Some think that painting a skull on your guitar and growing your sideburns to your chin qualifies you to label your band as "horror." Maybe it does, I dunno…but to this writer, music is second only to visuals when it comes to mining those dark, troubled recesses of the human condition, and it takes more than just artifice to give your sounds the macabre soul needed to cuddle up to the genre.

Enter the dark, sensual, Southern-scorched dread that vibrates beneath the surface of the music of Nicole Atkins. The psyche-rock/dark-blues-playing singer/songwriter has been creating oddball hybrids of musical menace for a few years, reflecting a sensibility weaned on the murder ballads of Johnny Cash and Nick Cave, with darker strains of P.J. Harvey thrown in for elegant, scrappy sex appeal.

One spin of her new album MONDO AMORE, and a peek at the accompanying videos, and it also becomes clear how much horror cinema itself dictates the laws of Atkins' abstract universe. She wears her obsession with fright films—specifically European ones—on her sleeve, and cites FANGORIA as her favorite mag. No crime in that…

Have a look at the video below, for a brooding track called "Vultures" (which opens the album and sets the tone for the creepy/cool vibe that follows), and tell us you can't feel the ghost of Carrie White leading you into black aquatic baptisms and watery graves. In fact, as Atkins herself told us, the concept was based heavily on the tone and atmosphere of Frank LaLoggia's 1988 ghost story THE LADY IN WHITE.

{youtube}UTAZHTKY6qU{/youtube}

To celebrate the release of MONDO AMORE, Atkins has kindly offered Fango readers the chance to own a piece of her passion, and is giving away not only a copy of the album, but also

a DVD set of her three favorite films: Dario Argento's SUSPIRIA, Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING and Charles Laughton's NIGHT OF THE HUNTER. The first lucky reader to e-mail chris@fangoria.com with the subject line "Atkins Rules" wins the flicks and the disc. The second person to do so wins just the disc. The third wins nothing but our respect.

In the meantime, explore Atkins' unique, dark universe here and keep your eyes wide shut for a feature on the lady herself in an upcoming issue of FANGORIA.

{jcomments on}