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Vampire-obsessed couple jailed for life for 'sexually perverse' murder

Two young women who bludgeoned and strangled a British-born teenage girl before kissing over their victim's dying body and filming the scene on a mobile phone were jailed for life in Australia today.

Valerie Parashumti, 19 - described in court as a sexually-motivated sadist who drank blood as part of a vampire subculture - and her then-lover, Jessica Stasinowsky, 21, were both handed minimum sentences of 24 years at the West Australian supreme court in Perth for what the judge called a "sexually perverse" and "evil" killing.

The case has shocked the city though its extreme brutality and the age - and apparent lack of remorse - of the killers.

The duo pleaded guilty to the murder of Stacey Mitchell, 16, at a shared house in the Perth suburb of Lathlain in December 2006.

The judge, Justice Peter Blaxell, said the crime was particularly horrifying because the killers had appeared to find their apparently motiveless crime simultaneously amusing and arousing and had not expressed genuine regret.

"You have each had more than a year in custody to reflect upon the evilness of your crime, yet you still lack remorse and obviously place no value on the sanctity of human life," the Australian Associated Press (AAP) news agency quoted him as saying.

"Even more appalling are your admissions to the effect that at the time of the murder you were each sexually excited by the violence of the event," he said.

The court heard that the only apparent reason Parashumti and Stasinowsky killed the 16-year-old was because she was annoying them.

Mitchell, whose family moved to Australia from Dorset when she was 10, had been staying in their shared house after running away from her parental home and soon attracted the ire of Stasinowsky, who believed she was flirting with Parashumti.

According to the judge, Parashumti decided to prove she had no affection for the girl and the pair hatched a plan to kill her.

All three had been drinking whisky when Parashumti crept up behind Mitchell and started hitting her on the head with a concrete paving slab, the court was told. As the teenager tried to escape, she was bludgeoned further and Stasinowsky strangled her with a dog chain belt.

Mitchell took at least 45 minutes to die, the court was told. The killers then kissed over Mitchell's dead body before filming the scene on a mobile phone, laughing and mocking the girl's accent.

The pair dumped the body in a wheelie bin in a back garden shed, where police found it several days later after being alerted by Mitchell's parents.

The court was told that a psychologist who assessed Parashumti found she had a severe personality disorder, was obsessed with vampires and was sexually aroused by torture and violence.

The judge ordered that the killers should not be allowed to contact each other in prison. This brought the only response from the pair, the West Australian newspaper reported, with Stasinowsky looking distressed.

The police officer who led the investigation, Steve Post, said the crime was shocking. "They killed her then celebrated with a kiss," the West Australian quoted him as saying. "This is not a horror movie, this is life in Perth. The pair deserve to be in jail and now have 24 years to contemplate what they did."

Peter Walker
The Guardian, 7 Mar.

Vampire lesbians killed British teenager

Two lesbian lovers, one of whom who drank blood as part of a vampire cult, battered a 16-year-old British girl with a concrete block and then celebrated with a kiss as she lay dying.

They also made a mobile phone video of the murder and were heard laughing and mocking the accent of their victim, Stacey Mitchell.

Stacey, originally from West Moors, Dorset, had moved into the house that Jessica Stasinowsky, 21, and Valerie Parashumti, 19, shared in Perth, Western Australia in December 2006. Eleven days earlier she had run away from her parents, Andy and Sophie Mitchell, who had emigrated from the South West some years before.

Stasinowsky developed a hatred for Stacey, believing that she was flirting with her lover. Parashumti felt the need to prove that Stacey meant nothing to her, so she and Stasinowsky plotted the killing.

On the day of the murder, the trio drank whisky and Stacey took tablets which made her drowsy. As J S Bach's St John Passion played on the hi-fi, Parashumti crept up behind Stacey and started hitting her on the head with the slab. Stasinowsky joined in, using a dog chain belt to strangle her.

The pair became sexually aroused as they battered the teenager and when they thought she was dead they checked her pulse, knelt over her body, and kissed.

Their video showed the beating and Stacey's blood-spattered bedroom. Stacey, whose body was dumped upside down in a bin, took at least 45 minutes to die, but Stasinowsky told a prison officer she wished it had lasted longer, a court in Perth was told.

A psychologist found that Parashumti, who drank blood as part of a vampire sub-culture, was sexually aroused by physical torture and violence.

Her lawyer, David Edwardson QC, said her family life had been violent and she had been experimenting with drinking blood since she was 10.

