

IUN

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Catalunya (Catalonia)

Països Catalans (Catalan Nations)

Peles and Bran, in Romania, to be given back within a month

The Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs of Romania, Adrian Iorgulescu, has a month to sign the necessary papers for the restitution of the Bran Castle and of the Peles estate to their lawful owners, Government spokesperson Oana Marinescu reported Friday.

At the Cabinet meeting, Minister Iorgulescu presented a paper showing that the legal conditions were in place for the restitution, in kind, of the Bran Castle to the Hapsburg family, and of the Peles estate to the Royal House.

‘The current usage of the buildings will remain in place for three years, and the Minister of Culture will continue to discuss with the lawful owners in order to assure the access of the public to the museums on those properties’, explained Marinescu.

Yahoo News, 6 Feb

Adrienne Barbeau plans vampire novel

Awaiting the release of her autobiography *THERE ARE WORSE THINGS I COULD DO*, veteran genre actress Adrienne Barbeau is set to try her hand at penning a slice of genre fiction. She’ll tackle the book once she wraps her time on stage in the title role of *THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS JUDY GARLAND*, which is set to debut in NYC at the Actor’s Playhouse (100 7th Ave. South) on March 23.

“I am working on a vampire novel, not by myself,” Barbeau reveals to Fango, quite ecstatic about exercising her writing chops again. “I have a co-author, because I don’t think I’m a person who can create a story; I can tell it once I have the bones of it. I can write the characters and the dialogue and the scenes, but to come up with a story idea is not a talent I possess.”

Fleshing out this bloodsucker opus with the original *FOG* star (and true Stevie Wayne) is “an Irish author, a man named Michael Scott who has had more than 100 stories published in the UK. He writes horror, sci-fi, romance— under a pseudonym —and is the leading expert on Irish folklore, I believe. He’s just extremely talented, and he told me I should write something for my 18-to-34-year-old fan base, and I said, ‘I can’t! I can’t think of a story to save my life!’ And he said, ‘Well, I’ll help you with that,’ so we’ve been co-authoring it.”

Barbeau is currently refraining from divulging the book’s title and plot (as the details are still being worked out), but keep watching this spot for further updates! —Ryan Rotten

www.fangoria.com, 14 Feb.

The Vampire at 75

This week 75 years ago, one of the classic horror films of all time was released - "Dracula," starring Bela Lugosi. It was the first talking picture horror film, and one that defined both the genre of vampire films and the acting career of its star. Though widely hailed for his portrayal of Count Dracula, Lugosi found himself typecast and was only able to find parts in horror films for the rest of his career. When he died in 1956, he was buried at his request wearing his Dracula cape. In 1931, when "Dracula" was released, the Great Depression was gripping the U.S., and movie theaters took in 719-million dollars in ticket sales. Now, going to the movies is an 11-billion-dollar-a-year business.

www.usnewswire.com, 14 Feb.

From Russia, With All Kinds of Weird Stuff

There are films that need no introduction, but a Russian-language vampire-and-apocalypse movie isn't one of them. Luckily, there are two visually striking, complementary ways of previewing "Night Watch." One is to watch the traditional trailer, and the other is to catch a tantalizing version that goes faster than the speed of sight yet is blandly labeled "condensed featurette." Both suggest the neon look and zooming pace that has made "Night Watch" a megahit in Russia and, more crucially for American audiences, has led Fox Searchlight to bet on its potential here. The first film in a trilogy -- the sequels "Day Watch" and "Dusk Watch" will follow -- "Night Watch" opens Feb. 17 in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and in other cities in the next weeks.

The official trailer is not exactly sedate. (Watch the trailer: foxsearchlight.com) After an introduction that shows a sweet little boy, there's a screeching sound followed by two minutes of quick cuts and flashing images: flocks of crows obscure the sky, a very pale man always seems to wear dark glasses at night, a truck does a somersault over a person standing on the highway. A narrator explains that this is the culmination of a battle between the forces of light and darkness that started more than a thousand years ago, and that the balance of power, maintained by a force called the "Night Watch," is now up for grabs. You don't need to know exactly what the boy or the pale man or other people with suspiciously fangy teeth have to do with all that. This trailer, promising "The first chapter in an epic horror trilogy," sends a message of colorful, non-stop, slightly haunted urban action.

