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# Making Zines: Re-Reading *European Trash Cinema* (1988–98)

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## Abstract

Discussion of the horror film fanzine culture of the 1980s and early 1990s has been dominated by an emphasis on questions around the politics of taste, considerations of subcultural capital and cultism in fan writing, and processes of cultural distinction and the circulation of forms of capital. Sconce's concept of 'paracinema' has come to shape the conceptual approach to fanzines. The aim of this article is to refocus attention on other areas of fanzine production, providing a more nuanced and richer historicisation of these publications and the ways they contributed to the circulation, reception and consumption of European horror film. Focusing on the fanzine *European Trash Cinema* I propose a return to the actual cultural object – the printed zine – examining the networks of producers converging around, and writing about, Euro horror films and related European trash cinematic forms, as well as the contents within the publication itself.

**Keywords:** fanzines; Eurohorror; European trash cinema; networks of production

Since the publication of David Sanjek's 'Fan Notes: the Horror Film Fanzine' in 1990,<sup>1</sup> which provided a valuable initial mapping of 'connoisseurs of the bad film, trash and gore'<sup>2</sup> and conferred upon fanzine editors and writers the titles of 'an alternative brand of film criticism, a school with its own set of values and virtues',<sup>3</sup> discussion of the horror film fanzine culture of the 1980s and the early 1990s has been largely dominated by an emphasis on questions around the politics of taste,<sup>4</sup> considerations of subcultural capital and cultism in fan writing,<sup>5</sup> and processes of cultural distinction and the circulation of forms of capital, namely (sub)cultural capital.<sup>6</sup> In these accounts, the analysis of cultures of consumption is indebted to Bourdieu's critique of taste and to his work on distinction,<sup>7</sup> which has been applied to account for struggles for cultural legitimacy and the distinction between and within groups of fans. Sconce's concept of 'paracinema', in particular, which he defined as 'a particular reading protocol'<sup>8</sup> typified by 'ironic reading strategies',<sup>9</sup> has come to shape the conceptual approach to 'such magazines,

fanzines and makeshift journals as *Psychotronic Video*, *Zontar*, *Subhuman*, *Trashola*, *Ungawa*, *Pandemonium*<sup>10</sup> and volumes like *Psychotronic Encyclopaedia of Film* (1983) and *Incredibly Strange Films* (1985), whose calling was ‘to valorize all forms of cinematic “trash”, whether such films have been either explicitly rejected or simply ignored by legitimate film culture’,<sup>11</sup> But, as David Church has argued in *Grindhouse Nostalgia*, ‘scholars have too often overextended Sconce’s argument by neglecting [the fact] that paracinema as a *reading strategy* does not always dominate the corpus of films upon which such readings focus’,<sup>12</sup> playing down ‘more traditional viewing pleasures that uneasily coexist with the profound negativity of paracinematic reading strategies’.<sup>13</sup> The aim of this article is to shift the focus away solely from paracinematic positions regarding film viewing and reading in order to refocus attention on other areas of fanzine production so as to provide a more nuanced and richer historicisation of these publications and the ways in which they contributed to the circulation, reception and consumption of European horror film.

By focusing on the fanzine *European Trash Cinema*, edited by Craig Ledbetter between 1988 and 1998, as my case study, I propose a return to the actual cultural object – the printed zine – to examine in detail the networks of producers converging around, and writing about, Euro horror films and related European trash cinematic forms, as well as the contents within the publication, from cover artwork to editorials to film reviews and feature articles to the advertisement of mail-order catalogues. Little attention has been paid to individual fanzines, and, more often than not, scholarship on European horror film has confined them to customary summaries cataloguing titles and names of editors as part of wider critical projects on European horror cinema.<sup>14</sup> Through a micro-historical inquiry into *European Trash Cinema (ETC)*, the aim of the article is twofold: first, a mapping of the interlocking associations and creative alliances coalescing around Ledbetter’s fanzine over a ten-year period, as an example of networks of production contributing to the formation of a critical discourse on Euro horror; second, an examination of the discursive terrains of *ETC* to focus on actual examples of the activities of genre-users and their aesthetic sensibilities, which are far more heterogeneous than those noted by Sanjek as sophomoric, archival or nihilistic,<sup>15</sup> and by Sconce as paracinematic. Both aims seek to provide a counterpoint to existing scholarship on horror film fanzines by considering the complex dynamics and cultural practices of fanzine production and consumption, and by reassessing the contextual significance of fanzine culture in shaping cultural histories of Euro horror.