At first she drank her own blood after cutting herself then later drank other people's.

The lovers, who pleaded guilty to murdering Stacey, were jailed for a minimum of 24 years.

Throughout the trial, Stasinowsky and Parashumti were laughing and smirking as the details of the killing were revealed.

Judge Peter Blaxell told them: "You have each had more than a year in custody to reflect upon the evilness of your crime, yet you still lack remorse and obviously place no value on the sanctity of human life.

"Even more appalling are your admissions to the effect that at the time of the murder you were each sexually excited by the violence of the event.

The day before she died, Stacey had told her parents she wanted to return home and in a statement after the trial they said they were "still devastated by Stacey's brutal murder".

Daily Telegraph, 8 Mar.

Eustis vampire-cult killer subject of French film on serial murders

A writer thinks Rod Ferrell would have killed more. But was the case overblown?

Vampire-cult leader Rod Ferrell claimed he would live forever. But as the convicted murderer serves a life sentence in prison, it's the story of his gruesome Lake County killings that just won't die.

Ferrell was 16 when he bludgeoned a Eustis couple to death in November 1996. The murders of Richard and Ruth Wendorf have been retold time and again, including in a low-budget film, several true-crime books and a TV docudrama.

Now French filmmakers are revisiting Ferrell's crimes for a 90-minute documentary set to air in May. The film will be broadcast on French state television.

Antoine Baldassari, the film's director, said his goal is to help French audiences understand a contemporary serial killer, Michel Fourniret, through the stories of three murderers from the United States. Fourniret stands trial Thursday for seven murders committed in France and Belgium from 1987 to 2001. He has confessed to six of them.

Filmmakers who recently spent time in Lake County conducting interviews for the project said it was Ferrell's potential to become a serial killer that led them to feature him in the film.

French author Stephane Bourgoin, who is working on the documentary and has written about 20 books on criminology and serial killers, said he is convinced Ferrell would have claimed more victims if he hadn't been stopped in time.

"There's no doubt about it," said Bourgoin, who interviewed Ferrell a few weeks ago for the documentary at New River West Correctional Institution in Bradford County. "He was, in a sort, a serial killer in the making."

Ferrell did tell police: "Killing is a way of life. Animals do it, and that's just the way humans are -- just the worst kind of predators of all, actually." And he came up with his

vampire name, "Vesago," from a Satan-worshipping serial-killing teen in the 1995 movie *Hideaway*.

Ferrell's followers called him their "maker," wore black clothes, black lipstick and black nail polish, and drank one another's blood. Baldassari said Ferrell, like Fourniret, saw the ultimate crime as a matter of little moral consequence.

"It was so natural for him to kill," he said. "This kind of criminal can speak with you about murder without any emotion."

Ferrell "was not a serial killer in the classic sense," said State Attorney Brad King, who prosecuted the case. "He killed two people at one time for one particular reason."

King argues the case was sensationalized into a horror story about a cultish murder scheme. Essentially, he said, Ferrell's cult was separate from his killer motive.

"To me, it was about a young man who had influence over a group of people to some extent and committed the murder of two people," King said. "He never really suggested that his murders were connected to his dabbling in the occult. He said the murders were committed to avoid arrest for stealing the parents' car."

After he moved from Eustis to Kentucky and later dropped out of high school, Ferrell had traveled back to Florida with a carload of his followers. They planned to pick up 15-year-old Heather Wendorf, a would-be runaway Ferrell befriended a year earlier.

On Nov. 25, 1996, Ferrell used a crowbar to kill Ruth Wendorf, 54, and her 49-year-old husband, then stole the couple's Ford Explorer from their Eustis home and headed off.

Heather Wendorf said she learned her mom and dad were dead after the group left Eustis. Three days after the killings, authorities caught the group in Baton Rouge, La. In addition to Ferrell, three others were charged in the deaths. A grand jury, however, did not indict Heather -- the fifth teen who left in the Explorer.

Two other killers featured in Baldassari's documentary weren't caught as quickly as the vampire cultists.

Gerard Schaefer wrote about killing more than 30 girls and women before a Florida jury found him guilty of two murders in October 1973. He was stabbed to death by a fellow inmate in 1995.

Edmund Kemper killed his grandparents when he was 15. When he turned himself over to authorities in 1973, in his 20s, he told them his last victims were his mother and her friend. He was found guilty of eight counts of murder and is serving two life sentences in California.

"We want to create a discussion in France about what is a serial killer," Baldassari said. "What are these types of criminals?"

