* (2011), while Andrew van den Houten, one of its producers, has worked on *The Woman* (2011) and *All Cheerleaders Die* (2013), and is president of the production company Modernciné. In an interview for the *IJGHS*, the pair discussed the film and some of its more gothic themes.

Speaking first on the arguable tendency for the most interesting and original works in the genre to emerge from indie filmmakers, rather than mainstream Hollywood, van den Houten suggests that this is due to the considerably greater 'creative freedom' allowed in indie productions. 'As far as the genre goes', he continues, 'it allows for so much more

envelope-pushing, and the indie world is a place where filmmakers can work regardless of budgetary constraints' — remaining focused on the fact that 'the star *is* the genre in many ways' [emphasis in original]. *Jug Face* falls into the tradition of 'backwoods' horror, which van den Houten sees as enduringly popular in an age where 'so much of our culture lives in the cities or suburbs': the backwoods represent the remaining 'unknown'. Interestingly, the inspiration for the title of the film (and the means in the narrative for selecting the victims) is based in fact. Kinkle states that 'face jugs were made in the southern states in the 1850s by slaves. They were used to hold moonshine and poisons for agriculture. Once glass containers became commonplace, they were used mainly for decoration, and the tradition continues to this day'. In its depiction of this backwoods community, the film is a far cry from texts such as *Deliverance* (1972), or *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and its 2003 remake, in which 'yokels' are portrayed as soulless and degenerate. Here, Kinkle has consciously endeavoured to 'make these people feel more real', as opposed to portraying them as 'just stereotypical backwoods hillbillies'. Their religion, though crude, is one with which we can identify; it takes to the extreme Rudolf Otto's assertion that 'human religion finds its genesis in fear'.¹ When asked about his inspiration behind the faith of this community, Kinkle said, 'I grew up in a very small community in the southern part of the United States, which was extremely religious. I knew people who went to snake-handling churches and even smaller groups that put their own twist on fundamental Christianity. That definitely had an impact on the film.' Regarding the ritualistic sacrifice, Kinkle states that this may be seen as a comment on the fact that 'every community finds ways to avert our animalistic desires such as violence and murder' – 'some', he adds wryly, 'are just more successful than others.'

One element of the film that has provoked much discussion and disagreement is the inclusion of a ghostly child (Alex Maizus), listed only in the credits as 'emaciated boy'. He warns Ada that she must willingly sacrifice herself to the pit, so as to avoid a fate as one of 'the shunned ones'. Asked to expand on the thinking behind these characters and their purgatorial existence, Kinkle states, 'I felt like the community needed a punishment worse than death for disobeying the pit. They all want to be sacrificed so that they can go be with it in its realm. The shunned therefore are forced to walk the forest forever, and never get the chance to be with their God.' This 'deity', Kinkle suggests, predates the first Native Americans. 'For the back story', he continues, 'I had always imagined that the Indians left any settlers there alone, because they knew that the pit was in that area.'

¹ Douglas E. Cowan, *Sacred Terror: Religion and Horror on the Silver Screen* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), p. 23.

Van den Houten is currently working on adapting Ty Drago's book series *The Undertakers* (2011–present) to film, while Kinkle is involved in several writing projects, which are yet to be announced. Along with the fact that their work stands to them, the two display eloquence in their understanding of the horror genre — these are certainly two names to look out for in the future.

Elizabeth Parker