As part of this historicising process, *ETC* needs to be contextualised in relation to the explosion of activity in the field of horror film fanzine production in the 1980s and the 1990s materialising and developing alongside the impact of horror films available on video, which beckoned a threshold change in horror film cultures, and in relation to established and emerging traditions of horror film criticism. Contemporary specialist genre magazine *Gorezone*, *Fangoria*’s sister publication, devoted to covering foreign and independent horror, reported on

this burgeoning fanzine culture in 'Homemade Horrorzines', '[there are] a total of 50 titles [currently] available by subscription – or, in some cases, in specialty shops – originating from all over the world'.<sup>16</sup> Scouring through just a fraction of this number reveals a variety of approaches to writing about horror and of distinctive encounters with horror films – at grindhouses and drive-ins, on late-night television, and on video – which must be borne in mind when examining specific publications.

As texts of cultural criticism contributing to the circulation, reception and consumption of horror films, fanzines must also be inserted into a wider historical continuum of horror film criticism, and read in the context of the historical emergence of video reviewing as a new form and an activity of genre criticism throughout the 1980s. Thus, while pioneering fanzine editors Bill Landis of *Sleazoid Express* (1980–85) and Rick Sullivan of *The Gore Gazette* (1981–91) documented their personal traversing of the theatres along New York's 42nd Street showing down-and-dirty horror, *ETC* – like *Ecco, the World of Bizarre Video* (Charles Kilgore, 1988–97) and *Video Watchdog. The Perfectionist Guide to Fantastic Video* (Tim Lucas, 1990–present) – participated in the creation and the development of a new form of review(ing). As Lucas put it in his first *Video Watchdog* editorial, 'we will critique what really counts: the way a film has been *presented* on video'.<sup>17</sup>

Research into horror film fanzines requires a broader interdisciplinary approach. Conceptually and methodologically, therefore, this article is informed by theories on paracinema subcultures which have legitimated the study of international traditions of trash cinema and shed light on specific cultures of consumption. Bourdieu remains firmly in my frame of analysis to explore the relationship between cultural production, circulation of cultural value and commerce. Bourdieusian concepts applied to the field of cultural production provide multiple and fruitful positions from which to understand the role of fanzine producers and their discursive practices – or 'habitus'.<sup>18</sup> European Trash Cinema is to be seen as a field of cultural and social activity in which the producer(s) of the fanzine create a cultural artefact, which, in turn, is defined by the expectations and values of its readership (for example, other fanzine editors, fans, subscribers, connoisseurs of the trash film) and relates to a range of other interconnected material sites and networks such as specialist genre magazines, film conventions, video bootlegging, mail-order video catalogues and the market. All the above, agents and institutions create the field. In a Bourdieu-style analysis, *ETC* could be considered as a 'subfield of restricted production' in its coverage of the production and consumption of obscure and symbolic artefacts and in its address to a limited readership,<sup>19</sup> and Ledbetter and his contributors in *ETC* as 'cultural intermediaries'<sup>20</sup> playing a critical role in the circulation and dissemination of foreign horror films. In addition to questions of cultural production and cultural consumption, I also reprise customary discussions of genre within film studies, namely Stephen Neale's *Genre* (1980)<sup>21</sup> and Rick Altman's *Film/Genre* (1999),<sup>22</sup> to address the more traditional viewing pleasures side-lined by Sconce's paracinema. It is current scholarship on popular music fanzines, however, rather than

on genre film cultures, that has drawn on Neale's influential study. In 'Popular Music Fanzines: Genre, Aesthetics, and the "Democratic Conversation"' (2010),<sup>23</sup> Chris Atton adopts a genre approach to fanzine discourse, whereby the fanzine operates 'as a site for the social process of genre formation'.<sup>24</sup> For Atton, fanzines are 'types of genre-cultures' which contribute 'to the critical discourse of popular music'.<sup>25</sup> Particularly relevant for my argument is Atton's attempt 'to develop an understanding of fanzines that is not limited by an interpretative emphasis on subcultural opposition'<sup>26</sup> and that broadens the examination of fanzines by locating them 'in either its proximate culture or any wider culture of popular music',<sup>27</sup> focusing on their 'personal histories, interactions or trajectories',<sup>28</sup> and engaging with 'the very discourses that comprise what Simon Frith has called '[the] democratic conversation [that takes place] between music lovers, a social celebration of a particular kind of musical attention and commitment'.<sup>29</sup>

