

HORROR MOVIE

A Low Budget Nightmare

Press Quotes

"A Low Budget Nightmare has heart and sincerity to spare... Who would have thought your grandmother might enjoy a documentary about the making of a movie about a murderous aborted fetus?"

- **Luke Buckmaster, The Guardian**

"What happens when a wide eyed dreamer with visions of success meets the speeding semi-trailer of reality and the ensuing carnage... It's the Hearts of Darkness of Chrissy-themed killer fetus slasher movies".

- **Antony O'Connor, FilmInk**

"A gruesomely brilliant feature-length doco"

- **Larissa Dubecki, The Age**

"An endearing character study; an examination into the determination and borderline delusion it takes to make one's vision a reality... In Craig Anderson, Gary Doust honours the archetypal passion-fuelled dreamer of great cinematic lore"

- **Simon Foster, Screen-Space**

"Big props to both Anderson and Doust in allowing a potentially humiliating project transform into something genuinely inspiring, surprisingly moving, and unashamedly entertaining."

- **Bryn Tilly, Cult Projections**

"There were times when I literally, and I do mean "Literally", pulled my jacket up over my eyes, I just couldn't watch. What comes out of it is a touching and very affectionate observation of a bunch of people who really do their best and have great intentions."

- **On Being There Blog**

Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare review – surprisingly delightful gore-fest doco

A documentary with heart and sincerity – all the more surprising given the grotesque content of the film it documents the making of



Craig Anderson directs Janis McGavin in *Red Christmas*, the subject of *Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare*.
Photograph: Jeremy Belinfante/ABC

Luke Buckmaster

Tuesday 31 October 2017 16.47 AEDT

In an attempt to explain the twisted, wiggled-out ambition of writer/director Craig Anderson – namely what compelled him to make his feature film debut, the horror movie *Red Christmas* – there is no better person to refer to than the man himself. Laying himself emotionally bare in the opening reels of *Horror Movie: A Low-Budget Nightmare*, director Gary Doust’s surprisingly delightful two-part documentary about the film-maker’s backbreaking journey to realise his dreams, Anderson gets watery-eyed as he reflects on his life.

“All the years I was growing up, the only thing I ever wanted to do was make a movie. And somewhere along the line I got confused,” he says. “Parts of my life have just fallen by the wayside ... What I don’t want to be, is the guy who dies not having done what they should have done. So I am going to make a movie. About an aborted fetus that survives its abortion, grows up, and kills its family.”

I attended the world premiere of this ... *unusual* film at last year’s Sydney film festival. How to best describe the experience? Allow me to borrow from Roy Batty’s tears in the rain monologue by saying: I’ve seen Australian films you people wouldn’t believe. Murderous Mr Whippy vans hunting down civilians off the streets of Melbourne. Werewolf marsupials glimmering in the dark in Siberia, and bands of Ghandalfian magicians delivering death wishes at 120 decibels.

But I have never seen anything quite like Red Christmas.



Not for all tastes: Red Christmas barges into the sensitive debate around abortion with the grace of a bull in a china shop. Photograph: Fridgejam Productions

The experience is, as the saying goes, not for all tastes - though it’s difficult to say precisely whose palate is being catered for in Anderson’s cranked-to-11, goo-splattered, giallo-esque exploitation film. The director charges into the sensitive debate around abortion with the grace of a bull in a china shop. If the film takes a stance on anything (the politics of grindhouse style flicks are often elusive, and this is no different) it is not pro-life or pro-choice, but about the horror of a woman being forced to justify her decisions.

The greatest surprise is that Red Christmas (which premieres on US Netflix in December and is available in Australia through Umbrella Entertainment) is actually well made. It’s particularly atmospheric, and also features excellent performances from Gerard O’Dwyer and Dee Wallace, whose portrayal lifts the protagonist to a level of complexity well above the common B-movie “scream queen”.

I like it more after watching A Low Budget Nightmare. Fans of outré genre curios, partial to a bit of schlock, will find much to relish and a lifetime’s supply of “I can’t believe they made that” material for conversations at dinner parties. The more strait-laced in taste might like to stick to the documentary, which airs this week on ABC TV.



Filmmaker Craig Anderson in Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare. Photograph: ABC

The core message is about pursuing your dreams no matter what, and staying true to yourself and your ambitions in the most seemingly untenable of circumstances. It is a David and Goliath story, of sorts, with the utterly endearing Anderson as David. And as Goliath, I don't know, common sense?

