



NEWS, REVIEWS, AND INTERVIEWS

Welcome to our news, reviews, and interviews page. Other sites have the news covered, we want to be different. Our interviews will focus on the creators, artists, and lunatics that make our genre something special. We'll also post reviews of creepy films we like (or don't), and have poster or mask related topics.

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Lunch, with a side of gruesome from filmmaker Clarissa Jacobson

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We love to see new voices in horror filmmaking, especially new female voices. Women filmmakers have been underrepresented for too long in Horror, and thankfully that has begun to change. *Lunch Ladies* is a funny, gory treat, written and produced by Clarissa Jacobson. We recently had the chance to chat with this talented filmmaker about her work. Keep an eye out for her projects, she is definitely going to make some noise in Hollywood.

The Haunted Cinema (THC) - It's Ghastly's and my pleasure to welcome you to The Haunted Cinema for a chat. Ghastly is hoping to see if your *Lunch Ladies* are available to work our concessions, however, I want to talk to you about your filmmaking, and writing. Tell us a bit about your background. Was a career in films always something that you aspired to?

Clarissa Jacobson (CJ) - The Lunch Ladies are thrilled to work concessions for The Haunted Cinema! They have a lot of potpie they made that they need to foist on unsuspecting customers. Win Win!



As for me, I'll work concessions too, but I aspire to film. I've wanted to have a career in film since the day I was cast as Papa Elf in the first grade Christmas play (yes I played a dude). For years I thought I wanted to be an actress, so I got my degree in theater at Indiana University, went to the [American Musical & Dramatic Academy](#) in NY after that then followed that dream for a while until I realized my true passion was writing. I had always written and done sketch characters and produced little tiny videos of myself doing them, but I didn't realize that's what my love was – the actual creation of the film, the characters, the production. So when I found [Twin Bridges Writing Salon](#) I went right into screenwriting. Funny how things come full circle I'm going back into doing some Voice Over and acting too. And I hope to direct. I just like all of it – but screenwriting the most.

THC - What are some of the challenges that you faced breaking into to the business?

CJ - Well, I wouldn't say I have broken into the business yet, hahahaaa. I am still holding tight and looking for financing to get the **Lunch Ladies** feature done, and I have three other screenplays optioned that we are hoping to get financing as well. But, on the other hand I have an incredibly successful short and have a lot of things happening and projects in the works. So, I will speak in terms of how to stay alive and positive in the business, those are the biggest challenges. To remember why you are doing it, because you love it, to keep your positive outlook, to keep creating art no matter how many times you fail, to listen to those who love you and want you to succeed and ignore the others



because you love it.

THC - Let's talk about your amazing, short film, *Lunch Ladies*. It is a wonderful, dark, horror comedy that shows an appreciation for, and understanding of the horror genre. Are you a horror fan? If so, what are some of the films that you love and have inspired you?

CJ - Thank you for that lovely review! The funny thing is, after making the short, I thought it was only a comedy. I didn't realize it was a horror just as much as a comedy, or that I was a horror geek myself until it got in some horror festivals. I thought that to be a horror fan you had to love for example – ***SAW***. Now, that's a great film, but that's a film I can't watch because I don't like that type of gore. So I thought that is what makes a horror fan - you have to like it all. And now, after being in the horror industry with ***Lunch Ladies***, I realize how big the horror genre is, that everyone has different loves in the horror space. So, yes, I've been a long time horror fan forever, I just didn't know it! My favorite horror films are ***The Shining, The Exorcist, Let The Right One In*** (Foreign version), ***An American Werewolf in London, Sean of the Dead, Evil Dead, It Follows, Night of the Living Dead*** and more.

I think I was definitely influenced by comedy horrors along the way but more than that, John Hughes and John Waters.

THC - While women have been involved in Horror for many years, there have only been a few behind the camera until recently. Thankfully, the past few years have seen a rise in women Producers, Directors, and Writers. What do you feel that women bring to the horror genre that has been missing in the past?

CJ - I just think we have different voices than men, we see things differently and there's room for both and there is an audience and desire to see both. The industry has to stop being afraid of different voices period and stop regurgitating the same ones because audiences are hungry for new thoughts and ideas.

A guy could write ***Lunch Ladies***... but would it be like how I wrote it? No, it would be from his male experience and viewpoint so our characters would be different. I mean would a guy even think to write about two middle-aged ***Lunch Ladies***? I don't know. So, the ideas are different, the take on things are different. I think the main problem is the industry underestimates the audience and wants to give them only one-true and true voice - the masculine voice – but we are showing the industry that audiences want the feminine voice too – which often includes women characters that aren't just eye candy!



