

Written by Chris Alexander
Monday, 03 December 2012 17:25



Writer/director Joe Berlinger has given the world such award winning documentaries as the eye-opening CRUDE and the unforgettable METALLICA: SOME KIND OF MONSTER. But he is perhaps best known for the troika of searing investigative films (with his creative partner Bruce Sinofsky) surrounding the case of the West Memphis Three—Damien Echols, Jesse Misskelley Jr. and Jason Baldwin—who were charged, tried and sentenced to life in prison (in Damien's case, death) for a vile, unspeakable crime that they did not commit

1995's Oscar-winning PARADISE LOST: THE CHILD MURDERS AT ROBIN HOOD HILLS got there first, venturing to the God-fearing wilds of West Memphis, Arkansas to chart the discovery of the bodies of three little boys, grim murders that were immediately pinned on a satanic cult. Due to poisonous police procedural and the fact that Echols wore black and liked horror movies, the killings were pinned on the teens and the following trial stands as one of the most highly debated mistrials of justice in contemporary American legal history.

The following pictures PARADISE LOST 2: REVELATIONS, and PARADISE LOST 3: PURGATORY, charted the fallout surrounding the murders and trial, observing the WM3 becoming celebrity folk heroes and martyrs, while the police and judge involved in the case shamefully refused to re-open the case. Eventually, as detailed in part three of the trilogy, the boys were released, though the price they paid—20 years in prison, health problems, trauma—was woeful and the legalese that got them off, odious.

The new, Peter Jackson-produced WEST OF MEMPHIS doc concisely summarizes these events and focuses on his own miraculous efforts to launch a private investigation into the crimes and Damien Echols, now a published author and warrior for human rights, is the focus of a new interview in the upcoming FANGORIA #319 (see here for full cover and contents).

But it is the Berlinger/Sinofsky films that got there first, that changed the outcome of the case, that brought it to the attention of Johnny Depp, Eddie Vedder and a myriad other celebs as well as millions of people worldwide who supported the boys. Finally, the entire trilogy has been released on an astounding three-disc DVD/Blu set loaded with new features and raw footage.

EXCL Audio: Joe Berlinger on "PARADISE LOST" and The West Memphis Three

Written by Chris Alexander

Monday, 03 December 2012 17:25

This writer must admit to a double decade fascination with the case and the films that served as my entry point into its players, and so when the chance to speak to Berlinger popped up, I jumped.

In the following, raw 15-minute audio interview, we discuss the case and the films and at the tail end, we tease you with what will evolve into a fascinating upcoming feature in FANGORIA magazine: a thorough investigation into Berlinger's maligned and misunderstood feature film BLAIR WITCH 2: BOOK OF SHADOWS, a film that has slowly but steadily amassed a loyal cult of admirers but a production that was fraught with horrors...

Until then, here is Joe Berlinger on PARADISE LOST.

{mp3}BERLINGER-PARADISE{/mp3}