I also turn to the emerging field of periodical studies in order to read fanzines – and fanzine writing – in context, to map connections and interactions between editors, collaborators, readers and other fanzines, and to acknowledge the contribution of fanzines to the 'democratic conversation' on Euro trash cinema in general and Euro horror cinema in particular. Periodical studies proposes to 'develop effective historical and critical models for understanding editorship, collaboration, networking and reception'.<sup>30</sup> Of special interest is the consideration of the periodical as an 'autonomous object of study',<sup>31</sup> in other words, as a cultural object in its own right, which calls for the 'actual process of handling, navigating and reading the object itself',<sup>32</sup> as well as the significance of 'the magazine as a network: a way of connecting people, things, texts, ideas, and places in dynamic feedback loops'.<sup>33</sup>

Like the scholar of modernist magazines who faces historiographical challenges regarding the transient nature of these publications, the availability and accessibility of the original, and what Lathan and Scholes have described as the 'hole in the archive',<sup>34</sup> the researcher of horror film fanzines is confronted with the ephemeral nature of a lower-brow beast characterised by dispensability, irregular periodicity, small circulation and reach, and the (un)availability of individual issues and whole runs (unless, that is, one was an avid consumer, collector and/or trader). My choice of *ETC* as a case study addresses some of these challenges. As part of my personal collection, I have access to the whole run, a total of twenty-nine issues, which were published regularly between 1988 and 1998. Its publication across a ten-year period coincided with the heyday of horror film fanzine production and mail-order video companies. As Stephen Bissette, a steadfast presence in the independent US horror film fanzine scene of the late 1980s and 1990s and a regular contributor to *ETC*, has noted in *Xerox Ferox: The Wild World of the Horror Film Fanzine* (2013):<sup>35</sup>

Video changed everything. There suddenly were bootleg tapes on the tables at conventions all around the country. And those tables have now become DVD labels. The entire market for the European horror films – from the *giallos* to the Bava films to the

Franco films – would not exist today if it had not been for ten years of video bootleg marketing [...] All this is an outgrowth of fanzine culture.<sup>36</sup>

*ETC* was certainly a central player in this outgrowth and in changing the ‘feel for the game’, to use a Bourdieusian metaphor. *ETC* not only contributed to digging up unknown titles and working its way through hundreds of videotapes to bring European horror genre fare to the fan’s attention, but its value and its use rested on its importance as a valuable resource for histories of the genre and for readings of cinematic forms which revelled in visual excess.

### From Hi-Tech Terror to European Trash Cinema

The origins of *European Trash Cinema* need to be traced back to *Hi-Tech Terror*, a four-page digest-size black-and-white newsletter, which was Ledbetter’s first attempt, as the titular abbreviation unabashedly signalled, to engage solely with the viewing and reviewing of horror film released to video. The title also signalled Ledbetter’s aspiration to insert the novelty of VCR technology into a long-standing tradition of fanzines and pulp magazines dedicated to all things terror. As Ledbetter put it in the first issue in July 1985, the aim of *Hi-Tech Terror* (*HTT*) was to ‘cover what is out there in the videocassette and satellite TV world that pertains to Horror and Science Fiction’,<sup>37</sup> since he felt ‘there should be some kind of record in print on the field as the VCR/satellite electronic media increases its market share’.<sup>38</sup>

Forty-three issues came out between summer 1985 and winter 1988 with a subscription rate of \$6.00 (USA and Canada) and \$10.00 (overseas) for 12 issues.<sup>39</sup> Throughout its publication, Ledbetter’s interest in US production waned, giving way to coverage of European and oriental genre fare. Although *Hi-Tech Terror* had a small circulation of 250 copies from its Texas base, Ledbetter became well-known among the Anglo-American fanzine world for his berating tirade about contemporary American horror film production and about horror film writing in specialist genre magazines and alternative publications in issue 33:<sup>40</sup>