The so-called featurette is pretty much what the film's official website calls it: "the entire movie in two-and-a-half-minutes." (Watch the featurette: foxsearchlight.com) This is probably not the place to start, but if you already know the basic light-dark-

vampire business, it's quite entertaining. There is no narration, just some music and lots of percussion as speeded-up visual images accumulate so quickly you can only take in part of what zips by. There are the birds, the warriors from a thousand years ago, the kid, the pale guy, but much more. This time there's also a subway, a Russian soldier, a bloody man on a doctor's examining table, computers, and a scene in which a boy's irises turn blood red. This version only slows down to show the somersaulting truck at its normal speed, which was fast to begin with.

Like the trailer, the mini-movie is calculated to play well to viewers raised on music videos, video games and, of course, the Internet. Targeting that young audience, the Internet is the only place Fox has placed this ultra-fast version of the "Night Watch." And they've made sure that both visually-crammed versions lure you to come back and look more closely. Even in the official trailer, the first time through you might miss the guy whose eye have yellow irises.

Caryn James
www.nytimes.com, 15 Feb.

Horror – Right before your eyes!

There are a couple of live horror performances in the works (and I am not talking about Joe Coleman's mouse-head biting!) that you might want to catch:

Lestat Stage Play

The musical inspired by the vampire characters of novelist Anne Rice is the inaugural Broadway production of Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures has already played (where else?) San Francisco and is now Broadway bound... but critics say it bites. Songwriter/producer Elton John blames his nuptials on his heretofore lack of hands-on participation (read the story here) and promises the Broadway opening will be bigger and better.

"This musical is the fulfillment of my deepest dreams," said author Anne Rice, in a statement before the critical drubbing. "Elton's music and Bernie's lyrics have captured the pain and the passion of the characters perfectly, and the entire adaptation has re-created the very essence of the books."

Carolee Carmello and Jack Noseworthy © Paul Kolnik
horror.about.com, 16 Feb.

'Night Watch': Vampire Chronicle, Can this Russian fantasy blockbuster win over jaded Western eyes?

The story that begins in this grandly conceived horror-fantasy import — a box-office sensation upon its release in Russia two years ago — is far more interesting than, say, "Night Watch" opens with a scene set a thousand years ago, in which two contingents of armored soldiers confront each other on a bridge. These are the Warriors of Darkness and the Protectors of Light, who together make up the supernatural legion of Others — witches, vampires and shape-shifters of various sorts who have always walked undetected among humankind. A battle erupts that becomes so bloody a truce has to be called. The warring factions agree that thenceforth the forces of Light will form a Night Watch to monitor and restrain the evil activities of the Warriors of Darkness; the Dark forces, in turn, will form a Day Watch to keep an eye on the good guys. That good guys should bear watching too is an indication of the story's unusual moral complexity, which will become clearer as the picture proceeds.

We next flash forward to 1992, and see a young man named Anton (the scruffily engaging Konstantin Khabensky) paying a visit to the Moscow apartment of an old woman who is in fact a witch allied with the Dark forces. Anton is upset that his girlfriend has left him for another man. The woman tells him that not only has the girl left him, but that she is pregnant. She tells him that she can punish the girl for her infidelity by killing the child in her womb, but only if Anton assumes full responsibility for the deed. He unwisely agrees. Before this long-distance abortion can be completely carried out, however, a Night Watch squad bursts into the apartment and seizes the witch. In the process, they discover that Anton himself is also an Other.

Twelve years later, Anton, toggled out in flappy overcoat, fingerless wool gloves and sunglasses after dark, has become an officer with the Night Watch. The truce between the forces of Light, led by a bluff, burly man named Geser (Vladimir Menshov, who directed the Oscar-winning 1979 Russian film "Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears"), and the forces of Darkness, led by the elegantly creepy Zavulon (Victor Verzhbitsky), is growing shaky. An ancient prophecy foretells the coming of a Great One, who will bring the struggle between Light and Dark to an apocalyptic end. What the prophecy doesn't foretell is which side the Great One will take. There's an uneasy suspicion, however, that he'll be showing up to take it very soon.

