



Home Biography Film Writing Galleries Links Press Guestbook Store

## Terror Tales: Frazer Lee Interview

by Destiny West

Frazer Lee is one of Britain's top up and coming Writers and Directors in the horror genre with an impressive list of projects already under his belt and more in the pipeline he is really an identity to be reckoned with, oh and good looking, what more could we ask?

I had the pleasure of inviting Frazer into my dungeon for a chat about his career and a chance to find out some trivial information about the man behind the dark imagination.

He talks to us about a few of his films including the award winning movie 'On Edge' starring the horror Icon himself, Douglas Bradley (*PinHead from the superb Clive Barker series Hell Raiser.*) And 'Red Lines'

**DESTINY WEST:** Welcome to my dungeon Frazer (*smiles wickedly and gestures for him to sit down in the old electric chair with power still attached to the mains*) Please make yourself comfortable, well as comfortable as can be. Thank you for consenting to this interview of your own free will, it makes it so much less messier. (*eyes torture equipment in the corner*).

**FRAZER LEE:** (*Frazer sits and licks the tips of his fingers, making them nice and wet... He tests the slight electrical current running through the chair. A broad smile appears on his face as the saliva crackles and spits. He sits back and makes himself at home, with his... hair standing to attention*) "Thank you - free will is one of my favourite things. But I must also confess to enjoying a mess." (*Grins upon seeing the torture equipment*)

**DW:** (*Mmmm, I would like to make a sweaty mess with him* Destiny ponders as she sits down opposite Frazer and crosses legs, her finger tips lingering over a suspicious looking button.) Now lets get down to business, five years ago did you envisage yourself where you are today? And if so are you happy with your career's progress?

**FL:** Well, five years ago I was frantically editing my first film On Edge so I guess at the time I was thinking only of finishing that! Looking back, I remember being insanely optimistic about making a feature film if On Edge was successful. I really believed I'd have a feature film under my belt by now. Five years on, I know all about the struggle of leaping from shorts to features so I'm more realistic. But I've not lost that optimism and enthusiasm of five years ago. On Edge has been incredibly succesful - it got theatrical, TV and Internet distribution and it won a few awards - everything we set out to accomplish with it. I'm happy to have made the second film Red Lines, which was such a challenge because we made it in a month on a tiny budget. Again, Red Lines is a success - we created Red Lines for a TV anthology show called Fear Zone and I'm delighted to say they loved the film and picked it up for distribution. So, five years, two shorts and no feature as yet. But during that time I've been improving screenplays and whatnot, so I'm still optimistic. I'm happy to still be making horror movies. I'm happy that Robber Baron Productions is still up-and-running. But I'm not so happy that I'm lazy. Not me! There is always more to learn about making films and I'm in it for the duration. Watch this space...

**DW:** You are truly an inspiration to young film makers out there, are you happy with that role and is there any advice you can give them?

**FL:** Hell, if I've inspired anyone to get up and make a movie then that's brilliant. I make the kind of films I want to see. I make them for fans of horror films - and if they like them then it becomes a million times more rewarding. One nice chap in the USA told me On Edge had inspired him to make his own short films and he's still out there doing them. That felt good, because I'm completely utterly grateful to anyone who ever inspires me - and that includes people who were discouraging because it just makes me even more determined to prove them wrong!

**DW:** When did you first become fascinated with all things horror?

**FL:** As a child, Friday night Hammer Horror and Universal Monster double bills on TV introduced me to a world full of imagination, suspense and curvy chicks. It just grew from there really (*laughs*). In a way, the horror genre became a safe place to be - a place I could understand and lose myself in - and the stars; Lee, Cushing, Lugosi, et al, became like extended family to me. And that hasn't changed really. Much of my audio visual intake - be it books, magazines, theatre, art, music, or whatever - is tinged with the beautiful scarlet stain of horror.

**DW:** Does anything scare you?

**FL:** You know, lots of people who see On Edge ask me if I'm scared of the dentist. And I'm honestly not. I LIKE it there - all the cool equipment. The occasional foxy dental nurse. It's all good. In the case of Red Lines, I guess I feared detention as a child (*laughs*). But really that movie was my way of dealing with my horror at the disgusting way the media and public at large reacted to and treated the spate of schoolgirl murders last year - like vultures, the lot of them. Truly, the news scares me. What human beings do to other beings. The stinking mass of corruption and abuse that many of our world's systems are built upon. Oh, and that guy from the Halifax Building Society TV advert. He's absolutely fucking terrifying! And Pop Idol - that's just too frightening for words!

