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MAGAZINE

No.3

SIX HORRIFYING
TALES OF TERROR
FEATURING

EVIL DEAD'S

TOM SULLIVAN

MARIO BAVA'S
FIVE DOLLS OF AN
AUGUST MOON

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INTERVIEWING A MONSTER

KANE HODDER

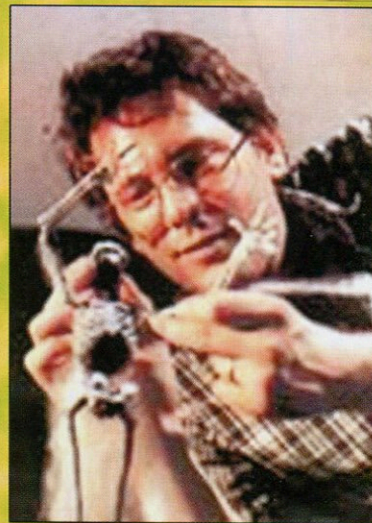
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Cryptic Magazines

Legends In Horror

featuring

Tom Sullivan



Interview by Thomas White

Inspired by *King Kong* when he was five-years-old and slowly becoming nothing short of obsessed with the behind-the-scenes of the silver screen, Tom Sullivan grew up to bring us some of the most memorable visuals of any cult classic film and has not stopped there. With his special effects on *Evil Dead* and his new hit horror comic *Tom Sullivan's Books of the Dead*, Tom continues to bring us his wonderful creations in any medium available.

TWhite: Tom, I would like to go back a little ways with you and talk a little bit about what got you interested in art and special effects.

TSullivan: It goes back to when I was five-years-old and saw the original *King Kong* for the first time. I had no idea how Kong and the dinosaurs or Skull Island was done. I became a huge fan of dinosaurs and drawing and sculpting ever since. It wasn't until the third grade that I heard about *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, and about the same time I found out about *Famous Monsters of Film Land*.

Forry's brilliant magazine was the only information about special effects in the early 1960s.

TW: Was your artistic talent noticeable right from the get-go or did it take some practice?

TS: I clearly had no talent, just an uncompromising ambition to learn how to draw and paint and make movies.

TW: And your writing?

TS: My plan from early on was to become a "renaissance man," a master of all trades so I could become an uber-director. I have always been making up stories. These stories were mostly Harryhausen kind of adventures. Recently, though, thanks to Chazz DeMoss and *Dead Dog Comics*, my writing is being published. I am very pleased with the results.

TW: You've mentioned *King Kong's* groundbreaking effects, done by none other than Willis H. O'Brien, as a definitive influence on you at a very early age. Did you seek out other O'Brien films or was it more get-whatever-you-can-get-your-hands-on?

TS: Absolutely! Thanks to *Famous Monsters of Film Land*, I was able to create a list of films to look out for. My mother let me stay up on school nights and watch the 10:30 p.m. movies if I could make a case that this film would enhance my education. She also taught me the importance of remembering the names of actors and filmmakers from the films. I was the only kid I know who knew how special effects were done. I was making clay sculptures of the Ymir and a carved foam rubber Cyclops and Allosaur heads from *One Million Years BC*. I also saved up my lawn mowing money and bought an 8mm camera and started my stop motion experiments.

TW: So how did Ray Harryhausen, one of O'Brien's scholars, help shape your work, with films like *Clash of the Titans* and *Jason and the Argonauts*?

TS: Ray is simply inspiring. The dynamics of his action and the sculptures and designs of his creatures are consistently some of the best character designs in the history of films. I collected every magazine and book on Ray and special effects. I still do. I had the honor of meeting Ray a couple of times at various conventions. He is an amazingly approachable fella.

TW: How did you and Sam Raimi get together?

TS: My wife Penny was going to Michigan State University and while there I read about the M.S.U. Creative Filmmaking Society, which was actually Sam and his older brother Ivan tapping into the lucrative student events market on campus.

They found as on campus students they could get deals on renting auditoriums and would charge a buck or two and show Sam's super 8mm comedies.