Anton next becomes involved with a young boy who is hearing "The Call" of the Other world, and whom Anton must intercept before the child falls into Dark hands. There is also a young woman named Svetlana (Maria Poroshina), who lives under a dreadful curse, unwittingly destroying all living things to which she turns her attention. The outward manifestation of her oppressive burden is a funneling Vortex of evil that swirls above her, and is growing higher and more threatening with each passing day.

Working with a budget of only \$4-million, director Timur Bekmambetov, who started out making Russian TV commercials and music videos, has created a lightly stylized world out of the drab materials of post-Soviet Moscow — its minimally populated streets, its glaring subways and its cramped, tatty apartments. Clearly inspired by big-budget Hollywood movies like "The Matrix," Bekmambetov was just as clearly determined not to simply rip those films off. Instead, he has put together a movie that is matter-of-factly Russian in its look and feel, and impressively inventive. For example, being unable to outsource the movie's many special-effects shots to a Western company that might have handled them with ease, he instead created a virtual, computer-linked network of small FX shops throughout Russia to do the job, working around the clock, in relays, across the country's many time zones.

Much of what this team has achieved is remarkable, especially the scene in which a truck bears down on an old man in the middle of a street, and with a raised hand he sends it somersaulting high above his head to land with a crunch farther down the road. There's a bravura sequence in which a bolt tears loose from the body of an airplane and we follow it all the way down to earth, where it bounces into a heating duct filled with cockroaches, and finally plops out into a kitchen to land in a woman's coffee cup. The riotous swarm of wheeling black birds that fill the Vortex as it centers ominously on top of an apartment building is also memorable, as is the shot in which a Dark character reaches behind his neck and yanks his entire spine out of his body.

No one involved in making this movie lacked talent; it's only their resources that were circumscribed. Nevertheless, the resulting film isn't quite what even a sympathetic Western viewer might hope it would be. Anyone who remembers what it was like to see "The Matrix" for the first time seven years ago is likely to find that "Night Watch" lacks lift-off — it's not especially scary and its storyline isn't always entirely clear. The movie's cultural singularity (it's in Russian, with English subtitles) is distancing — we feel we're watching an impressive feat being accomplished under severe limitations, which is interesting, but maybe not quite impressive enough to eyes grown jaded from too much outsized Hollywood product. However, this is not the end of the story.

"Night Watch" is based on the first volume of a trilogy by the prominent Kazakhstani fantasy novelist Sergei Lukyanenko. (It will be published in this country, in English, in July.) A sequel based on the second volume, "Day Watch," has already been shot and, like this film, acquired for distribution by Fox Searchlight, which will step in (with more money, presumably) to co-produce the concluding installment of the story, "Dusk Watch," which will be filmed in English.

"Night Watch" may not be a fantasy classic itself (although it's certainly a watershed for the newly energized Russian film industry). But that doesn't mean that Bekmambetov and his production team haven't learned enough in making it to put the larger budgets it has merited to even more interesting use. Bring on part two.

Kurt Loder

www.mtv.com, 17 Feb.

'Vampire' thug bites passer-by's face

POLICE are hunting a vicious blood-sucking thug who pounced on a passer-by and bit his face.

The 45-year-old Caversham victim was walking near the Pitcher and Piano pub in Friar Street, Reading, when the attacker started hurling abuse at him at midnight on Wednesday last week.

The contents of a pint glass were thrown in the man's face by the madman, who then wrestled his victim to the ground and bit his face four times.

PC Timothy Lloyd said: "This was a nasty attack where the victim suffered several facial cuts as the result of bites."

The attacker - white and slim, around 6ft tall, with short dark hair - was with seven other men. PC Lloyd urged them to come forward.