Adrian G. Uribarri
Orlando Sentinel, 22 Mar.

Beyond the Rave: A new lease of life for the undead

Hammer Horror film franchise is back

The much cherished Hammer Horror film franchise is back with a very 21st-century tale of vampires. Marc Lee reports

Hammer Horror is back from the dead. Thirty-two years after its last diabolical despatch from the dark side (Christopher Lee disgracing the cloth as a heretic priest in *To the Devil... a Daughter*), one of the most cherished franchises in British film history is about to return with *Beyond the Rave*, a blood-spattered tale of vampires on the rampage among hardcore dance fans.

Beyond the Rave

And, while the setting is bang-up-to-date (it's infused, too, with allusions to the conflict in Iraq), the film is also at the cutting edge of distribution technology. It will be presented in 20 five-minute "webisodes" on the social networking website MySpace, before an eventual release on DVD, and will also be available to download.

A fresh-faced cast, including Jamie Dornan (*Marie Antoinette*) and Nora-Jane Noone (*The Descent*) in the lead roles, is augmented by cameo appearances by Sadie Frost, who appeared in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 *Dracula*, and 70-year-old Hammer Horror stalwart Ingrid Pitt (best remembered for *The Vampire Lovers*).

Veteran DJ/producer Pete Tong is credited with "curating" the music for the film.

Beyond the Rave is the story of Ed (Dornan), a British soldier due to fly out to Iraq, who spends his last day of freedom searching for his missing girlfriend (Noone), last seen in the company of a dubious band of rave devotees. He ends up at a dance party deep in a remote forest in the dead of night. There will be blood. Lots of it.

Dornan says he enjoyed the contrast with his previous role as Count Fersen in Sofia Coppola's lavish biopic of the high-spirited French queen. "I had just come out of a nice family period drama, and that was partly why I wanted to do something like *Beyond the Rave*. I was also intrigued by the whole webisode thing.

"The shoot felt a lot faster than anything I'd done before. There was a real buzz on set because everything was so speedy. But then, if you're going to make an impression in a five-minute episode, it's got to be pretty sharp. It was new territory for everyone."

And what about the lashings of gore and the ultra-violence? "Well, it was quite hard to take it seriously when you're being attacked by a mad vampire wielding two samurai swords."

Which again is in sharp contrast to Dornan's next movie - the "all very pretty" *Shadows in the Sun*, due later this year and featuring the luminous, legendary Jean Simmons in the lead role.

The director of *Beyond the Rave*, Matthias Hoene, was faced with a variety of challenges in making the film, but a life-long love of Hammer helped him through his

long, dark night of the lost souls. "I grew up watching Hammer," he says. "It was always exciting to see that mix of horror and sexiness."

The responsibility of bringing the franchise to 21st-century audiences is, he says, "massive". "On the one hand there are the old fans who will always think that something new won't be as good.

But we really wanted to do something fresh that would capture a young audience, so we set out to tell a story that's thrilling and sexy and a bit shocking."

In the end, he pushed the envelope a little too far and had to cut a couple of scenes (involving something he describes as "munching") that were deemed unsuitable for MySpace, even though the site will be sticking to a rolling global watershed when the streaming starts. (The offending footage will, the director promises, be restored for the DVD release.)

However, the biggest problems Hoene faced during production stemmed from the restrictions imposed by the webisode format. "Normally in a feature film, you would spend the first 10 or 15 minutes setting up the characters and the background.

But in this project we had to ensure that every five minutes there would be character development, thrills, fun - the whole package that you'd expect from a full-length film. And, of course, not every episode could end in a cliffhanger - that would be too forced."

But is there a danger that this sort of filmmaking becomes merely bite-sized entertainment? "I don't think so," says Hoene. "If you want to watch something short during your break or while you're on the bus, if you want to be entertained for just a little while, it's perfect.

"This is just another way of telling stories. Dickens wrote serialised stories - were they bad for being short? It can be a great format."

Hoene is a passionate defender of the genre, too. "What I love about horror," he says, "is that you can take certain serious subjects - political, social - and talk about them in an entertaining way that would be impossible in another sort of drama. You can deliver messages in a horror film that you couldn't otherwise.

"If you made a straight film about genetic experiments, for instance, no one would go to see it. If you made a horror film with the same theme, a lot of people might. Do it intelligently and you'll get your message across."