The documentary opens with Anderson, 38, having recently lost 30kg and about to get circumcised to treat a painful health issue (phimosis). The trouble begins when the film-maker, who has quit his job in television and invested all his money into this passion project, realises he has under-budgeted the production by approximately \$80,000. *Red Christmas* was always going to be cheap-as-chips, most of the crew being friends of the director working for deferred payment.

This is the film business, however, so those chips still add up to a staggering amount of money. An early moment, when Anderson's working-class parents decide to take out a loan to support their son's endeavours, caught me off guard and got me a little watery-eyed - as did a moment later on when one of *Red Christmas's* stars, the charming and scene-stealing O'Dwyer, discusses how he is ashamed to have Down's syndrome.



Charming and scene-stealing: actor Gerard O'Dwyer. Photograph: Jeremy Belinfante/ABC TV

The money situation leads to a very awkward and very funny interaction between Anderson and his camera shy - and economically responsible - brother Todd, from whom he has no choice but to ask for a huge wad of cash. And then the real trouble

begins. There are issues with Wallace's contract, suddenly casting doubt on her involvement. And the shooting schedule is a blow-out from day one, taking nine hours to pull off what should have been achieved in three.

A Low Budget Nightmare is a reminder of how bloody hard it is to make a movie, before a film-maker can even begin to consider whether what they're working on might be any good. "What if the movie is terrible?" asks Anderson at one point, a hero you cannot help but root for. "It's about an aborted foetus that returns and kills its family. Of course it's going to be terrible," he concludes. But by then you know this lovable, self-deprecating scallywag will keep on fighting.

Neither production turned out to be terrible; far from it. Doust's documentary (which premiered as a stand-alone film earlier this year at the Adelaide film festival) is in fact the most entertaining behind-the-scenes account of Australian cinema since director Mark Hartley's 2008 wild ride, *Not Quite Hollywood*.

A Low Budget Nightmare has heart and sincerity to spare. Weirdly, perhaps, given the grotesque content of the film it details the making of, the documentary has broad appeal. Who would have thought your grandmother might enjoy a documentary about the making of a movie about a murderous aborted foetus?

Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare is showing on Tuesday, 9.31pm on ABC1

Since you're here ...

... we have a small favour to ask. More people are reading the Guardian than ever but advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. And unlike many news organisations, we haven't put up a paywall - we want to keep our journalism as open as we can. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. The Guardian's independent, investigative journalism takes a lot of time, money and hard work to produce. But we do it because we believe our perspective matters - because it might well be your perspective, too.

I appreciate there not being a paywall: it is more democratic for the media to be available for all and not a commodity to be purchased by a few. I'm happy to make a contribution so others with less means still have access to information. *Thomasine F-R.*

If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps fund it, our future would be much more secure. **For as little as \$1, you can support the Guardian - and it only takes a minute. Thank you.**

Become a supporter

Make a contribution

Topics

- Television
- Documentary
- Horror

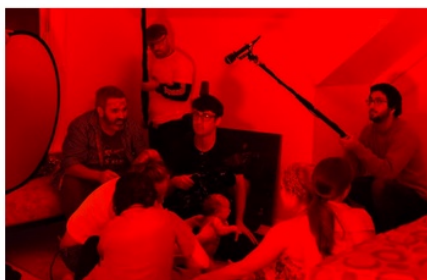


Horror Movie – A Low Budget Nightmare

ABC, 9.30pm

A gruesomely brilliant feature-length doco about the making of an Australian low budget horror movie that will have viewers hitting the interweb to see how *Red Christmas* fared in the review stakes ("Offering something to offend viewers from many walks of life," promises the Hollywood Reporter). The making of Australian actor Craig Anderson's first extremely low budget flick – the tasteful tale of an aborted fetus seeking revenge on his family – is detailed against a background of budget issues, union troubles, human placenta, Anderson's medical circumcision and – worst of all – his dad taking Hollywood scream queen Dee Wallace to McDonald's. **Larissa Dubecki**

Tag Archive



Get Into the Grind of DIY Filmmaking with *Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare*

The real horror is behind the camera.

Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare

Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare is, in essence, the story of Craig Anderson. Craig's an affable chap with a lifelong dream of writing and directing a feature film. When we first meet Craig he's quite frank about the fact he's not getting any younger – and opportunities haven't exactly been falling into his lap – so he decides it's time to get proactive and make the bloody thing himself. As the title of the doco suggests, Craig's dream turns dark pretty quickly.