**DW:** (*Picks up scalpel watching the light reflect in its blade.*) Describe Frazer Lee in five words and I do mean only five words.

**FL:** (*Frazer crosses his legs suddenly...*) Writer... director... Frazer... Alaric... Lee...

**DW:** What do you want written for your epitaph and what would you most like to be remembered for?

**FL:** I have a headstone here somewhere (*checks in the folds and pockets of his big black leather coat*) - oops, must've left it at the Jane's Addiction Hallowe'en show last night... Ah well, might make a good stage prop! I'd like to be remembered as a hard-rockin', whiskey-swillin', pussy lickin', all round good guy who made kick-ass movies and told a good tale. Hey, maybe they can build a loveseat into my headstone so that any passing goth chicks can sit on my..... lap, even when I'm in the hereafter!

**DW:** How do you consider the horror film industry to be progressing?

**FL:** People keep asking me if I'm happy that horror films are making a comeback. Fucking hell! They never went away! Where have you been all these years, people? (*laughs*) I do think, like most things these days, the horror genre is being measured by it's mainstream presence. And because several studio pictures have made a ton of money it's seen as a comeback. But for horror fans, who watch subtitled, banned, old and new movies from all over the world and not just what is on at the multiplex, it can seem ludicrous to suggest that there's any kind of renaissance going on right now. I guess the film industry, at all levels, is just better than ever at marketing and releasing movies - and that's a good thing as far as I can see. Personally, I don't see the point of remaking classics like Texas Chainsaw and Psycho - but if they make money, then I can only hope that some of that money is invested in original and new horror movies. There is a ton of demand out there for horror entertainment - and everything from short films like mine to the big franchises is finding its audience it seems. I mean, any movie that introduces people to this brilliant genre is a blessing as far I can see. It's great to see movies like Dog Soldiers, which is a British £3 million flick, rubbing shoulders with Freddy VS Jason on the big screen.

**DW:** (*sighs*) Personally in mainstream horror films I can not recall having seen anything really frightening since I was a child. Do you believe that as a society we have become desensitized to horror because of the real life horrors that occur around us everyday?

**FL:** Wanna see something really scary Destiny? (*Beckons Destiny over to The Chair. She complies and is horrified when Frazer whips out his bank statement. She has to agree - the overdraft is PURE HORROR.....*) Yeah, I perceive that the media at large has become a giant carrion crow, ready to flap and squawk over the latest horrific this-or-that in order to sell tabloid newspapers. People do have an inbuilt morbid curiosity - and the news fulfils the supply and demand by making a story out of it and selling it. Horror movies do the same thing, but in horror movies, you're dealing with creative expressions of inner and outer horror. Once your audience has seen all the carnage in the Gulf at dinner time, where can you go to get a rise out of them? I'm personally finding it fascinating that psychological horror is developing and finding new strengths - with movies like Ringu, The Others and The Eye there's less gore and more creepiness. I love films that get under your skin. But there will always be room in my heart for the ones that go "Boo!" and throw buckets of blood at you. And for a mainstream audience, maybe that "boo factor" is enough to help them deal with the real life horrors they're seeing every day. Not for me though. I like to be disturbed first, then drenched in gore afterwards. (*Throws Destiny a saucy wink*)

**DW:** Whilst watching a horror film in our cinemas today do you think we are more likely to hear the audience scream or laugh?

**FL:** I think they'd scream if they were watching the remake of *The Haunting* after seeing Robert Wise's classic original. And they'd definitely laugh their socks off at *Darkness Falls!* (*laughs gutturally himself, as if to make the point*) It depends on the audience really.... And the film of course. I've sat with people who giggled and talked all the way through *The Exorcist* - but I bet if they watched it alone, in the dark, it'd be a very different story! I've had the pleasure of being part of a crowd which was absolutely terrified by *The Blair Witch Project*. But for the most part, horror works best if you balance humour and fear well throughout - the two emotions work off of each other - in my opinion. That's why the aforementioned *Dog Soldiers* works so well. And that's what folks seem to like about *On Edge* - the blend of humour and "Oh, no!" *Red Lines* is intentionally humourless though - I wanted to really upset the audience for five minutes with that film.

