

IUN

International Upire News

Vol. 1, October 2006

Edited by Josep Figols



www.cercle-v.org

contacte@cercle-v.org

Catalunya (Catalonia)

Països Catalans (Catalan Nations)

Interview with a vampire

Although Betty Curse is a cute, young poppette with catchy tunes and funky dress sense, Lily Allen she ain't (thank Christ). For a start, her artwork includes a graveyard, her forthcoming album is morbidly titled Here Lies Betty Curse and she wears lots of black eyeliner. But Betty (real name Megan) says, "I don't think I'm necessarily Goth." Instead, she claims that 'goth pop', as her music has been widely labelled, "is down to the way we look, not paying attention to the music.

The music can stand up on its own." And actually, it can. Girl With The Yellow Hair, her latest single, is a catchy pop song with dark lyrics, a combination that seems to be her trademark. Betty says she's been interested in "death and stuff" since a young age, reflected in both her literary and musical tastes: she cites Edgar Allen Poe, Nick Cave and Robert Smith as some of her (all-male) influences.

But what is it like being a girl in the alternative music industry, where female rockers are about as common as teetotal rockers? "I'm not gonna whine about it, but it is definitely more difficult. Your motives are questioned a lot more - are you for real and all that crap. I'll read the reviews and they're all about how I'm looking and what I'm wearing. People don't take me as seriously because I'm young and female but hopefully I'll prove them wrong.

- Soft-spoken and contemplative, Betty sounds mature beyond her years (she's only 20). Her first spell in the limelight came after winning a role in Alex Garland's zombie horror flick 28 Days Later. Now at an age where most of her peers are at university, Betty left school, "to concentrate on the band." While her friends were working or studying, "I'd be stuck in the house on my own." Locked away writing songs everyday, she admits it was a hard time.

Has she been depressed? She pauses: "I'd like to meet someone who can say they haven't." Although never really happy at school, Betty was, "determined not to change to fit in. I'd feel more miserable if I pretended I was into shitty RnB." And if her music - and look - has any kind of message, its authenticity, "I want people to understand they should just be themselves. You don't get anywhere by trying to be someone else.

- So what exactly is Goth? "I see it as being beautiful and finding something wonderful and dark. Death to me is the most beautiful thing...it's yearning for something that you may already have but may not last forever." If that's a subconscious reference to her music career, she shouldn't have too much to worry about. While her songs have a certain debut quality to them, they also have an abundance of potential, and there's a sense that with maturity will come great things.

That should give her something to smile about.

Karen Yossman

www.oxfordstudent.com, 11 Oct.

Rogue Pictures Signs Vampire Comic

A new vampire comic book, "Blood On The Tracks" has sold its film rights to Rouge Pictures even before its release according to The Hollywood Reporter. To be written and directed by Neill Dela Llana and Ian Gamazon, the film focuses on a murder rampage in the New York City subway system. Police initially believe it to be

the work of a psychopath but it is learned that a vampire is causing the carnage. Micheal Zoumas and Barry Levine will produce.

<http://www.flickdirect.com>, 18 Oct.

Evil incarnate
So you think you know Dracula?
Fulton's new production may surprise you

LANCASTER COUNTY, PA - John Pasha wants you to know his Dracula, which makes his world debut on the Fulton stage tonight, is not misunderstood.

"There's no 'poor me, I miss my humanity,'" says Pasha with a smile. "This is going to be a scary production. It's going to surprise and scare you."

Yes, his mysterious count is struggling a bit with his humanity, but mostly he's a monster ready to scare the wits out of you.

And as Pasha says, there's nothing better than being scared in the theater. Movies are made of celluloid, but actors on the stage are alive (or undead) and breathing.

"It's like a haunted house times 100," Pasha says. "And it couldn't be any better than at the Fulton."

Indeed, the Fulton is the perfect place to put on a production of Dracula, since it's set in the 19th century.

"It takes place in the Victorian era, when Jekyll and Hyde, Jack the Ripper, Dorian Gray and Freud were all part of the culture," Pasha says. "These are all icons of the time and part of our collective conscious. And they are all very much involved in the story."

This is, Pasha says, "a production of 'Dracula' you've never seen before."

Written by Mark Healy (who wrote the Fulton's adaptation of 'The French Lieutenant's Woman' in 2003), this production is officially titled "Dracula: Lord of the Undead."

Yikes.