THC - In the past, female characters in horror were the “scream queen” or “damsel in distress”. Thankfully these stereotypes have been changing, bringing more complete, smart roles for women. *Lunch Ladies* is a great example of that. Was the death of the cheerleader and serving her as the main course, your celebration of the passing of the old, and the entrance of the new role for women in horror?

CJ - That’s funny! I never thought of it so intellectually. But that’s a wonderful twist on the concept. When I wrote it, I never thought of anything like that – it was only about the characters and what they want and what they felt. I wanted to write something about people that go to jobs everyday and are not given the tools they need to make things work, yet are constantly being put down - underdogs.

I wanted to write a movie about people that have dreams even though no one would ever think they do – to make it a point that everyone has dreams and are more than the sum of their job. So here are two women who have big dreams, who work in a nowhere job and no one respects or cares about them. And they’re bullied everyday. And one day, those underdogs win and that bully loses so it’s a nice fuck you to bullies and everyone who says you can’t go for your dreams – dream-killers - those who destroy others dreams and hopes just for the sake of their own insecurities deserve to be served up on a platter.



One day she told me she wished someone would write a movie about Lunch Ladies because there weren't enough lead parts for middle-aged women. She would always audition against another woman and because there was only one role, only one or the other would get it – she said hey, if someone wrote about Lunch Ladies then there would be TWO middle-aged roles and they could both get the part! (spoiler alert) Then Donna was in the play **Sweeney Todd** at the time and I was like wouldn't it be funny to do a spoof on **Sweeney Todd** with high school Lunch Ladies. But since everyone does spoofs I decided to wink at it to admit I was stealing the idea by having them in love with Johnny Depp who starred in **Sweeney Todd**. They get the idea to do what they do from HIM.

THC - The writing is sharp, witty, and dark. Tell us about the writing process for the film. How long did it take? How long did it take from concept to finished script?

CJ - Thank you! I wrote the feature first - that took 18 months, then the short followed and that took another 5. I wrote it in my screenwriting class that I've been in for 13 years – Twin Bridges Writing Salon - taught by Joe Bratcher (producer and choreographer on the short) and Judy Farrell. Writing a good script takes time. You tear it apart, you put it back together, you develop it you take notes you tear it apart again. **Lunch Ladies** was exceptionally hard. I don't know why, probably because it is so weird and took a long time to get the balance of the comedy and horror right.

THC - The choice to primarily feature women, from the aforementioned Lunch Ladies, to the character of Alexis works perfectly in this film. Why was it important to tell the story from this point of view?

CJ - Just being a chick, I couldn't imagine even writing it from any other point of view. It's the only point of view I really know! I finally after many scripts wrote a screenplay from a male point of view. I was ready; I had enough experience to write outside what I know. But all my scripts up until then and after have always been female point of view, because that's where I come from. I can't imagine that people would respond to Lunch Ladies from a male point of view because it's so feminine – in that it's



THC - I loved the way the Principal is portrayed in the story. You chose never to show his face. He was either shot from the shoulders down, only a voice on the intercom, or had his features out of focus. Was this always what you had in mind?

CJ - Yes! I wrote it that way in the screenplay. That was one of the notes early on in class. Rudy Hornish who plays the janitor in the short – and was in my writing class for a few years - actually gave me that note – he said

"Hey, wouldn't it be cool if you never see the Principal, if you just heard his voice and saw his body?"

That's what is wonderful about class – so many great ideas and you steal 'em and make 'em your own.

THC - The way that the film is acted, shot, and scored it has a fairy-tale quality, albeit a Grimm's Fairy-tale quality. Was that your intention as you wrote it, or was that the Director's, J.M. Logan's, idea?

CJ - That's how the screenplay is written. It's over the top, surreal and there are tons of visuals giving you that. When I met with JM, I told him what I wanted and how I saw it. I said I want big, surreal, comic-book quality, like a cartoon. It's over the top, but rooted in reality. He was on the same page. If you are doing your job as a screenwriter you have the visuals there, the feel the tone everything, the



The score was done by Antoni M. March – who JM had found through Federico Jusid who had worked with JM before. JM had lain in a Danny Elfman soundtrack for editing purposes (Amelia Allwarden edited). It felt right, and JM had done scoring before so was able to work with Antoni to tell him exactly what he wanted. Antoni made the most incredible score a mix between Danny Elfman and John Williams. The last song by Fire The Animal, I found by calling all my musician friends for recommendations - I wanted a rock and roll song that had some grit but was upbeat.

THC - Let's talk about your role as Producer on this film. I have seen many horror shorts, some successful and others not so successful. This film rises above in many ways, and the production value is top-notch. What were the challenges in this production?