**DW:** Is real life horror more frightening than the supernatural?

**FL:** To quote one of my favourite movies, "Look, I know the supernatural is something that isn't supposed to happen, but it does happen..." Personally speaking, I get freaked out when real life gets supernatural on your ass. The BBC did this really effectively with *Ghost Watch* a few years back - and to an extent so did *Blair Witch* - when the everyday becomes something... other. That's also what I admire about Christopher Fowler's writing (*author of the short story on which On Edge was based*) - the simple technique of taking something as routine as a trip to the laundrette or dentist and messing it up with spooky psychological stuff, or plain old supernatural nastiness. Works every time! Put me in a room with a poltergeist and a serial killer (*Frazer notices Destiny looking at a strange unmarked door out the corner of her eye...*) and I'm going to be hard pushed to tell you which one is the most scary. But they'll both walk out of there knowing they've inspired my next screenplay!

**DW:** Do you believe a horror film needs blood and guts to make it scary or is that just for shock value?

**FL:** Ah, blood and guts... (*Grins dreamily and licks his lips*) It's all about pay-off. It's all about the punchline to the gag. See, romantic comedies have all this build up - "will they, won't they?" and the punchline is the big kissing scene. Porno movies invariably follow a similar pattern, only they usually do it with a bit more honesty and style than romantic comedies. In horror, if the shock is going to be somebody seeing a ghost, then that'll work. But if the punchline is that someone is going to get their head lopped off with a big old chainsaw... Well, there'd better be some claret, or people will feel cheated!

**DW:** Is there any genre of horror film that you would not do and if so why?

**FL:** I think I'd be up for any type of film, as long as I was in love with the story. There's so much to learn from working on different projects. But filmmaking is such a long and painful process (*notices Destiny visibly shifting in her seat when he says "long" and "painful"*) that I have to be in love with the tale I'm working so hard to tell. Like any love affair, it's not to be approached lightly. It's all or nothing. Hell, I'd consider any genre of film if the screenplay grabbed me. I wouldn't do a romantic comedy though, unless I could call it *Rotting Hill*...

**DW:** What is your all time favourite horror movie?

**FL:** It's so difficult to isolate one from the many hundreds of favourites festering in my brainpan... But if I had to choose, I'd say a double-bill of *The Exorcist* and Robert Wise's *The Haunting* for pure unrivalled chills and classical, graceful, cold menace.

**DW:** What are the three key elements to a successful horror film and why?

**FL:** Wait a minute, I'll just check. (*Takes a bunch of skeleton keys out of his pocket and studies them*) Ah yes, that's it. Atmosphere, tension, release. Films that create an atmosphere and take you to a dark place and then leave you there, terrified and energised - they work so well. The other elements are then the build-up of tension and the subsequent release, be it the boo factor of *Halloween*, or the creeping nastiness of *Audition*, you've got to release the pressure a little - just enough to make 'em squeal... Look at the first *Hellraiser* movie - it does all those things and more!

**DW:** Do you have any new films or projects coming out that fans can look for in the near future?

**FL:** Horror fans who enjoyed *On Edge* and *Red Lines* will be happy to know I'm developing more projects with Doug Bradley - but *Sod's Law* says that the more you talk about them, the less likely they are to happen... But rest assured, I am working on creating a number of short and feature length films, horror fiction, and a graphic novel (*with artwork by Shane Oakley of Alan "From Hell" Moore's LIMBO fame*) - this is a good creative time, so

hopefully some more Frazer-flavoured terrors will be on their way soon! Please drop by [www.frazerlee.com](http://www.frazerlee.com) anytime and say hell-o!

**DW:** Finally, where do you see Frazer Lee in ten years time?

**FL:** Let's see... I don't know... But hopefully I'll be riding the horror movie rollercoaster with a smile on my face, a drink in my hand and a ghoul by my side!

**DW:** *(smiles)* Once again thank you for allowing Terror Tale readers the chance to get to know you better, I know personally I anticipate many shivers down my spine from your dark mind. *(Licks my lips seductively)* now I wonder what this button is for?

**FL:** My absolute pleasure Destiny. "Frying tonight!!!" Frazer xxx

*from Terror Tales Online, January 2004*