TW: What a lot of our readers don't know is that Raimi had a few other things he did before *Evil Dead*, and you were there for some of that stuff. I believe there was a feature film called, *It's Murder*, that you worked on. What else was there?

TS: Sam made a bunch. There was *6 Months to Live*, about a suicidal terminally ill fella. It's a laugh riot. Also *The Happy Valley Kid*, starring Rip (Robert) Tapert, as a wimpy kid picked on by most at college who goes Columbine on his tormentors. Way ahead of its time. *Clockwork* was a horror experiment starring Scott Spiegel and Cheryl Gutteridge about a woman fighting back against a stalking bum. It was about 10 minutes long and managed to look slick and create some tension.

TS: I remember *Attack of the Helping Hand*, which has a lot of *Evil Dead 2* in it.

TW: Do you have any of these films or stills or anything from these projects?

This sort of stuff could make a man rich on Ebay.

TS: I do, but I promised not to sell or copy the films. I can show them to friends.

TW: So it was pretty natural that when Raimi started doing *Evil Dead*, you would be on board?

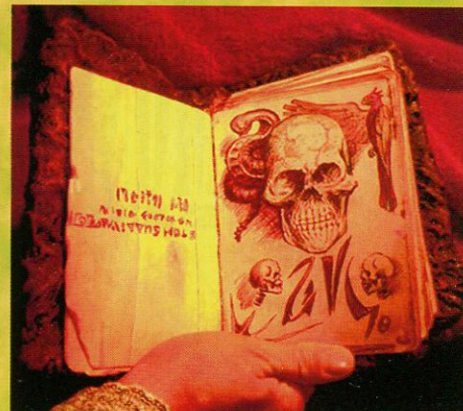
TS: Sam and the guys wisely checked out other FX artists, but I was willing to work for very little money and I do have a versatile set of skills. I think those things sold me.

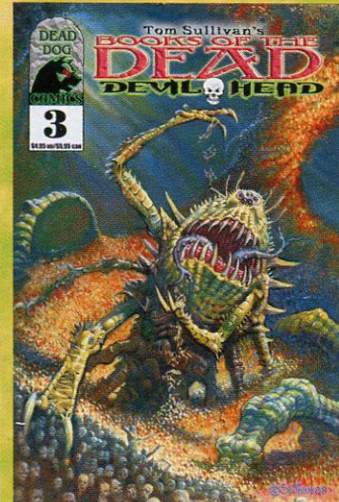
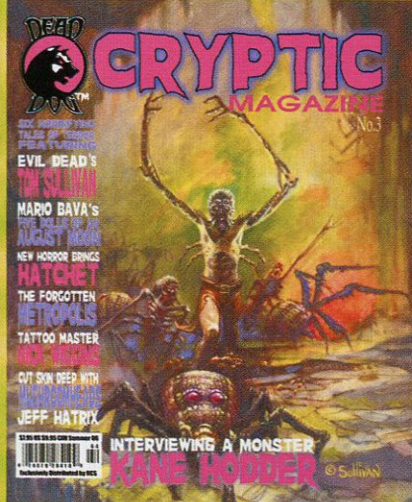
TW: I am sure the list is extensive, but give us a few details on the props and effects you created for *Evil Dead*.

TS: I was responsible for creating the book of the dead, including the pages artwork. I also created the dagger. I designed, created and applied the Deadite makeup. I created the practical gore effects, as well. I was the unaccredited, unpaid Art Director. I designed, constructed and co-animated the meltdown finale sequence, along with Bart Pierce. I play the demon hands within the Deadite that burst out of their bodies and throw guts into the audience's laps. I thought that was important. I painted two posters to help promote the film when it was known as *The Book of The Dead*.



A pre-production sketch from Lovecraft's *The Cry of the Chullu* by Tom Sullivan





TW: So *Evil Dead* wrapped up and was eventually released to initially fail before becoming what it is today. When were you approached for *Evil Dead: Dead by Dawn*?

TS: At the end of 1985, I think. Sam had been in contact, and I was offered my choice of jobs on *ED 2*. I was not interested in doing makeup again, but the expanded stop motion sequences were very interesting. The flying Deadite at the end had a big Harryhausen-type battle, but Sam screwed up the background plates and the critter was all but eliminated.