Red Christmas is the film in question, a polarising Yuletide slasher flick that in Craig's own words, "[is] about an aborted fetus that returns and kills its family – of course it's going to be terrible!" While the eventuating feature is a niche proposition, *Horror Movie* itself is absolutely fascinating. There's a palpable sense of tension throughout the two-part doco's runtime, where our scrappy hero and his band of friends realise they may have bitten off way more than they can chew.

Scenes where Craig borrows ungodly amounts of money from his brother, tries to negotiate the complexity of America's SAG rules to land Dee Wallace (*E.T. the Extra Terrestrial*, *The Howling*) in the lead role and attempts to explain some of the ropier aspects of his script to dubious cast members are a mixture of fascinating and cringe-inducing. Director Gary Doust (*Making Venus*, *Next Stop Hollywood*) has crafted an intimate look at the world of low budget genre filmmaking in Australia and portrait of a man who lives for movies, often at the expense of his own well being.

Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare is about what happens when a wide eyed dreamer with visions of success meets the speeding semi-trailer of reality and the ensuing carnage. It's at times hilarious and heartbreaking, brimming with pathos and well worth a watch for those with even a casual interest in the grisly sausage factory that is making movies on a shoestring budget.

Basically it's the *Hearts of Darkness* of Chrissy-themed killer fetus slasher movies.

Part 1 airs on ABC October 31st 9.30pm, and part 2 on November 7.

HORROR MOVIE: A LOW BUDGET NIGHTMARE

 TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2017 AT 7:15AM

Featuring: Craig Anderson, Gerard Odwyer, Bryan Moses, Robert Anderson and Dee Wallace.

Director: Gary Doust

Rating: 4/5



Eighteen years after the soul-crushing realities of self-funded film production were exposed in Chris Smith's landmark documentary *American Movie*, director Gary Doust puts a warm but no less anxiety-inducing Australian spin on the tribulations faced by the next-to-no-budget auteur in *Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare*.

Craig Anderson had runs on the board after the TV comedy success *Double the Fist* (he earned a 2015 AACTA Award for Best Comedy Directing), but the dream was to helm his horror feature script **Red Christmas**. Nearing 40, Anderson's life was moribund, reduced to sleeping on the floor of his small office studio surrounded by his VHS tapes and (admittedly impressive) collection of Stephen Pearson prints. Existence hits a low point when a painful condition demands mature-age circumcision. Anderson is frank and funny about the increasingly dire state of his life, which bottoms out with the pathetic reality of having to have his adult foreskin removed while still on his mother's Medicare card.

Doust had exhibited a natural talent for capturing the torment of a low budget shoot as far back as 2002 with his own award winner, the terrific *Making Venus*. His affinity for and incisive understanding of the filmmaker's experience, nurtured during his tenure as head of the film collective *Popcorn Taxi* and in his doco series *Next Stop Hollywood*, affords him a sweet and trustful rapport with his subject. Footage inside the Anderson family home, where the desperate director asks his financially stable brother for a loan, provide for a rare kind of awkward intimacy; Anderson's snowballing anguish over budget/crewing/schedule/union conditions make for some truly stomach-tightening and heart-tugging moments of factual filmmaking.



By the time the *Red Christmas* shoot gets underway in regional New South Wales, Doust and his camera are deeply embedded within the on-set dynamic. Personalities emerge that bring Anderson into sharper, deeper focus – actor Gerard Odwyer, a Down Syndrome sufferer who proves to be accomplished actor and strong emotional core, for both productions; first AD Bryan Moses, often the voice of reason amidst the madness (he and Anderson co-directed the 1999 Tropfest winning short, *Life in a Datsun*). Not for the first time in her career, leading lady Dee Wallace (*pictured, above*) proves a winning (and suprisingly swearsy) presence and inspires her director to stretch his talents.

The final stages of Anderson's *Red Christmas* journey provide insight into the end-to-end process of envisioning, realising and selling your work (including a post-production stretch on a cruise ship that seems slightly incongruous given the penny-pinching woes that make up so much of the film). In practical terms, *Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare* should be required viewing in film schools nationwide for its matter-of-factness. The film truly soars as an endearing character study; an examination into the determination and borderline delusion it takes to make one's vision a reality. In *Craig Anderson*, Gary Doust honours the archetypal passion-fuelled dreamer of great cinematic lore.

HORROR MOVIE: A LOW BUDGET NIGHTMARE will have its World Premiere at the [2017 Adelaide Film Festival](#). Session and ticket information can be found at the event's [official website](#).