Its presence on the internet affords *Beyond the Rave* a huge potential audience. "There is a real global element to it," says Jamie Kantowitz, a senior vice president at MySpace. "It is going to be released in 18 countries, in nine languages, at the same time. "MySpace has 110m users worldwide, and this film is going to hit 90 per cent of our user base at some point or another.

"We are taking a traditional distribution format and turning it on its head. We're not saying you have to sit and watch [the film] collectively, we're saying that when you like it, you're going to take it and make it your own, then your friends will find it. It's like having a film on 110m cinema screens."

Simon Oakes, Hammer Films chief and executive producer of *Beyond the Rave*, dismisses the suggestion that the joint project with MySpace is simply a marketing exercise. "This was not designed cynically, it was designed creatively," he says.

"And it is not about the death of cinema. It's actually the reverse. It is about making film available to people who don't watch movies that often.

"Since the advent of DVD and the internet, cinema audiences have not decreased, they've gone up. The internet is a fantastic way of promoting motion pictures - just look at *Cloverfield* [the blockbuster that established a worldwide fanbase on the net months before it reached the big screen].

"People keep asking if doing *Beyond the Rave* means Hammer isn't going to make feature films. The answer is no: our core business is feature films. However, it is essential that we become known to a younger generation.

"Hammer's heyday was at a time when there was a real can-do attitude in British filmmaking," says Oakes. And, with the rise of the internet as a means of distribution, he believes, there's plenty of life in the undead yet.

'Beyond the Rave' will be broadcast on MySpaceTV from April 2. The DVD will be released in June.

The history of Hammer

1934 Hammer Film Production Ltd is launched. First release: *The Public Life of Henry the Ninth*.

1950s Hammer's first horror film, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, is released in 1957, followed a year later by *Dracula*.

1960s Hammer's heyday. Releases include *The Curse of the Werewolf*, *The Kiss of the Vampire*, *The Devil Rides Out*, *Quatermass and the Pit* and *The Plague of the Zombies*. Non-horror output provides vehicles for two of the era's most glamorous stars - Ursula Andress as *She Who Must Be Obeyed* in *She*, and a fur-bikini'd Raquel Welch romping with anachronistic dinosaurs in *One Million Years BC*.

1970s Rather less lovely were a trio of films spun off from dreadful TV sitcom *On the Buses*. The decade sees the studio heading for an early grave as more sophisticated Hollywood releases such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist* start to make Hammer look old-fashioned.

2007 The Hammer brand is revived when a European consortium acquires the company and its 295-title library. ML

Daily Telegraph, 24 Mar

Life in prison for murder of 'vampire'

A MAN has been sentenced to life in prison for the murder of a male prostitute and self-proclaimed vampire.

The man, who can be identified only as JP for legal reasons, pleaded guilty in the Victorian Supreme Court last year to the 2003 murder of Shane Chartres-Abbott.

Mr Chartres-Abbott, 28, was gunned down in front of his partner and father outside his home at Reservoir, in Melbourne's, on June 4, 2003.

At the time, Mr Chartres-Abbott was on trial for the rape and maiming of a woman who had hired him as a prostitute.

The Supreme Court was told the hitman claimed he was asked to carry out the murder as a favour for an associate and two police officers helped him both before and after the crime.

He has made statements and undertaken to give evidence against those he alleges are involved.

JP's admissions to his involvement were described as "extraordinary" because he was never a suspect in the case.

Justice Simon Whelan said JP and another man went to Mr Chartres-Abbott's home and ambushed him as he walked down the street with his partner and father.

The court was told the two other people were pushed aside and JP fired two shots at Mr Chartres-Abbott, one into his side and the other under his chin.

The pair fled in a car they had parked nearby.

"The murder to which you have pleaded guilty was a callous, planned, premeditated execution," Justice Whelan told the man.

Justice Whelan said such a crime would ordinarily attract a life sentence with no parole but because of the significant help he was willing to give police, his admissions and the fact his statements put him and his family in danger, he deserved a discount.

Mr Chartres-Abbott had pleaded not guilty at his trial to two counts of rape and one count each of intentionally and recklessly causing serious injury.

The jury in his trial was told that he informed the woman he was a vampire and he drank blood to live.

The woman was found naked, bloodied and unconscious in the shower of a hotel room in August 2002. Part of her tongue had been ripped out.

JP said Mr Chartres-Abbott's murder was carried out as revenge for the attack, describing him as an "animal" and a danger to other women.

JP is already serving a life sentence and with today's sentence will be eligible for parole in 2023 when he is in his early 70s.

Katie Bice
Herald Sun, 28 Mar.
