

Tony Timpone's Elegies: First "FRIGHT"

Written by Tony Timpone

Wednesday, 24 August 2011 14:13



Both the horror-remake and 3D crazes took major stumbles last weekend at the nation's box office, when the tepid FRIGHT NIGHT redux vastly underperformed. No surprise there, as the unnecessary vampire update proved totally anemic (Michael Gingold expertly sums up the picture [here](#)). Anyway, as I watched the lackluster new film bored out of my skull, my mind raced back to the superior original and a Fango-office field trip to a FRIGHT NIGHT screening way back in July 1985.

That fateful summer, I had only been working at FANGORIA a few weeks, fresh out of NYU. Under the tutelage of late editor Dave Everitt (the pain of his untimely passing last year has barely lessened), I had begun serving as an editor on the mag's great masthead. One day, Dave announced that the press folks at Columbia Pictures had invited the staffs of both Fango and big sister STARLOG to attend a special advance showing of FRIGHT NIGHT. Just for us! So the Fango and STARLOG teams (Dave and I, STARLOG editor David McDonnell and his editorial bullpen, including Carr D'Angelo, Eddie Berganza and Dan Dickholtz, and FX scribe David Hutchison) hoofed over to the old Coca-Cola building at 777 Fifth Avenue for the private unveiling. Green and wide-eyed, you can imagine my excitement, slipping away in the middle of the day to be the first on my block to see one of that summer's major horror flicks!



Tony Timpone's Elegies: First "FRIGHT"

Written by Tony Timpone

Wednesday, 24 August 2011 14:13

Once settled in that swank little screening room's plush seats, I looked around and noticed that the STARLOG/Fango gang had the whole place all to ourselves; no one in back of us and no one in front. Though we took up almost an entire row, just as the lights dimmed and the Columbia logo lady graced the screen, a stray moviegoer showed up and sat next to me, to my left. I found this kind of odd, as the guy could have sat in any of the other empty seats or rows in comfort and solitude, with ample elbow room. Well, maybe he got scared during horror movies and was looking for strength in numbers!

FRIGHT NIGHT, written and directed by Tom Holland, was an enjoyable romp. I remember Everitt in particular being especially enamored of it. During the movie, many of us laughed and shrieked or cracked wise at the screen. Since the theater was so intimate and we were all friends, we might as well have been in one of our own living rooms, swiggin' brews and eatin' chips with the gang. As much as I liked FRIGHT NIGHT, as it unspooled, the Evil Ed character (played by 21-year-old Stephen Geoffreys) began to grate on my nerves. "This guy is so obnoxious!" I grumbled aloud at one point, which led to more brickbats every time hero Charley Brewster's weasely sidekick came on screen. This talkback culminated when Evil Ed became a bewigged bloodsucker himself. I shouted out, "This guy is even more obnoxious as a vampire than when he was human!" The whole place chuckled. After we calmed down, we went back to watching the film and politely clapped after FRIGHT NIGHT's exciting finish.

As the lights came back on, the small fellow to my left got out of his seat and crossed in front of the screen. Oh my God...it was Stephen Geoffreys! He was the one who slipped in incognito as the film began and plopped down beside me. *He was the one who must have heard every insult I hurled at the screen each time his character turned up!*

The actor made his way to the elevator and disappeared before any of us could catch up to him.



Well, I felt like crap after that, guilty and shameful. Just 22 at the time, who was I to pretentiously judge the work of others in a public venue like that? There I was, knocking this poor dude on screen, not realizing the actor himself was sitting right next to me the whole time. What an insensitive creep I was. While the others laughed off the experience, not me. Days passed and I still could not shake the bad feelings over what I had done.

Tony Timpone's Elegies: First "FRIGHT"

Written by Tony Timpone

Wednesday, 24 August 2011 14:13

A week later, Fango Dave sent me to Jerry Ohlinger's movie memorabilia store in the West Village to purchase some Gene Corman stills for the mag. As I walked along Eighth Street on the way back to the subway, I noticed a familiar face walking toward me. It was Stephen Geoffreys again! I could not believe it! As we came face to face, I stopped him in his tracks.

"Aren't you Stephen Geoffreys?" I asked, though I, of course, knew the answer.

"Yes, I am," he said, in his distinctive lilting voice.

"Wow, I just saw you in FRIGHT NIGHT, at an advance screening. You were great! So funny! You made the movie for me," I said, pouring it on thick, as if he had just met his biggest fan in the world.

"Realleeee?" he said with all sincerity and smiling from ear to ear. "Thanks!"

We exchanged some more small talk, and then parted. Fortunately, Geoffreys never recognized me as the smartass from the week before. By spotting the young actor in public and praising his screen work, I probably built up his ego enough to make up for my earlier wisecrack comments. Relieved and somehow vindicated, I slept better that night after that opportune act of contrition. And I learned a valuable lesson: to keep my big mouth shut during screenings!