<http://icberkshire.icnetwork.co.uk>, 23 Feb

"Johnathan" jury No. 2 deliberates

First court case ended in a mistrial Second jury heard more on girlfriend

After months of testimony, a mistrial and more than \$1 million in costs to the justice system, the bizarre "Johnathan" stabbing case has gone to a jury for a second time.

The jury retired yesterday to consider their verdict in one of the city's highest-profile crimes — without being told the back story. They returned to their hotel, and remained sequestered.

Before they began hearing evidence last December in the first-degree murder trial of three teens charged in the 12-year-old boy's death, they had been told the first trial had ended in a mistrial, but not why.

When they saw the Crown's star witness — a poised 16-year-old girl — take the stand in youth court and answer questions about her Web postings on "vampire" sites and her use of email handles like "biteforblood," they weren't informed it was just such references that had aborted the first trial.

The case concerns a boy who can only be identified as "Johnathan", whose bloodied 100-pound body was found Nov. 25, 2003, in the basement crawl space of his east-end home with 71 cuts, hacks and stabs.

He had died within minutes of a vicious attack, drowning in his own blood and unable to cry out because his voice box was cut.

Such horrific evidence held the city in its thrall during the first trial — a tale of seemingly casual adolescent brutality - - its centrepiece a six-minute tape recording of the three teenage boys boasting of plans to wipe out Johnathan and his family.

Johnathan's older brother, 19, and two friends, 17 and 18, pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder in the stabbing death. Because the brother was 16 and his pals 15 at the time, they cannot by law be named.

The jury in the first trial was in its second day of deliberations a year and nine days ago when Justice David Watt called a mistrial. He said new information, revealed in a media report about the girl's Web postings, forced his hand because it cast doubt on her credibility.

"I don't see how, in this case, Humpty can get put back together again," Watt told a hushed courtroom. "If this young woman didn't commit perjury, she came close enough."

It brought a halt to a case that had already cost about \$1 million in public money and raised questions about how such evidence — readily available to the knowing Internet surfer — was missed.

The problem was that the girl, who cannot be named, seemingly downplayed her interest in vampire fetishism when she testified, contradicting a key defence explanation for the bizarre murder plot tape recording.

Her Web postings, which only came to light after the first jury retired, seemed at odds with her insistence that she found such vampirism ridiculous.

She testified in both trials that on Nov. 25, 2003, at age 14, she was shocked when a vampire-fantasizing former boyfriend revealed a plot to kill Johnathan, his stepfather and mother as they returned home, one by one.

So she banded together with four girlfriends to phone and secretly tape him and his friends repeating their claims, so she would have proof to bring police.

"Blood is on tap here," the boyfriend said on the tape, trying to entice her to join him with an apparent reference to vampirism. "You can be just an accessory. ... We can hang out in the bedroom while they do it," he urged.

Johnathan's brother came to the phone, saying he wanted to kill his family with "fists and knives" because he was "sick of everything."

"My brother should have been home now, but for some f---ed up reason he's not home yet," he said. "Like he knows what's happening, so he's avoiding it."

The girl asked the third boy, a 15-year-old known to be shy and non-violent: "You're killing people now?"

"Yeah," he replied laconically.

Defence lawyers in both trials maintained the bloody boasts with vampire overtones were just an immature fantasy orchestrated by the boyfriend in a bid to revive a flagging romance. The other two were simply playing along with the joke, they said.

But on the stand in the first trial, the girl denied any interest in vampirism, saying she found it repellent.

She adamantly maintained that position during this second trial, under a different judge, David McCombs.

Although she admitted at the second trial she posted an Internet profile and semi-nude photos of herself on VampireFreaks.com, where she expressed an interest in "blood,

pain," she denied any interest in drinking blood and said she was put off by her boyfriend's claims to be a vampire.

Aside from this issue, much of the evidence of family dysfunction, teenage alienation and fearsome brutality in both trials was the same.

Johnathan's brother probably suffered from "intermittent explosive disorder," forensic psychiatrist Dr. Dominique Bourget testified.

In both trials, the deeply troubled youth has claimed, through his lawyers, Daniel Rechtshaffen and Robert Nuttall, to be the sole killer.