CJ - 120 people in the cast and crew, it was a lot of folks. But hardest was finding a school to film in - I called over 100 schools before finding one – which happened to be a lead from JM – he and I also looked at tons of schools together, that was the hardest part finding the location.

The film was hard to do but magical. We worked very hard, and there were setbacks, but all the setbacks actually needed to happen to make room for the great stuff. For example the first set designer quit one week before we filmed to take another job. On top of it, he was super unprofessional, he took with them the assistant I hired for him, had done no work on the piece and left no suggestions on who could fill his place. ONE WEEK BEFORE FILMING. Guess what? Best thing that ever happened, I called and called and called and found Alicia and Ray Ho – husband and wife couple. They came in a few days before and killed it.

THC - For those reading this who may be thinking about making their own short film. As a Producer, talk about budgets and how to work with limited budgets. What are the traps that filmmakers new to short films need to avoid?

CJ - This was my first short so I didn't know tons about producing, but I'm an incredibly hard worker and I surrounded myself with amazing people and was not afraid to ask for help or admit I didn't know something. The traps? Acting like you know it all. Not asking for help. Not listening to those that know more than you. These are things that I've seen happen on other shoots that fail. Not being prepared – we prepped for MONTHS before filming. Not having a script that's developed – without a strong script, you're toast. Not saying please and thank you on set and treating everyone equally. Listening to those who say you can't – get rid of any "no" people on your team – it's so hard to make a film – you need people who believe you can do things. I was told "no" so many times it was ridiculous. JM and my team all said Bullshit, we make that a YES we can.

THC - The casting for Lunch Ladies was inspired. Did you have a hand in the casting? As you were writing the script, did you have an idea of who you wanted to see play Seretta and LouAnne?

CJ - Thank you! I did 95% of the casting myself. I wrote the part for Donna. LouAnne was JM Logan's find – she had done a short for him before and he knew based on type and her amazing skills as a comedienne that she'd look great with Donna and they'd work well together.



Daisy was producer Shayna Weber's find, she knew her from when she was a little girl and suggested her. Chris who plays the principal was in my writing class. The teachers and faculty and Janitor – Rudy Hornish - were all in my writing class. I found the students on Backstage, I talked to each one of them for over a month and knew their names and what they did when they came on set – no one was an “extra” to me – I have been an actress and treated like crap as an extra and I wanted all of them to be treated like they were serious actors which they were. The dancers were cast by Joe Bratcher and myself.

THC - A successful short film can be an important path to feature filmmaking. Tell us about taking *Lunch Ladies* on the Film Festival Circuit. What was that experience like? How was it received? How important are film festivals to a short film filmmaker?

CJ - The festival circuit was incredible! I met so many amazing people and went to as many as I could including the European ones. People loved it at the festivals and I think especially having it all over the world gave it a lot of buzz and love. I learned a lot. And it was hard work; I read a book, studied festivals then submitted like crazy all over the world.

THC - We love make-up effects and gory visuals here at The Haunted Cinema, and *Lunch Ladies* delivers on both. Talk about the creation of the effects on *Lunch Ladies*. What “tales from the



past. So they know that stuff like the back of their hand. Matt I had met at a bar a few years prior and he was one of the two people who had recommended JM to direct to me. When JM came on so did Matt. I told JM I didn't want the effects to look super real – like the film **SAW**. I wanted them like the effects in **Sean of the Dead**. Just real enough but not too real. We were all on the same page and Matt made them perfect just disgusting enough for you to go “ewwww” but not so disgusting you think it's real. Two funny tales from the cafeteria – 1) the leg that gets ground up is a cast of MY leg – it freaked me out first time I saw it and still does 2) there was so much blood in the kitchen that it took until nearly 5am to clean up – one hour before kids were coming to school on Monday.

THC - What's next for you? Any projects brewing that you can share? Any chance of revisiting the *Lunch Ladies* world?

CJ - I made the short, **Lunch Ladies** based on the feature and this has always been my dream to have the feature made, so I'm looking for financing for that. Meanwhile, I have a coming of age feature film that was optioned by Norman Stephens and Bev Nero Productions called **Stella By Starlight** that we hope to film in Tulsa. I also have a Gothic horror about Elizabeth Bathory that was optioned by Venezuelan Director Gisberg Bermudez who did the film **El Silbon**. Coming out soon, in 2019 I also have **A VERY IMPORTANT FILM** – it's a 5 minute short about a woman named Clarissa Jacobson who made a film named **Lunch Ladies** and realized it wasn't important and has now made something important. No lie.

THC - How can people find you?

CJ - I'm on IMDb and you can look at the lunchladiesmovie.com website where I post a ton of fun things. I will also be starring in **A Very Important Film** – coming out in 2019!



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