

Cutting Up With “CHAINSAW SALLY”

Written by Seneca Haynes
Sunday, 20 June 2010 13:27



Recently, I had the opportunity to rap a bit with JimmyO and April Monique Burril, the Maryland-based founders of Forbidden Pictures and creators of the CHAINSAW SALLY franchise. The first series of the splatter sitcom based on their 2004 movie has been set for DVD release by Troma in September, with a second season in the works. The duo also recently self-released their latest feature THE GOOD SISTERS, co-starring Debbie Rochon.

FANGORIA: You produce THE CHAINSAW SALLY SHOW in your home town. Tell us a bit about the relationship between the production and your local community.

JIMMYO BURRIL: Well, at first we did a lot of sneaking around, trying to get shots here and there without bothering anyone. But halfway through the show, a friend of ours who is a cop in the area told us he was friends with the chief of police in our town. He spoke to her and she was really receptive. Even let us use a squad car for the shoot.

APRIL MONIQUE BURRIL: No one seems to mind. When we shot the CHAINSAW SALLY movie, it was in the town of Perryville and the locals really seemed to get a kick out of it. We were even in the local paper. THE CHAINSAW SALLY SHOW was shot in several towns, but no one seemed to mind us. As long as we didn't let our cast and crew take up all the parking on our block, we were fine. And the folks in the trailer park that contained both the trailer location—duh—and most of the outdoor areas where he filmed didn't care a lick. Yep—running through the woods at night, some girl screaming her head off as if being murdered in the most bloodcurdling fashion, close enough to the housing to see their lights—was even one cop called? Nope.



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FANG: What do you imagine the real serial killers in Maryland—I believe they number in the thousands—think of your work?

JIMMYO: I’m not sure, but I really hope they don’t watch SALLY, cause she’s rather creative.

APRIL: You know...if they are actually taking the time out of their busy schedules to watch us, they’re probably either delighted by the sense of humor we put in it, or—if they’re the type that take themselves super-seriously—they’re infuriated by it. At the very least, I hope they appreciate the creativity. And I hope they appreciate that Sally does have a “code” of sorts, albeit a loosely formed one. All victims have to have committed some transgression—i.e., too many grocery items in the “express lane”, parking illegally in a handicapped spot, etc.—though admittedly, those transgressions are usually pretty minor.

FANG: What is Forbidden Pictures?

JIMMYO: We named our film company after the movie April and I watched on our first date, FORBIDDEN ZONE by Richard Elfman.

APRIL: Yeah, he kept looking over at me and saying, “I told you this movie was weird.” But after I said, “Yes, I love it” enough times, I think he finally figured out I was the right girl. Seemed like a natural choice for the name of our happy little movie company.

FANG: How does your work hold up under the lens of a feminist critique?

JIMMYO: Sally seems to have almost as many female fans as she does male. I know that the first tattoos we saw of her were on a lesbian couple. They each got Sally on their arms.

APRIL: Pretty well, I believe. After all, the main character is female and, though she doesn’t shy from sexuality, she’s not all T&A. Sally is strong and intelligent. On top of that, her victims are chosen from both genders. Sally does not discriminate based on sex. She’s an equal

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opportunity slasher!

FANG: Tell me about the work and experiences that led you to the production of CHAINSAW SALLY.

JIMMYO: Sally was an invention between April and I to be a web-horror hostess in the vein of Elvira. But because of our tastes, we made her more punk rock. She was a mixture of Leatherface, Tank Girl, Hannibal Lecter, Elvira...and a lot of April's personality. To make the movie, we had to give her a backstory, so we took the Batman legend and gave it to her, leaving out two important factors: money and a moral code.



APRIL: The CHAINSAW SALLY movie was filmed and produced from 2003-2004, and—after endless battles to break into distribution—was picked up by Shock-O-Rama and released in 2007, at which time it enjoyed a totally unexpected level of success. At that point, we started trying to drum up investments for a sequel, which we were/are hoping to have a much higher budget for. After a couple of years running around in circles—as it turns out, most investors aren't interested unless you want to let go of creative control...which we are absolutely not willing to do with the Sally franchise—Jimmy wrote a script for a completely different kind of film, the occult thriller THE GOOD SISTERS, filmed in 2008. This was a much simpler kind of movie, much easier to fund and, as it turned out, a fantastic exercise for everyone involved—cast and crew.