Any number of different Draculas have been dramatized over the years, from the 1931 classic with Bela Lugosi to Frank Langella's sexy turn in 1979, to Gary Oldman's rather strange creation in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 "Dracula." And don't forget George Hamilton's comedic romp in "Love at First Bite."

"Next to Sherlock Holmes, Dracula is the most dramatized character in literature," Pasha says. "Mark has taken a lot of different legends and put them into this production."

Those legends include Vlad the Impaler, who was an actual person living in Transylvania in the 1400s.

What really makes this production truly frightening, Pasha says, is its perspective, the idea that there is a bit of Dracula in all of us.

“Everyone is flawed. It isn’t pure good versus pure evil,” he says. Dracula shows up when the darker side of us starts to leak out. It’s scarier because it’s part of us.”

It was actually a stage production of “Dracula” that convinced Pasha, then 12, that he could actually be an actor.

He was at the Children’s Theatre Company in Minnesota (he grew up in St. Paul) and went to see a show about the famous vampire.

“All these kids showed up in one scene for a dream ballet and I thought, I can do that,” Pasha remembers. “I felt like it spoke to me, I was riveted by it.”

Soon, Pasha was auditioning for the theater. He got his first professional gig playing Wally Webb in “Our Town.”

If Pasha had skipped that production, he’s pretty sure he still would have become an actor. There is a videotape of him, taken when he was 7, declaring to the world that he wanted to become an actor when he grew up.

“My dad took me to New York City to see Broadway shows when I was a kid,” Pasha remembers. “And I was always a performer. I’d be in the talent shows at school all the time.”

Pasha got his bachelor of fine arts at Boston University, then went to the University of Delaware where he earned in masters.

Classically trained, he’s appeared at Shakespeare festivals throughout the country.

“I’ve worked at almost all of them — Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Alabama. And I worked at the Shakespeare Theatre in D.C.”

He and a group of friends even formed their own company and took a production of “Hamlet” to Taiwan, performing at the Taipei National Theatre. He played Laertes.

While he loves the classics, Pasha says being part of a new play is exhilarating. And having the playwright there is great.

“You can be part of the entire story process,” he says. “You get to discuss your interpretation, you can feel like you’re a greater part of the experience.”

Jane Holahan
Lancaster New Era

Doctors Researching Blood Clotting Element In Vampire Bat Saliva

Doctors are launching a new medical study inspired by vampire bats.

Researchers believe vampire bats might someday save your life, especially if you suffer a stroke.

You may consider the hairy little blood suckers the stuff of nightmares, haunted houses and horror movies, but scientists believe they might have medical merit.

When vampire bats feed, their saliva prevents blood from clotting in their prey.

"That's what leads to a stroke -- you have a clot in a blood vessel, and then it blocks blood supply to that territory of the brain for a sufficiently long period of time to cause damage," said Dr. Andrew Slivka.

Slivka is enrolling patients in a study to examine a serum derived from the saliva of vampire bats.

Preliminary studies show it may effectively dissolve clots for up to nine hours after a stroke, three times longer than current drugs.

That extra time could be crucial for people like Janet Melcher. When Melcher suffered a stroke near her rural Ohio farm, it took several hours to get to a major hospital. A drug with a nine-hour window may give her a new appreciation for those winged critters from South America.

"I don't like bats, but if they help me or somebody else, that's a good thing," said Melcher.

Another good thing is how easily this drug is given.

It's given in a single bolus, so it doesn't have to be given over a period of time and infusion or anything.

With stroke, every minute counts and every new option is appreciated, even when its inspiration is not.

Over the next few years, the bat drug will be tested at 80 medical centers worldwide. If it proves effective, it could someday be a first line of treatment when someone suffers a stroke.

WTAE Channel 4 Action News, 20 Oct.

Dracula's in our blood

Playwright: 'He's a symbol of our dark side'

Most of us have fanta sized about being Dracula.

Sure, sunlight can vaporize you and somewhere there is a stake with your name on it.

But with luck, you can dodge those bullets for centuries, and meanwhile the upside is phenomenal:

Immortal? Check.

Irresistibly seductive? Check.

Superhuman strength? Check.

Turn into a giant bat? Check.

Wear a cape? Check.

Dracula maintains his hold on the popular imagination more than a century after novelist Bram Stoker introduced us to the suave and sophisticated vampire.

