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Oh, the horror

By Eugene Driscoll THE NEWS-TIMES

SECAUCUS, N.J. — I didn't mean to piss off John Landis, the guy who directed "Animal House," "The Blues Brothers," "Trading Places" and "An American Werewolf in London."

But it happened.

Landis appeared last week at the annual "Fangoria Weekend of Horrors," a horror movie convention.

Now I know what you're thinking.

Horror movie convention? Trekkies? Geeks in Halloween costumes?

Kinda, if Trekkies were drunken, slovenly, criminally perverted movie buffs — because were the dudes I hung with last week.

Hold on, lemme get back to the Landis story.

Landis was there to promote "Masters of Horror," a horror-themed cable show that will on Showtime Oct. 28. Landis is directing one of the 13 episodes.

The convention was at a hotel next to the Meadowlands in Jersey. Landis appeared on stage and answered whatever questions the 200 or so people in the audience threw a

Call me a geek, but that's the cool thing about these conventions. The talent interacts with the common schmoes — and the common schmoe always asks better questions than me, guy with the press pass.

Except this time.

Landis was talking about "American Werewolf in London," an early '80s



Glen Baisley, an independent horror mov from New York, rented a table at the con; Eugene's long-time friend Brian Spears, a make-up guy.

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horror flick that has become a bona fide classic. Landis is funny and tells a really good story — he seemed genuinely happy chatting up the horror fans for a few minutes.

But I wanted to hear about John Belushi, who worked with Landis on both "Animal House" and "Blues Brothers."

So ...

"JOHN BELUSHI — DEAD OR ALIVE?" I screamed from my chair, without really thinking.

Landis, who hasn't aged in 30 years, tilted his head slightly and gave me a quizzical look.

"John Belushi will be here later," he said, getting a laugh from the folks.

"GIVE US A BELUSHI STORY," I yelled back, "SOMETHING ABOUT JOHN BELUSHI SOMETHING FUNNY!"

At this point, everybody in the banquet hall became quiet. It was like somebody sucked out of the place.

Funny, light-hearted Landis launched into what sounded like a cross between a eulogy and a public service announcement.

"John Belushi was a great guy and a force of nature and a gifted artist and a drug addict who killed him," Landis said. "Unfortunately, this isn't the joke part. Don't use drugs kids, not on you. I've lost several people to it. They kill you. And I'm still fucking angry about it."

Time to move on, right?

I walked out of the big banquet room, walked down a hall and entered the "dealer's room" and another big room. This one was filled with folding tables covered in everything horror.

Horror DVDs, collectibles, T-shirts, toys, everything. See, the horror convention is also for guys like Glen Baisley, an independent horror movie director from New York, to get his stuff out.

Baisley wrote and directed "The Tenement" and a bunch of other low-budget horror flicks. He rented a table at "Fango," as the convention is called, with Brian Spears, a rising talent (and longtime buddy of mine) in the horror world.

Spears has done gore make-up for HBO's "Autopsy," along with T&A flicks "Flesh for 1" and "Shadow," starring none other than "Candyman" Tony Todd — and lots of topless women.

Baisley and Spears are an interesting couple.

At horror conventions, Baisley is a schmoozer and a salesman, there to get publicity for his movies and to sell a few DVDs when possible.

Spears, meanwhile, has a slightly different agenda.

Their day began at 6 a.m., when they left their homes in Westchester County, N.Y. to go to the tables at Fango.

At about 8:30 a.m., they were being interviewed by a documentary crew from Showtime. Baisley was interviewing horror fans.

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The guy with the microphone asked Baisley about his favorite horror movies. Baisley, usually good-tempered dude of well over six feet with a voice that rivals Vader, started about "Halloween."

Spears, a shorter guy who always gets mistaken for the Richard Dreyfuss character remained quiet for a moment. Then, as Baisley talked earnestly about the great director Carpenter, Spears began tweaking Baisley's nipples over his shirt. Baisley, apparently used to this sort of thing, smiled slightly and kept talking about hor

Spears was also selling stuff at the convention. He had a huge collection of hand-made and masks, many of which had been used in the movies he's made.

A half hour after the public had been let in, Spears sold a burnt corpse to a bar owner Hampshire. The guy paid about \$250 for it and planned to hang "her" in his bar for Ha

Later, the guy showed up in the hotel bar wearing what I think was black face. Speaking of the hotel bar, that's where the real entertainment for the Fango shows ha

Later that night, and after talking to a guy for 20 minutes about "The Seven Ups," a 70 flick, I hung with Spears, Baisley, actor Mike Lane, Spears' make-up partner Pete Ger gagle of other indie horror filmmakers.

A summary of the after hours activities: Baisley fell out of an elevator, Gerner cuddled urinated in a stairwell, Lane did a dead-on, yet disturbing imitation of Bill Paxton from "Aliens" and a bizarre "Fango girl" had some really f'd-up foot fungus.

Oh yeah, Spears and I were kicked out of a VIP after party not once, not twice, but thr Turns out you had to pay 40 bucks in advance to get in.

Spears and I also befriended Judah Friedlander, the comic from VH-1's "Best Week E wears a trucker's hat that reads simply: "World Champion."

I had seen Judah once at The Comedy Cellar in New York City, where he killed — I m and shoulders above the other comics (which included Dave Attell).

Judah isn't just a stand-up comic. The dude can act. He played the sorta autistic dude "American Splendor."

Judah was at Fango to promote "Feast," the Project Greenlight movie that is coming o year.

"Is 'Feast' any good?" I asked Judah, who, by the way, does not drink or smoke.

Judah said it kicks ass. Actually, I can't remember precisely what he said, so I'm answ question as if I was his press agent.

He and Spears talked for awhile, with a wildly drunken Spears quizzing the stand-up c Balthazar Getty, who stars in the John Gulager-directed "Feast."

Spears was convinced Getty was a spoiled brat.

"He's got all that gas money, that prick!" Spears said.

Judah, holding a glass of Seltzer and wearing thick-ass Elvis glasses with messy long was impassive.

"He was cool, man," Judah said.

"No, man, he's got all that money!" Spears insisted.

"I honestly did not know that until right now," Judah said.


The three of us chatted for a little bit. The conversation ended with Judah promising u: us into a comedy club for free. I'm e-mailing him this article as a reminder — and I'm f weekend.

The next morning, Judah said somebody had stolen his trademark trucker cap. "It really sucks, man," he said.

I think it was Landis.

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