Shortly after that project was complete, Jimmy and I were discussing what a shame it was that this great character, Chainsaw Sally, had such a big following—I'd already had a few people get tattoos of me at that point, which still freaks me out—but nothing was being done with her. Then Jimmy came up with the idea for THE CHAINSAW SALLY SHOW—to be done with no budget in mind whatsoever. It was made solely with what we, meaning all our Forbidden Pictures friends, had readily available to us and fueled only by our wits and creativity. Though we

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actually did have distribution offers this time, the DVDs would initially be produced and distributed by us—a completely independent venture. Which, in addition to the gore, is why Herschell Gordon Lewis agreed to be our executive producer.

FANG: If I were to, say, give you a million bucks to make a movie, what movie would you make and who would you cast in it? Also, since I’m forking over the dough, what main character would I be cast as?

JIMMYO: BAD KITTY...and I’d cast you as a naked lesbian vampire roadie with Tourette’s.

APRIL: I’d wait to see what brilliant story Jimmy came up with, and then be there with all my miscellaneous abilities to help out as best I can! Which I think is pretty much how everyone in the Forbidden Pictures group works... I would expect I’d probably end up in a showdown with you at some point.

FANG: That sounds exciting; I’ll force my agent to read this article. Now I know that THE CHAINSAW SALLY SHOW is getting into its second season. I personally heard about the show not long ago via word of mouth and immediately developed an unhealthy interest in it. This leads me to believe Sally has a following that has breached the boundaries of Old Bayland. How do you feel about the current response to your work?

JIMMYO: Well, Sally built a good group of fans when the movie came out. It sold really well. We then set forth to attempt to get funding for CHAINSAW SALLY 2. We got tied up with a few people optioning it, and so we had to sit while they fiddle-farted around. Each time they started saying what all they planned to change, and we would say, “*Nope. Thanks.*” So, cut to two years later, and we pretty much are starting over. However, it seems to have lit up again. People love Sally...and I believe it’s because she is both the hero and the villain. She’s not stereotypical. Of course, I love that people like our work. We do it to entertain people, and if people are entertained, then we’re happy.

APRIL: I continue to be shocked and delighted by it. I’m always surprised when someone from another state or country not only knows who we are, but turns out to be a fan. It’s wonderful. We are ourselves both avid horror buffs, so it’s great to be appreciated so much by others like us—or even by those not like us...I’m not picky! The thing that amazes me the most, again, are

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the folks who get Chainsaw Sally tattoos. That’s just freakishly wonderful.

FANG: What’s the difference between GOOD SISTERS and CHAINSAW SALLY?

JIMMYO: It’s 100 percent different. SALLY is camp and black, black comedy. GOOD SISTERS is more psychological. And kinda sad, I think.

APRIL: We’re good *witchy* sisters! Or, actually...not really “good,” at least not in the sense of being nice people. I will say that working on such a dramatic piece was a great experience on its own, but then to share it with Debbie Rochon was fantastic. I learned a lot about acting during my time with her, besides just generally having a great time making what I hope is seen as a good, mess-with-your-head film.

FANG: How long did it take to produce an average episode of CHAINSAW SALLY, and how many people are involved?

JIMMYO: It depended on locations; about a week, a little less. There were about six or seven crewmembers around at any given time. Very small and friendly group.

APRIL: Hard to say, since we approached the whole season at once. We went by location. The season took about four months. Keep in mind that everyone involved still had their day jobs to contend with, so most shooting was on weekends. I would agree, though, that if you boiled it down to consistent hours, about a week for each episode sounds right.

FANG: Do you ever plan to relocate to Hollywood, or is FORBIDDEN PICTURES content to remain a rogue East Coast production company?

JIMMYO: I like the East Coast, but if work took me out west, sure we’d move. There would be no love lost between me and the “tax me” state of Maryland.

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APRIL: I like being a rogue East Coast company. Though sometimes I wonder what life a little farther west would be like...maybe not California, but perhaps Colorado. We've also considered staying east, but more north—New England-ish. I have tons of family up there, lots of super locations—and snowmobiling!

FANG: Beyond the new CHAINSAW SALLY episodes, what else might you be working on next?

JIMMYO: We have a couple of other possible projects, so we will see which one is the strongest, and run with that.

APRIL: I'm the Type B of this relationship. I just go where the wind takes me, baby, and totally enjoy the ride.

For more on THE CHAINSAW SALLY SHOW and the Burrils' other projects, go to the Forbidden Pictures [website](#) .

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