TW: You didn't do a lot of the day-to-day effects on the film like in the first movie. What were some of the things you did for *Dead by Dawn*?

TS: I sculpted the covers and built the books of the dead.

I designed the new dagger. The hilt was cast from the original. Cary Howe and Mike Tric sculpted the blade. I designed and built the elements and animated the opening book writing/ghost sequence. I designed, built, and animated the Henrietta head popup out of the floor shot. I animated Ash's hair turning white. I animated the flower writing. I designed, built, and animated the flying Deadite at the film's finale. My late wife Penny and I have cameos at the airport scene.

TW: So what happened with *Army of Darkness*? Were you approached to be a part of the film?

TS: Yes, but in a limited way. They needed a new Book of the Dead, as they had given away or kept the books from *ED 2* that they never returned to me. Rob told me I could have a cameo if I could fly out to L.A. Unfortunately, I was recovering from a car accident and couldn't attend.

TW: How did you manage to maintain the rights to your work on the *Evil Dead* films?

TS: I had it put in writing. I also copyrighted my work. My copyrights have paid me many times what I earned doing the film.

TW: How do you think things would have continued for you if you didn't have the rights to your creations?

TS: I would have been sitting on the sidelines watching the parade. Fortunately, Sam and the guys couldn't afford these details when they were making the film.

TW: So what happened after the *Evil Dead* films? Did you look for more work in the film industry?

TS: I never got a film offer from my work in *Evil Dead*. I went to work for an art department in San Francisco when Penny and I moved out there. I had shot nine rolls of 36 exposures of all my work on *Evil Dead* and documenting the shoot in Tennessee. The film was purchased by Sam and the guys, so I left all nine rolls with them and they left them in the car trunk all summer. So I had nothing to show anybody that I had actually worked on a movie. It took three years for *Evil Dead* to be released, so it was rough going.

TW: Tell us about DARKAGEPRODUCTIONS.

TS: DARKAGEPRODUCTIONS is the name of my website. It has a Gallery, Forum, News, and Appearances sections. It will be updated soon to allow for a catalog for art prints and replicas, as well as better networking for filmmakers and artists. **TW:** Recently, you have been doing some things for the comic book industry with Tom Sullivan's *Books of the Dead* published by Dead Dog. The first couple of issues are out now. How do you think it's coming along?

TS: I am blown away by the comic. The artists, Josh Medors on the first two issues and Kenneth Loh on the last two, are phenomenal. The color and paper is first-rate and the final result is beyond my expectations. I like the story, too. Very Lovecraftian. I am wrapping up Issue #4 right now. This would make a kick-ass film.

TW: Recently you worked on a film called *The Dread*. What was your credit in that film?

TS: That's a good question. As my credits kept growing, I was asked to design the demon on paper, and I did. Then the effects guys were overwhelmed by the volume of effects and the lack of pre-production, so I helped out with some stuff like Ellen Sandweiss's death. Then I let slip that I had done some community theater and a bit part in Patrick Desmond's feature, *The Absence of Light*, so they gave me an audition and now I play Dr. Boorstin, a psychiatrist. *The Dread* Producers decided to make me an Associate Producer on the film. I love those guys.

TW: *The Dread* is being adapted to a four issue mini series by Dead Dog. Are you involved in that, as well?

TS: Unfortunately, no. I think I am busy enough these days. *The Dread* is getting the class act at Dead Dog, though.

TW: What's next on the plate for you?

TS: I have been asked by Patrick Desmond to act in his next film, and in the meantime I am writing my own film scripts, preparing to market more *Book of the Dead* replicas, trying to learn Premiere Pro (why'd they have to turn filmmaking into rocket science?) and having a blast being a guest at various conventions around the country.

TW: Any parting words?

TS: Thank you for this chance to share. I am having a blast doing the creative thing and modest doors are opening. It's an exciting time, and I have a lot of irons in a lot of fires. Stay tuned.

For further information on Tom, please visit: www.darkageproductions.com

Shown below is the young Tom Sullivan hard at on the sets of *Evil Dead*...