Nuttall argued the youth went berserk, stabbing his brother over and over in an uncontrolled rage triggered by a remark by Johnathan about the mess the teens had made. He is guilty of manslaughter, not murder, because there was no intent to kill, Nuttall told jurors.

Lawyers Catherine Glaister and John Dennis, representing the now 17-year-old vampire fantasist, and Dennis Lenzin and David North, for the third boy, argued the two youths were shocked witnesses to the brother's lethal rage.

Jurors heard that the brother told Bourget he woke up angry that day.

He had a long history of family strife, scrapes with the law and poor schoolwork. He skipped school with his two friends, who came over to play video games, smoke and drink wine.

At about 1:30 p.m. Nov. 25, 2003, the vampire-enthralled boy called his girlfriend, who was home sick, from Johnathan's house, revealing the plot to kill the family. She testified she was shocked but unsure what to do.

Later, some, if not all three, boys rifled the master bedroom, then smashed bottles and a TV in the basement.

The girl went to her high school to seek a trusted friend's advice.

She and four schoolmates decided to phone and secretly tape another conversation with the boyfriend so she would have proof for police.

At 4:13 p.m. she phoned the boy. After the taping, one of the girls' mothers called 911. By 4:50 p.m. Johnathan arrived home. By 5 p.m., he was dead.

Five minutes later, police left the home from which the girls made the call, tape in hand.

At 5:29 p.m. Det. Glenn Gray phoned Johnathan's house, pretending to be a telemarketer. The brother calmly told him his parents were not home.

Moments later his stepfather arrived. The "vampire" boy left within minutes.

The stepfather testified his stepson then tried to stab him, while the remaining boy repeatedly hit him on the head with a baseball bat. Lawyers for the two boys argued they were simply defending themselves against the man.

Now a jury will try to sort out all these facts — once again.

Vampire bats killing livestock in Colombia

Some 200 horses, cows and pigs have died in southern Colombia after being bitten by vampire bats thought to be infected with rabies, El Tiempo newspaper reported Friday.

The animals perished this month on farms and ranches around Puerto Asis along the border with Ecuador and Peru.

A flock of apparently rabid vampire bats is to blame for the livestock deaths, the daily said.

Even so, animal-health authorities in the provincial capital, Mocoa, told the newspaper that they have yet to determine if the beasts died of rabies. Farmer and local community leader Antonio Toro said that “the cows wake up with blood in their ears and on their legs, and later they die.”

The vampire bats responsible for the deaths make up a flock that is passing through the area, according to regional agricultural official Diego Orozco, who said the same bats may have killed more livestock in other localities.

EFE, 25 Feb.

LESTAT What is it about bloodsuckers that Broadway producers find so irresistible?

"Dance of the Vampires" was a dud. "Dracula, the Musical" flopped. Now here comes yet another vampire musical — supposedly being worked on after not wowing critics in an out-of-town tryout in San Francisco — although this one has several proven artists behind it. Elton John and Bernie Taupin wrote the songs; Hugh Panaro ("The Phantom of the Opera") stars; and it is based on "The Vampire Chronicles" by Anne Rice. Previews begin March 25. Opens April 25. Palace Theater, 1564 Broadway, at 47th Street. Ticketmaster. www.lestat.com.

www.nytimes.com, 26 Feb.

Rice's vampire, Lestat, seeks life on Broadway

Whether the Vampire Lestat adds Broadway to his long list of popular culture credits — he's the centerpiece of a series of best-selling novels, and Tom Cruise played him in the 1994 movie "Interview With the Vampire" — depends, in part, on his ability to ward off a force stronger than garlic or holy water

The critics.

"Lestat" is scheduled to open April 25, after a month of previews, at the Palace Theatre. The Elton John-Bernie Taupin musical is being retooled after a world premiere last month in San Francisco, where reviewers unleashed every possible vampire pun — from "bloody awful" to "toothless" to "anemic" — to express their distaste.