I don’t give a shit A) what Larry Cohen is doing, B) How Sam Raimi plans on remaking *Evil Dead* for the rest of his life, or C) The fact that there are hundreds of straight-to-video American made Junk waiting to find a home in someone’s VCR. I JUST DON’T CARE ... We Americans refuse to recognize the tremendous amount of superlative work taking place overseas. We’d rather fawn over Tobe Hooper Abortions from Cannon (next up is Empire), thank Charles Band for resurrecting the drive-in double-bill so that we can see two turds for the price of one and interview Herschell Gordon Lewis for the 50th time. C’mon folks, show some originality.<sup>41</sup>

To be sure, this editorial lends itself to a conventional cultural-distinction frame of analysis: first, Ledbetter was trashing ‘other’ horror tastes and dominant production trends – whether mainstream, independent or straight-to-video markets; second, he acknowledged that a US-centric perspective fails to appreciate foreign

production; and, last, he extends his critique to certain tendencies within horror film writing which are too obsequious and tiresome in their coverage of production companies, directors and films. Ledbetter concluded by urging fellow fanzine editors, writers and fans to follow a more innovative critical path.

His outright severance from US horror film and fervent appreciation for films made 'overseas' was carried over into *ETC*:

Welcome to the first issue of EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA. I've been looking forward to covering these types of films exclusively for a long time ... I have purposely decided to mock the current fashion that says if a film is dubbed is must be trash. BULLSHIT! Many's [*sic*] the time that I got an extra thrill from recognizing those oft heard voices that appear literally in thousands of films.<sup>42</sup>

The association of dubbing with trash here points to questions of quality and cultural authenticity normally associated with the exhibition of art-house films. Ledbetter's pleasures, on the other hand, reside in the familiarity of those (American) voices which have come to characterise the dubbing of foreign low-brow genres for American audiences at drive-ins, grindhouses and, later on, in videotapes. Ledbetter returned to his personal becoming-a-Euro-trash-fan narrative time and again:

Around 1983 I decided to give up entirely on the American film industry and devote all my viewing and writing time to Italian, Spanish, French and German films from the 60's, 70's, and 80's. I haven't once regretted that decision. I guarantee you that this journal has no interest in US films and there will be no coverage of it in *ETC*.<sup>43</sup>

'Trash' had a plural meaning and value in the pages of *ETC*, performing various functions which were inscribed in the fanzine's original masthead, and which were at work in Ledbetter's editorials and in the reviews published. Like Jim Morton's *Trashola* (1981–84), which covered the schlock films screened in San Francisco's movie theatres, or Richard Green's *Confessions of a Trash Fiend* (1982–84), which reported on the New Jersey drive-in scene of the early 1980s, Ledbetter did not articulate what he understood by 'trash' in an explicit or consistent manner, and, he was not, certainly, the 'Pauline Kael of zine writers',<sup>44</sup> to paraphrase Richard Green's description of Bill Landis of *Sleazoid Express*.<sup>45</sup> Ledbetter mobilised 'trash' both as a gesture of position-taking against contemporary US horror production and genre criticism trends, and as an unequivocal gesture of championing lowbrow Euro-genre fare. The fanzine's original masthead and logo, designed by Jeff Smith – himself the editor of *Wet Paint* (1981–86) – and reproduced in issues 2/3, 3, 4, 9/10, 11/12, conveyed a male trash aesthetics that sought literally to lampoon and ditch dominant cultures of consumption, namely *The Nightmare in Elm Street* series and the *Friday the 13th* series, as represented by the cartoon-like horror fan wearing a 'Freddy Lives' T-shirt, the 'Freddy' Krueger trademark metal-clawed gloves and the Jason Voorhees trademark hockey goalie-mask. Such trashing of dominant horror film trends would be verbalised

in many an editorial: ‘a lot of fans are getting real bored with the US film scene. After you have seen all the sequels, the shot-on-video atrocities, the big-budget sleaze, you realize everyone is stuck in neutral. So you start looking elsewhere for instance, for something different.’<sup>46</sup> In other editorials and sections of the fanzine like ‘European Trash Comments’, ‘trash’ functioned also as an attitude linking like-minded publications as well as a collective work-in-progress between other fanzine editors, reviewers and readers who were mapping the circulation and consumption of European horror film in contemporary American and British horror culture. The editorial for issue 7 in volume 1 hailed 1989 as:

a very good year for Euro-trash lovers [since] we saw the debut of many fine film publications that catered to our particular obsessions (most came from Great Britain as usual), plus the stalwarts SPAGHETTI CINEMA & WESTERNS ALL’ ITALIANA here in the US continued to appear. [...] The most exciting news will be the debut of a stateside publication that will cover a healthy share of the foreign film territory. It’s Tim Lucas VIDEO WATCHDOG magazine.<sup>47</sup>

