

Terror Tidbits (Fango #301)—Brazil is Bleeding

Written by Mitch Davis

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“My films, back in the day, were something dangerous to watch. There was a military dictatorship back then. And simply stating that you liked one of my movies could be your passport to jail.”

—José Mojica Marins

A demonic trailblazer in South American independent filmmaking, José Mojica Marins is Brazil's master of the macabre. Over more than a half-century of (genuine!) guerrilla filmmaking, Marins has virtually recarved the underbelly of Brazilian cinema in his image, making confrontational horror films in defiance of—and as an incendiary reaction to—a brutal state dictatorship that was none too enthusiastic about the raw sexuality, anarchistic violence and skewering of religious ideals that comprised so much of his work. Several of his films were seen as criminal acts, and he suffered no shortage of hardships as a result.

In the process, Marins became a full-on pop icon in his country. Regardless of where you're coming from and what you may have seen, his films will startle and surprise you. Furiously anti-law and anti-church, his radically eccentric interpretations of the genre haunt a borderland between carnivalesque spookshow and revolutionary scream—horror-comic fever dreams of the condemned.



Marins' earliest productions were the epitome of resourceful low-budget filmmaking, and his Zé do Caixão character (Anglicized as Coffin Joe), whom he both created and performs, is equal parts Marquis de Sade, Salvador Dali, Freddy Krueger and Friedrich Nietzsche. He's a godless

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undertaker whose very freedom from religion affords him the power to terrorize his community with impunity—the ultimate antihero for an oppressed and victimized audience.

Further bolstering his reputation as a madman with a movie camera, Marins has done countless, er, unorthodox things over the course of his career. Working as he often did with non-actors, Marins would audition candidates by exposing them to snakes, spiders, rats, etc. as “tests of courage,” choosing those who best controlled their fear. He also regularly made his insect-adorned candidates run screaming through crowds on the street to submerge them into chaos, reptiles and arachnids falling from their bodies amidst terrified bystanders. For the inaugural episode of his weekly television series in the late '60s, Marins buried his regular star Mário Lima alive for the show's entire running time—digging him out at the end, just before the credits rolled. To the chagrin of detractors who thought him to be satanic, he once took over an abandoned church and turned it into his production studio, where he created mountains of blasphemous imagery. In the late '80s, Marins founded a new kind of church revolving around the powers of the mind. The stories are endless, and as fascinating as his work as an artist.

EMBODIMENT OF EVIL (out this month on U.S. Blu-ray/DVD from Synapse Films) is the production Marins' fans have spent decades waiting for: a larger-than-death Coffin Joe comeback film for a changed, modern Brazil. The storyline (written by Marins and Dennison Ramalho) is a direct sequel to Joe's second film, 1967's THIS NIGHT I'LL POSSESS YOUR CORPSE, completing a narrative trilogy that began with 1964's AT MIDNIGHT I'LL TAKE YOUR SOUL while eschewing the many subsequent Coffin Joe films, TV shows and comics. It marks the first time Marins has been able to make a horror film free of censorial constraints, and that he's been able to work with a major budget and state-of-the-art special FX—backed by 20th Century Fox's Brazilian studio arm, no less!

For the whole story, pick up FANGORIA #301, on sale this month. Go [here](#) for full issue details, and [here](#) to order the issue or subscribe to the magazine!

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