And vampires in general have had a hard time adjusting to the bright lights of Broadway. In 2002, the embarrassingly camp "Dance of the Vampires," drove its star Michael Crawford from New York. Two years later, a lush "Dracula" from North Salem composer Frank Wildhorn barely survived critical scorn for a four-month run.

"Lestat" will have a new ending, a spokesman for the show says. The story drawn from Anne Rice's "The Vampire Chronicles" series, featuring 18th-century French aristocrat Lestat de Lioncourt, is being streamlined. Elton John — famous for resisting revisions of his scores — is reworking one song and writing two new ones.

The cast, however, remains intact. Hugh Panaro — like Crawford, he's best known as a "Phantom of the Opera" — stars as Lestat, with Jim Stanek as his long-suffering partner, Louis; Carolee Carmello as Gabrielle, Lestat's fiercely independent mother; Drew Sarich as Armand, Lestat's commanding sometime nemesis; and Allison Fischer as Claudia, Louis and Lestat's daughter, whose betrayal of Lestat gives the story its terrible poignancy.

One fan is already pleased with the results.

"This musical is the fulfillment of my deepest dreams," Anne Rice has said. Rice famously railed against Tom Cruise when he was selected for "Interview," then came to his and the movie's defense once she had seen it, taking out full-page newspaper ads.

Official Rice biographer Katherine Ramsland has suggested that the 1976 novel "Interview With The Vampire" — which tells the story of Louis, Lestat and Claudia, the child Lestat turns into a vampire with tragic results — is really a metaphor for Rice, her husband, the late poet Stan Rice, and their daughter, Michele, who died of leukemia at age 5 in 1972.

"I never consciously thought about it when I was writing the book," Ramsland quotes Rice as saying in "The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Anne Rice's 'The Vampire Chronicles'" (Ballantine Books). "I knew I was using the physical beauty of Michele as the model, but Claudia was a fictional character in her own right. The character, the voice, the things Claudia says have nothing to do with my daughter — but there's no question that this is the symbolic working out of a terrible grief. What else can it possibly be?"

Grief, and its potentially paralyzing effect, is the real subject of Rice's vampire stories. In the 1980s, as Rice developed the characters in her novels, Lestat and his circle came to represent the gay community plagued by AIDS — just as Bram Stoker's "Dracula" had represented the dread of syphilis and the fear of outsiders in turn-of-the-20th-century London.

"Why were these characters born?" Rice asks in her program notes to the musical.

It is, she writes, so that she can say with Lestat: "I will be the hero of this, you understand me? I will never grieve for myself."

Georgette Gouveia
The Journal News, 26 Feb.

The Transylvanian Society of Dracula Symposium on "Compared folklore: the Supernatural categories"

The disclosures expected of this particular symposium are understandably high, and the society strives to meet the expectations by securing the cooperation of the best minds of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore (led by Prof. Dr. Sabina Ispas, founder-member of the TSD, who – in the meantime – has become a Fellow of the Academy); of Prof. Dr. Sorin Comorosan, Fellow of the Academy, who promised a long-awaited "Parallel Worlds – in the light of modern quantum physics"; of Prof. Dr. Silviu Angelescu and his equally awaited "Typology of the Supernatural"; or the intriguing "A new theory on the vampire" by Sir Alan Murdie, chairman of the famous "Ghost Club", England; "The findings of a forensic expert on After-life" by Dr. Mark Benecke, the World's best forensic biologist. Two ethnographic and folkloric sanctuaries of Romania will send their representatives – Prof. Dr. Mihai Fifor, director of The Ethnographic Museum of Oltenia (who can be questioned about the notorious Marotinu case – villagers settling a "strigoi" by traditional means); and Prof. Dr. Mihai Dancus, director of the Ethnographic Museum of Maramures. May 26 - 28, 2005 Sinaia – Romania

Letter from Castle Dracula, Feb.

New Documentary of National Geographic

Both "History Channel" and "National Geographic" filmed new documentaries in Romania, in January and February 2006. Members of our Society from both shores of the Atlantic contributed their share. This newsletter will announce the airing dates as soon as they arrive.

Letter from Castle Dracula, Feb 2006