*(Footnote: SCREEN-SPACE attended 2016 Sydney Film Festival screening of *Red Christmas*, but did not publish a review. We did provide a 2.5 star rating on our [Letterboxd](#) page.)*

CULT PROJECTIONS

WELCOME TO MY PARLOUR OF VIVID CINÉ
DREAMS

CULT PROJECTIONS

CINE PICO

INTERVIEWS

DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

DEN OF LISTS

LIMELIGHT

LETTERBOX

FAVOURITE FILMS

HORRORPHILE

CINE SPIT

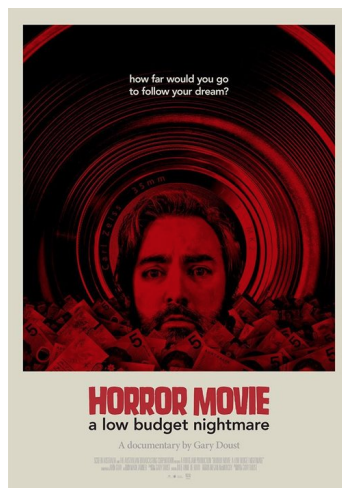
DEEP TRASH

GALLERY

PARTICULARS

HORROR MOVIE: A LOW BUDGET NIGHTMARE

October 26, 2017



Australia | 2017 | Directed by
Gary Doust

Logline: A light-hearted documentary that follows the complete production process of a low-budget horror movie with all the obstacles and pitfalls that come with it.

Some of the most memorable documentaries set out to tell one story, but end up telling another, or court ambitions of capturing all that is crucial, and yet something more intrinsic and fascinating emerges. *Hearts Of Darkness: A Filmmaker's*

Apocalypse about Francis Ford Coppola making *Apocalypse Now* is one such documentary, so is *American Movie* about Mark Borchardt making his short film *Coven*. Now we have the making of Craig Anderson's *Red Christmas*, and all that is nightmarish is good in the world.

Anderson was a frustrated bit player, an actor reduced to playing those small thankless roles on Australian TV. He harboured a passionate interest in cult-flavoured horror movies, especially the lesser known curios, those lost gems that never got a proper release on DVD, which he added to his monstrous VHS collection. But Anderson had a very big itch that needed scratching; to make his own weird cult horror movie, something that could fit snugly on his shelves alongside other treasures like *Basket Case* and *It's Alive!*



So he set about making his own movie, at all cost, and the result is one of the funniest, most heart-warming stories of tenacity, fool-hardiness, desperation, and perverse joy within the often cruel, relentless, and unforgiving realm of DIY, independent, low-budget filmmaking. The horror genre is full of these endeavours, but few, if any, have been captured from go to woe to hey-ho with such grotesque charm, cringe-inducing outrageousness, and sheer championship, as Gary Doust's fly-on-the-wall, take-no-prisoners, warts-and-all account - and case study - of Anderson's feature debut as writer and director.



After spending several years on a script - about an aborted foetus, now adult grown, that seeks retribution on its mother and her family - Anderson finds himself sleeping on a mattress on the floor of his warehouse office with eighty grand of his own savings set aside, and an Ace up his sleeve: Dee Wallace (*The Howling*, *Cujo*, *E.T.*) has agreed to take the lead role as the mother. But Anderson still needs to get her to Australia. Somehow he manages to convince his reticent brother to loan him \$60,000. Okay, that's encouraging. So now he coerces his good friend Bryan Moses to take the role of 1st AD and informs him they have just sixteen days to shoot 330 scenes.

It can only go pear-shaped from there. And, of course, it does, magnificently. Moses has a nosebleed from stress on the first day of shooting. Brilliant.



Laden with scene after scene of deliciously oh-my-god moments (both in shock and mirth), *Horror Movie* ticks all the boxes about what NOT to do, and yet, the production continues to stumble along, getting results. From Anderson's early shock revelation about his upcoming circumcision, to his insistence on using a real placenta in one of the movie's gore gags, to the brave move of using Down Syndrome actor Gerard Dwyer in a pivotal role, to the utter fearlessness in hoping Dee Wallace won't just walk off set the moment she arrives on location and sees what a shonky farrago the production actually is. Oh, and the test screenings on the ocean liner, we can't forget those. It's a smorgasbord of production hell moments,

punctuated by Anderson's nervous, but infectious giggle.



Big props to both Anderson and Doust in allowing a potentially humiliating project transform into something genuinely inspiring, surprisingly moving, and unashamedly entertaining. You don't need to have seen *Red Christmas* to enjoy *Horror Movie*. There are two versions, a 99-minute cinema cut, and an extended two-hour two-parter screening in Australia on ABC, the first part on Halloween, 9:30pm.