"He's a symbol of our dark side," said British playwright Mark Healy, who this week will witness the world premiere of his new adaptation, "Dracula: Lord of the Undead,"

at Lancaster's Fulton Opera House. "We are all attracted to the darkness and things we shouldn't be attracted to, really."

Healy knows he's traveling a well-worn path.

"It's been adapted more than any other single book outside the Bible," he said. "However, I think only about 10 percent of people who know the story of Dracula have actually read the book."

Healy said many of those adaptations were less than faithful to Stoker's novel. By going back to the original text, he found fodder for new surprises, particularly by pondering an obvious question the book doesn't really address.

"Why does Dracula come to this place at this specific time?" Healy asked. "Why has he left his homeland after centuries to come such a long way, and at Halloween?"

In Healy's play, the answer lies in the meaning of the undead count's name (literally "of the dragon") and its link to the dragon mentioned in the Book of Revelations.

He won't say more.

"It's nice to retell a well-known story and see if you can surprise people and play with their expectations," he said.

Healy is hanging out in Lancaster this month, watching Fulton Theatre artistic director Michael D. Mitchell and his cast work out the staging of his play. He's also serving as playwright in residence at Franklin & Marshall College, an arrangement that makes his stay financially possible.

"Playwrights are not all that well-paid," he said, laughing.

Healy has written several plays, including an adaptation of "The French Lieutenant's Woman" that premiered at the Fulton in 2003.

Now he's applied his skill to Dracula. He's appeared as an actor in two productions of "Dracula," and his mother is from the English town of Whitby, where much of the novel is set.

"I spent a lot of time in Whitby," Healy said. "There's even a Dracula museum there."

He's intrigued by the observation that Dracula's victims in some ways contribute to their own fates.

"You have to invite a vampire into your life," Healy said. "He doesn't just come crashing through the window, like a Frankenstein's monster might. You have to invite him over the threshold, and there has to be something in you that draws him."

David N. Dunkle
Patriot News, 21 Oct.

Dracula desk a legend in its own write

IT was left to rot in a garden for years, then lay forgotten in a house and very nearly ended up on a bonfire.

But the battered writing desk which once stood in the former Leeds home of an Editor of the Yorkshire Post may now go down in literary history as the place where Bram Stoker wrote Dracula.

Whitby has always been Yorkshire's main stop on the Stoker trail since he not only imagined the novel there but also featured Whitby Abbey and other sights in the opening chapters.

But pen was apparently put to paper on a desk he gave to his friend JSR Phillips, who edited the Yorkshire Post from 1903 to 1919. The antique later ended up in Hartlepool – where it was treated as junk and eventually given away to local author Billy Yull.

The desk and letters explaining the Dracula connection were yesterday unveiled by Mr Yull, 56, in an attempt to find out more about what could become a Vampire cult icon.

His strange legacy was the result of a friendship with a neighbour, Gillian Broderick – then living two doors down at 4 Henry Smith's Terrace, Hartlepool, the former home of Guy Phillips, grandson of JSR Phillips.

In 1975 Guy wrote to Mrs Broderick, concerning a desk that had been left behind when he sold her Number Four and moved to Appleton-le-Moor, near York.

He said: "I am happy to confirm that the desk I left with you when you and your husband bought 4 Henry Smith's Terrace is the actual desk on which Bram Stoker wrote Dracula.

"Stoker was a close friend of my grandfather JSR Phillips, Editor of the Yorkshire Post, and several times stayed at his house in Balmoral, Headingley, Leeds. Stoker gave him the desk with the information he had written Dracula on it.

"My grandfather left it to my father ER Phillips, Chief Assistant Editor of the Yorkshire Post. My mother disliked it and for years it stood outside in their garden at Scotton, near Knaresborough, until with their permission I took it to London and repaired it for my own use."

Mr Phillips mentions the desk was originally covered with green baize but he removed it because it was rotten. Antiques experts have pointed to this as a sign of authenticity as the desk would be baize covered – but most people would assume the original top was leather.

Mr Yull has also found a hand-written note from Mr Phillips to Mrs Broderick when he heard she was moving again, wishing her good luck with the house sale and regretting leaving the desk behind.

"I loathed the Dracula desk. But it is a fact that after leaving it behind, I and my family suffered misfortune after misfortune. I had two coronaries and my wife died suddenly of a stroke," he said, although he was now happily remarried.

