Lately I've been thinking about THE TWILIGHT ZONE and short films, and how truly alike they can be. Coincidentally, a very interesting book on TWILIGHT ZONE found its way to my desk just last week. It was then that one specific filmmaker came to mind: Patrick Rea of Lawrence, Kansas.

In the introduction of this particular book, the late Rod Serling's wife Carole explains that part of Serling's vision was to come up with a show based on a "shadow land that existed just beyond the limits of imagination." Once again, I thought of Rea and how he lives beyond the spotlight of New York and LA, deep in the heartland, literally banging out one short film after the other—all with that TWILIGHT ZONE feel.

I met Rea back in 2006 when he contributed some scary shorts to what was then Fangoria TV, but I decided it was once again time for he and I to chat, and for me to link some of his works to this blog so we all can experience just what is going on in Kansas. I began by asking Rea if he had in fact ever been influenced by THE TWILIGHT ZONE. His reply: "I didn't start watching TWILIGHT ZONE until I was in high school. I used to see all the marathons on the USA Network and the Sci Fi Channel. To be honest, TALES FROM THE CRYPT was more of an influence in my early life."

"TWILIGHT ZONE was more of an influence in my adult life, starting with my college years," he continues. "There is something very old-fashioned about those shows. They can disturb you

and make you think without showing graphic violence, and they always have a twist." Rea's point about those reversals is quite telling, since all of his own movies have similar surprises at the end. "The format of the TWILIGHT ZONEs unconsciously seeped into the films I was creating," he adds, "and people were saying that our projects were a lot like the show. Ironically, now it has become more of our modus operandi, and our short films are becoming like ZONEs."

And by now, there are a ton of Rea's minimovies out there. "Starting in 2001, we have probably made about 60 shorts, but there was a shift around 2006," he says, "when they became more technically savvy and we felt more comfortable showing them to lots of people. Obviously, you get through college and then those first few years afterward, and you go through a learning curve. When we hit 2006, our films started to look a little more polished and had more mass appeal, and we had a better understanding of the medium at that point."

When I tell him I agree, and suggest there must be a moment in every filmmaker's life that stands out as he or she is learning, Rea remembers his particular moment: "The director Alexander Payne [SIDEWAYS] gave a talk when I was in high school and he was giving some advice, and said, 'You've got to get used to doing some bad work initially to get to your good work, and you really have got to get your feet wet on films that are really not the best, and eventually you hone your abilities and get better.' I feel that 2006 was when we turned that corner. This was the time when we made WOMEN'S INTUITION [the story of a young woman who must explain to her doctor that she hears strange noises whenever danger is near], and from then on our quality level has been very good."

I begin to notice that Rea continuously speaks in terms of "us" and "we," making me wonder just who his posse might be, and if there's an underground community of filmmakers in Kansas. Rea responds, "Yes, and we all went to college together. There's Ryan Jones; he and I started making movies together and formed SenoReality Pictures [a play on the words "see no reality"]. Ryan specializes in graphics and sound design, so he gets to do a lot of cool stuff. Josh

Robinson does most of the editing, and by 2006 I started working with Hanuman Brown-Eagle, and he has been our cameraman/DP ever since. These are our core people.

"A lot of people say, 'You don't need film school,' but the people I'm working with are the ones I met in film school," Rea continues. "It led me to them." Sounds like a great group, but what about the music? "We've been using Harry Manfredini, who scored FRIDAY THE 13TH," he says, "and we also use Julian Pickford for most of our work. He's part of our inner group."

I can't help but return to the fact that all these great films—also including NEXT CALLER (in which a late-night radio talk-show host, doing a program on the supernatural, has his skepticism tested by strange phone calls), NOW THAT YOU ARE DEAD (a darkly comedic battle between a cheating husband, his mistress and his murderous wife, with a supernatural twist) and DO NOT DISTURB—have been conceived, written and shot one after the other in Kansas, a place I have now come to realize is a hotbed of creativity. I ask Rea to tell me more about Kansas and why he hasn't moved on to New York or LA, where the filmmaking community is larger. "There's a lot of support here," he says. "I feel we've made a name for ourselves here by being Kansas filmmakers. For example, when we played at the New York City Horror Film Festival, they had a list of films and announced where [their makers] were from, and it was like, 'LA, New York, Paris' and then it was Kansas. We're able to stick out a lot more. I'm not saying we will never move to New York or LA, but right now we have a really strong support system and crew base, good people willing to help donate, locations are cheap and everything is readily available."

Next Caller [illegible] Patrick Rea [illegible] Vimeo [illegible] {comments on} Short Film from Michael Stine on Vimeo .