

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face. The person has pale skin and dark, intense eyes. On the sides of their face, there are several thick, fleshy, pinkish-red tentacles or appendages that appear to be attached to their skin. Their mouth is wide open, revealing a set of sharp, white, pointed fangs or teeth. The lighting is dramatic, with deep shadows and bright highlights, giving the image a horror or sci-fi aesthetic.

paul champion

jack of all trades

by Matt Molloy

From the first moment we saw Eel Girl's scaly, zombie-like visage, we've had dreams of plastering her face on a SCARS cover. That "Eel Girl" filmmaker/director Paul Champion isn't just some guy working out of his mother's basement (well, probably not), but has a legit background of fx and art work on everything from "Sin City" to "Clash of the Titans" gives this short the feel of a full, polished film. Not that Champion thinks every short filmmaker should make the leap into features – right away. Shorts breathe creativity. The sort that allows not only films like "Eel Girl," but "Night of the Hell Hamsters," Champion's first short. Trust us, he can explain it better than we can.



SCARS: It doesn't happen often that the person I'm interviewing has so much going on that I don't even know where to start. So I guess we'll go with "Eel Girl." What was the inspiration behind this creepy creature short film?

PAUL CAMPION: It was all down to the music track. I heard that first, and just started coming up with some ideas of this half-fish girl-thing in the room with the bath. Then I thought perhaps I could make it as a music video, but it took 4 years to get around to making it, so I turned it into a short film instead, hoping it might more interest if it played in film festivals. She was originally going to just bite his head off, with a huge amount of blood everywhere, but I decided to go with something a bit more original, even though it was much harder to pull off the effect.

SCARS: Is there any interest in turning "Eel Girl" into a feature length film?

PC: I've had a few enquiries, however I'm a firm believer that short films are best left as they are. Most attempts to take a story that is designed to work in just a few minutes don't work when you try and stretch it out to 90 minutes.

SCARS: Before "Eel Girl," came your first short film, "Night of the Hell Hamsters," which is definitely on the other end of the spectrum. How did this film come to be?

PC: "Hell Hamsters" was originally an idea I came up with for a 48-hour film competition in New Zealand. We didn't get to make that particular story, but as it was my idea, I started developing it a bit more, primarily working around the scene with

the only way to save him would be to kick him in the balls. At the time I was trying to get a feature film off the ground, but I'd never directed anything before so I thought I'd better get on with it and start with a short film.

SCARS: Do you plan to continue making short films?

PC: I was hoping to make a feature film next, however trying to finance anything is very tough at the moment, so I've got one, possibly two more shorts that I'd like to make in the meantime.

SCARS: A lot of directors start off with shorts, then move on to producing their features later. In the meantime, tell us about the three projects listed on your website, paulcampion.com.

PC: At the moment even experienced directors are having problems financing films, so it's better to have a couple of projects on the go and hope that at least one gets made. Currently the three projects are: "Dark Hollow" - based on Brian Keene's novel. Set in a sleepy country village, it's about a Satyr that is brought to life and begins abducting the local women and killing off the local men, it's a good old fashioned monster movie, a bit of blood, boobs and makeup effects for the creature.

The second film is "Terminal," again based on Brian Keene's novel. This one is a supernatural thriller about Tommy, a young father, who finds out he's dying of a terminal illness, and in desperation to provide for his family after he's gone, he decides to rob a bank to provide for his family.

The third one is "Charnel House," with a script by UK horror writer Paul Finch. This one has a young criminal gang fighting for their lives against voodoo re-animated zombies. All three films are currently at an advanced stage of development, we have finished scripts and are currently trying to get them financed, ideally looking for some pre-sales, and hoping to get at least one into production this year.

SCARS: Is there a reason for choosing to turn two Brian Keene stories into films?

DARK HOLLOW



PC: He writes great stories, it's as simple as that. Most of his novels read like a movie, and his characters are all very down to earth and it's very easy to relate to them. I've been trying to get "Terminal" made for several years now, however with the recession and the general difficulty in trying to finance a feature film, especially for a first time director, I thought perhaps "Dark Hollow" might be easier to raise finance for, as it's a simpler story and can be done on a lower budget.

SCARS: Before directing your own films, you have done visual effects for films like "Lord of the Rings," "Constantine," "Sin City," "30 Days of Night" and "The Chronicles of Narnia," among many others. Was working on these films as exciting as it sounds or is digital work a little more grueling?



THOMAS WILLIAMS



PC: It's both. It's fantastic to be involved in these projects and to be creating something that will hopefully be seen by millions people, but it can also be extremely long hours sat in front of a computer in a dark room for months on end.

SCARS: It looks like you are now doing some concept art work for a few recent films like "Clash of the Titans," "Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief," and the upcoming "The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader." Do you enjoy concept art work over some of the other jobs you have done?

DARK HOLLOW



PC: After directing, I definitely enjoy doing concept art the most. It's a chance to let loose with your imagination and experiment and play with different ideas.

SCARS: How have these past jobs helped with creating your own films?

PC: They've given me a lot of experience, particularly when it comes to designing the visual look of a film, and particularly the visual effects. Most of the stories I

want to tell are in the sci-fi/fantasy/horror genre, and I'm probably always going to be using effects in some way to help tell the story, so I'd say I've now got a pretty good understanding of how visual effects work (and how much time and money it involves). It's a great help when trying to work out how to tell the story and if I need to use visual effects, if I can get away with doing it practically in camera, or if there's a way to tell the story without using visual effects at all.

SCARS: We wish you well with all of your projects!

PC: Thank you!

Be sure to head over to www.paulcampion.com to watch "Eel Girl" and "Night of the Hell Hamsters" in their entirety, as well as learn more about all of Paul's projects.

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DARK HOLLOW



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