Mrs Broderick left the desk at Mr Yull's house. His wife was going to put it on a bonfire, because it was in such a bad state. But he insisted it should go upstairs as a base for his computer - on which he was writing his first novel, ironically on Nazi fascination with the occult.

He said: "The desk is in appalling condition. It has been through two world wars, and stood outside in all weathers. It is my intention to restore it to its original glory."

Guy Phillips died in 1988. His second wife was traced by Mr Yull to a Norfolk nursing home but the trail went cold. There was two daughters, now possibly in their 50s. He has appealed for them to contact him at 2 Henry Smith's Terrace, Headlands, Hartlepool TS24 0PB.

Mark Branagan
Yorkshire Today, 23 Oct.

Professor sucks the life out of vampire tales Math formula takes bite out of Dracula

If vampires truly existed, the last human being would have been sucked dry centuries ago and our fanged killers would have long starved to death, according to an American physics professor who uses science to debunk the existence of supernatural creatures.

In a newly published essay, Central Florida University professor Costas Efthimiou uses science and mathematics to dismiss a variety of creatures of the night, including vampires, ghosts and zombies.

To examine the plausibility of Dracula existing, Mr. Efthimiou supposed the first vampire was created on Jan. 1, 1600.

That was roughly the time when the creature of darkness first emerged in folklore.

He then used the mathematical concept of exponential growth to calculate how long it would take for vampires to overrun the living.

Forget turning to crosses and holy water, it turns out we wouldn't have stood a chance.

Assuming that every vampire feeds once a month and that each victim becomes a vampire, the professor calculated that humanity's 15th-century population of roughly 536 million would have all been transformed into vampires within 30 months.

The vampires, of course, would have subsequently starved to death, he said.

"I only used mild, cautious assumptions," he said. "In the movies, you can see that vampires eat all the time. Truth be told, vampires never stop eating."

Mr. Efthimiou said Hollywood is guilty of perpetuating supernatural folklore and myths that are scientifically improbable.

"There are many reasons why people believe in pseudo-science. One of the main reasons is that people want to believe in a world that is different than ours. Our world is quite boring. People can't accept reality, so they want to believe in things that physicists know are impossible."

Typically, Hollywood ghosts -- as well as those spirits allegedly seen in eyewitness accounts -- also don't play by the rules of physics. The headless ghost of Anne Boleyn is said to wander the halls of Blickling Hall in England, but she's clearly never met Sir Isaac Newton.

According to Newton's laws of motion, ghosts shouldn't be able to walk like human beings as well as pass through walls. In order to walk around like Patrick Swayze in *Ghost*, an entity needs to exert force on the floor which exerts an equal and opposite force in return. However, that same force wouldn't allow a spirit to pass through walls.

"I show that the standard picture of ghosts is inconsistent," he said. "Ghosts can't have the ability to go through material objects like walls, yet walk around like us because they should also be falling straight through the floor."

"If they can go through walls, they're going to go through floors. If there are such as thing as ghosts, they'd be different than (what) people commonly imagine."

While Mr. Efthimiou enjoys poking holes in the supernatural, humanity better pray that Count Dracula isn't awakened this Halloween. Although the population of world is now 6.5 billion, the professor said it would only take 34 months for vampires to devour and overrun modern man.

"There are more of us, but it would still be a quick end."

The Ottawa Citizen, 24 Oct.

London's Vampire club seeks new recruits

LONDON - Vampyres are prowling for new recruits in London as Halloween approaches to partake in wild parties, trips to Transylvania and bat spotting nights -- but coffin-dwelling, blood drinkers need not apply.

With a penchant for custom-made fangs, striking make-up and gothic clothes, members of the London Vampire Group (LVG) say it's their fascination with the romantic notion of vampires, rather than any darker intent, that draws them together.

"People who think they're un-dead, hundreds of years old, or that you have to drink blood if you're interested in the dark side of things, we can put them right on that," LVG's Mick Smith, 57, told Reuters in an interview in a London pub.

"The drinking of blood is a taboo. It's a point of view that we don't tend to represent, but we think it is something that should be articulated," said Smith, wearing a sombre black suit.

They may be conservatively attired lawyers or computer programmers by day, but Vampyres are transformed by flamboyant clothes after dark for the Dance of the Damned Vampire Ball and Requiem of the Resurrected parties with gothic belly dancing.