Yes, do yourself a favour and watch this superb little documentary. It's all the silly troubles, simple pleasures, and heartbreaking falls of life rolled into one twisted tale of a crazy "family" of creatives doing what they love, and rolling with the pinches and punches. If there's one moral to conjure: throw caution to the wind, because life ain't a breeze, it's a damn gust.

Share

2 Likes

[← Crash](#)

[Blade Runner 2049 →](#)

"horror movie: a low budget nightmare" gu moviehouse adelaide film festival. "spookers." gu moviehouse adelaide film festival.

"Horror..." and "Spookers" played as a sort of Friday the 13th double bill. "Horror" was, by far, the more interesting of the two and it charts the making, release / marketing of a low budget horror movie, "Red Christmas", made in Australia, written and directed by Craig Anderson. The movie didn't look all that interesting though upon release it received very positive reviews in a number of well established and reputable publications. The documentary however was harrowing! Talk about watching a train wreck! There were times when I literally, and I do mean "Literally", pulled my jacket up over my eyes, I just couldn't watch. What comes out of it is a touching and very affectionate observation of a bunch of people who really do their best and have great intentions. And Anderson is very candid and generous with advice and information about the production phase and about post production release and marketing. The director of the documentary, Gary Doust, and Craig Anderson were both in the audience, this was the documentary's premiere and they both participated in a very honest Q&A after the screening. Turns out there were a lot of intending film-makers in the audience, you could pick 'em, they are a type so, somewhat unfortunately, most of the questions were directed at Anderson, maybe understandably, whereas the film that had been screened was Doust's creation. "Where angels fear to tread", me thinks! Not for the faint hearted this movie making business, maybe unless you can skip straight to the host of assistant producers level. Or maybe make films like "Bad Black".

"Spookers": There's a place outside of Auckland, in New Zealand, which used to be a psychiatric hospital, read "asylum", which was de-commissioned in 1999 and now is giant theme park for scaring people, and it seems to do a very good job. This a lot more about the community of people working there as "spookers" and the owners, rather than the place itself. There's a bit of discussion about the ethics of running an entertainment facility which is supposed to scare people in an institution which was dealing with mental health, as well there might.

Latest Articles

[The Art Gallery of South Australia, North Terrace.](#)

["Grown for free, take what you need, pay what you can." North west corner of Souter Park on Albert St, Goodwood.](#)

["Bush Mechanics: the exhibition." The Drill Hall, Torrens Parade Ground, until October 30th.](#)

[GU Moviehouse Adelaide Film Festival Audience Awards](#)

["The Voyeur's Hotel" Gay Tahlese](#)

"The map is not the territory."
- Alfred Korzybski, 1933 (Science and Sanity)

[search the site](#)

♥ FrightFest liked



Martin @CharleySays71 · Oct 29

Replying to @FrightFest

And thank you for organising it! "**Horror Movie - a Low Budget Nightmare**" was the biggest surprise for me, absolutely loved it.

1 1 4



Horror Movie Doco @Horormoviedoco · Oct 29

Thank you @frightfest audience members for all your positive feedback to yesterday's screening of **Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare!**

2 2 23



Tony Wiseman @TDarkReaperW · Oct 29

Watched '**Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare**' documentary at Fright Fest yesterday & respect 🙏 to @Dee_Wallace

3



Stevie @FilmFanStevie · Oct 29

Love that @FrightFest show Documentaries like The American Scream and **Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare**. Both films you'll instantly love

1 1 12



Jessyyyyyy @JessyCritical · Oct 29

Replying to @JessyCritical @FrightFest

I was really proud to see my quote used at the end of **Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare**. Loved Red Christmas, so thank you @fibrecement 😊

2 7



deathly shallows @UnheimlichManvr · Oct 28

"**Horror movie: a low budget nightmare**" was a beautiful, touching little doc with a lot of heart about the making of underrated #RedChristmas

2 8



Robbie Dunlop @robunlop1984 · Oct 28

Horror Movie - A Low Budget Nightmare - Brilliant! Hilarious, poignant, enthralling @fibrecement @FrightFest Want to rewatch Red Christmas!

3 11



James Taylor @tayloredchatter · Oct 28

Horror Movie: A Low Budget Nightmare, doc about making+selling a film may prove the most harrowing watch of #FrightFest Halloween event!

1 3 10