

## Elegies: TruLee, MadLee, DeepLee, Part Two

Written by Tony Timpone

Saturday, 19 February 2011 10:05

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When my personal remembrances of Sir Christopher Lee left off in the last edition of Elegies (see [here](#)), the British scream titan was hanging out with a few select enthusiasts and staff backstage at the 1990 FANGORIA *Weekend of Horrors* convention. Slightly frazzled by a trio of psycho fans who had accosted him earlier upon entering New York City's fabled Hotel Pennsylvania, he'd leave all that behind as he took the stage inside the hotel's Grand Ballroom, introduced by convention co-producer Adam Malin of Creation Entertainment.

Before Lee came out, we screened a trailer and clip of the actor from GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH. The standing-room-only audience went bonkers when Adam handed Lee the mic. Not since 1975's *Famous Monsters* convention, when Lee buddy Peter Cushing appeared, had such a living genre legend attended a New York show.



Adam and I opened the session up to questions, and Lee answered each one with his customary deep voice and deliberate response. He did not brush anyone off or give any "yes" or "no" replies; he answered each question in detail. Emphasis on *detail*, as Lee rambled so much (in a good way!) that his stage time flew by after only a dozen or so queries. But he hit all the bases: the Hammer days; how most of the films he did weren't *really*

horror films; rating THE WICKER MAN as his favorite movie; playing Dracula, Frankenstein's creature, the Mummy, Sherlock Holmes (and his brother), et al.; his fencing as Rochefort in the '70s MUSKETEER movies and marksmanship as 007 villain Scaramanga in THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN, etc. It was one big cinematic history lesson, told by the grand high minister of all that is sinister, as Forry Ackerman would say.

But all good things must come to an end, and I had the unfortunate task of informing the

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masses that Lee would be leaving after one more question (“Make it a good one!” I said)—and he could not stick around to sign autographs (large collective—but expected—sigh). To wrap up the Q&A session, I picked one wildly flailing arm out of the crowd, toward the back.



“Mr. Lee, you promised to sign an autograph for *me*,” the woman shrieked. “*You promised!!!*”

Oh no! I had chosen Psycho Fan #1, the same one who had previously stalked Lee with two equally demented cohorts! The actor’s face turned white, he mumbled a few words of consolation, then Adam and a burly security guard (Vietnam vet and comic-book writer Doug Murray) ushered Lee off the stage, back into the holding room.

“You have to get me away from that woman,” Lee said as we huddled backstage, trying to figure out an escape plan that would keep the veteran actor away from the trio of stalkers. We ultimately decided on escorting him through some kitchen corridors, down a hotel freight elevator and out a side entrance of the building, where his limo would be waiting to zip him away. It was the perfect plan...so we thought!



Walking hurriedly and determinedly, we came out of the hotel’s revolving door, the limo just 10 feet away... Then, out of nowhere, Huey, Dewey and Louie—actually, make that Screwie, Screwie and Screwie—came charging at us from seemingly out of the dark. To this day, it remains one of the great mysteries of all time how the psycho fans had figured out our getaway

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route. The small phalanx of security guys sprang into action, immediately shielding Lee, and the limo driver dove around the car and opened the passenger door. Then the she-banshee let out a wail that practically brought the city to its knees.

“*You promised!!!*” the pasty-faced woman (picture a diminutive version of Pat from the old SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE sketch crossed with MISERY’s Kathy Bates) screamed again, stopping Lee in his tracks, as if by some supernatural means. Even though he was already halfway into the car, he turned around to face the wacked-out fan. He mumbled something under his breath to me, along the lines of, “I’ll never be rid of them, and I *did* say I would give her an autograph.” So much to our surprise, Lee went over to the psycho fans to sign their stills, quickly and efficiently, with no eye contact at all. But, of course, one wasn’t enough. After he scribbled his name for all three, they began pulling more items out of their faded satchels for Lee to autograph! At this point, I’d had enough. I shoved the Charlie Manson-looking dude backward into his cohorts, and Doug politely but forcefully pulled Lee back and into the car, which sped off into the night. The three nuts stood there with their mouths hanging open as we hustled back into the hotel. We’d had enough convention madness for the day.

This would not be the last time I met Christopher Lee. A few years later, I’d hang with him again, on Lee’s saner home turf. And what would be the first thing he brought up?

### TO BE CONTINUED

P.S.: See Lee accept his BAFTA lifetime achievement award below, presented by Tim Burton, who directed Lee in SLEEPY HOLLOW, CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY, CORPSE BRIDE and ALICE IN WONDERLAND.

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