The Halloween Goth Ball in Whitby, where Bram Stoker was inspired to write "Dracula," is a major calendar fixture. Trips are planned to the Czech Republic's gothic castles and ossuaries, and to New Orleans, setting for Anne Rice's "Interview with the Vampire."

FANG FIXATION

"I'd always been fascinated by vampires, they are often portrayed as powerful and beautiful. It's the romanticism of it all," said Rebecca Summers, 35, social secretary of LVG which was formed about 12 years ago, a splinter group from parent organisation The Dracula Society.

"It gets you out of that mundane world. And if you can live forever and remain beautiful then most people would want to do that," said Summers, who works as a business consultant.

With flowing black hair, red lips and a range of corsets, bustles and PVC outfits in her wardrobe, she says her work colleagues are unperturbed by her fixations with vampires and vampire myths which go back thousands of years and occur in almost every culture around the world.

But persuading her husband to ditch his "Coldplay" CD collection and have fangs fitted is a bigger challenge, said Summers, who carries her own set of sharp teeth in her handbag.

Few LVG members believe that the blood-sucking maniacs portrayed in Hollywood horror movies are roaming London's streets, wearing black capes and sucking blood from humans and animals to maintain immortality.

But some do believe in vampire-like personalities.

"There are people who believe in psychic vampires, that there are people who act as vampires, are very predatory, they take energy from other people," said Summers.

"You do get the odd strange people who believe they need to drink blood to survive. I've only had email dealings with them."

LVG is keen to project vampire fans in a positive light after coming under scrutiny several years ago when a German woman, convicted with her partner of a satanic murder, said she became a vampire at so-called "bite parties" in London.

"In one sense, we have a positive social function -- rectifying bad ideas," said Smith, who edits LVG's *Chronicles* magazine, with articles on vampires in literature, coffin-shaped sleeping bags and the "Vindicator" agony aunt advice.

"For me the most horrific things that happen in the world are on the news every day, not what you see in a horror film."

Sophie Hares

Reuters, 25 Oct.

Down for the Count: Vampire Bats Help Battle Strokes

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Stroke victims will gain the advantage of an improved drug treatment and vampire bats could end up with a better public image if current research involving a bat saliva derivative shows the results some health professionals are anticipating.

The study, which wraps up in a few months, is utilizing a compound derived from the saliva of vampire bats and testing its effectiveness in reducing the risk of brain damage after the onset of an acute stroke. If approved, the drug will triple the time period for initiating emergency stroke treatment and offer other important advantages over other medications currently in use, including the only Food and Drug Administration-approved stroke drug.

Dr. Andrew Slivka says research of the new drug is important because time is not on the side of doctors when treating patients immediately following a stroke.

“With the use of the drug t-PA, doctors have only a three-hour period to initiate effective stroke treatment,” said Slivka, a neurologist and principal investigator of the study at The Ohio State University Medical Center. “It’s unfortunate, but only about 3 percent of stroke victims arrive at the hospital in time to be considered a candidate for this drug.”

T-PA, or recombinant tissue plasminogen activator, is the only FDA-approved medication currently available to doctors for the treatment of ischemic stroke.

The study medication being evaluated by OSU Medical Center contains a recombinant form of the potent bat saliva. The medication, called desmodus rotundus salivary plasminogen activator, or desmoteplase, extends the treatment window to nine hours and appears to be much more effective against clots than t-PA.

In its natural environment, the vampire bat secretes an enzyme in its saliva that prevents the blood of its food source from clotting during a meal. In the emergency department setting with a stroke patient, the genetically derived enzyme from the bat’s saliva targets and dissolves the blood clots that can block important vessels following an ischemic stroke.

An added benefit of the study medication surfaced in earlier research with mice when the drug was found to target the protein fibrin, a linchpin of blood clots, without causing any collateral damage to the brain, a known side effect of t-PA that limits its use in some patients.

Desmoteplase also can be introduced to the body’s circulatory system quickly over a period of one or two minutes. T-PA takes 60 minutes to be infused.

Ohio State is one of 80 centers around the world involved in testing desmoteplase in a large number of humans.

Ischemic stroke affects more than 600,000 people annually in the United States and occurs when a blood vessel supplying the brain with oxygen and nutrients is obstructed by a blood clot. Without oxygen and other nutrients, nerve cells quickly die, resulting in loss of function of the part of the body they control.

Lyn Tolan

MediaSourceTV.com, 25 Oct.