‘Trash’ connoisseurship was a common topic in the ‘European Trash Comments’ section where readers provided further information on the production and distribution histories of specific directors and films.<sup>48</sup> But, trash sensibilities were always displayed in the the proclivity of the reviewers to discuss taboo subjects and cinematic excess, as well as on their focus on the pleasures derived from moments of spectacle.

For a thirteen-year period Ledbetter succeeded with *HTT* and *ETC* in carving out a niche – ‘the ONLY newsletter devoted to foreign genre fare’<sup>49</sup> – at a time when there was a surge of newsletter-sized publications and review-zines competing for the attention of fans of horror films and low-budget filmmaking. Let’s move across to *ETC* to trace its trajectory, its networks of exchange, and its contents.

### **ETC: The Fanzine**

During its ten years of publication *ETC* went through a number of distinct changes in its format, its production values, its ethos and its reach. Like other contemporary small horror presses, *ETC* started as a newsletter. A total of twelve issues were published, averaging six to eleven pages, the only exception being the publication of the fifteen-page double issue 9/10 devoted to the discussion of the Italian rarity, *La morte ha fatto l’uovo/Death Laid an Egg/Plucked* (Giulio Questi 1968). *ETC* in its early years flaunted its do-it-yourself look in the design, the typography and the layout: digest-sized (5½ × 8½ in), hand-drawn logo, type-written reviews and news in uninterrupted succession, and a small number of illustrations (mainly, photocopied Italian comics vignettes, movie ads clipped from other publications, and front covers of like-minded newsletters and fanzines, which reflected the trading zine culture). Circulation reached ‘less than a hundred rabid fans’,<sup>50</sup> many of whom would have traded their own fanzines with Ledbetter.



While reviews formed the backbone of the newsletter, Ledbetter interspersed news items, interviews and the promotion of other fanzines; issue 3 included a 'Letters' section, an element that did not become a regular feature until later on in the life cycle of the fanzine. The selection of films for the opening issue would be indicative of the generic and geographical range of *ETC*'s reviews of 'old' and 'new' European horror films, of international 1960s spy films co-productions and of 1970s Italian police thrillers (*poliziotteschi*), and of notorious horror auteurs like Jess Franco and Lucio Fulci. A review from Ledbetter on Jorg Buttgerreit's *Nekromantik* (1987) was followed by Lucas's review of Franco's *Sexy Sisters* (1977); the issue was completed with four Italian titles: *7 donne d'oro contro due 07/Seven Golden Women Against Two 07* (Vincenzo Cascino, 1965), *Il miele del diavolo/The Devil's Honey* (Lucio Fulci, 1987), and an Umberto Lenzi double-bill with *Milano odia: la polizia non può sperare/Almost Human* (1974) and *Roma a mano armata/Assault with A Deadly Weapon* (1976), reviewed by Michael Secula, Jeff Doung and David Walker respectively. Occasionally, the inclusion of the odd Argentinean film such as Emilio Vieyra's *Sangre de vírgenes/Blood of the Virgins* (1967) and Mexican film such as Rafael Baledón's *La loba/The She-Wolf* (1965) stretched the denomination of 'European', to say the least. But, if anything, it confirmed the neutralisation of regional origin for the purposes of distribution of foreign horror film for American audiences. Despite such varied territorial origins and generic range, Ledbetter nevertheless had a marked preference for Italian horror production.

The first twelve issues of *ETC* were assembled in 1991 as a 'Collector's Issue' thanks to the financial support of Tom Weisser, who became the publisher of *ETC* as a now fully fledged digest-size fanzine coming out four times a year with a price-tag of \$3 per single issue and 10\$-subscription for four issues. (Other contemporary fanzines were similarly priced.) Volume 2, which comprised a total of eighteen issues, brought further changes with the adoption of a standard format (8 ½ × 11 in) from volume 5 onwards (April 1992) replacing the digest size of the first four issues. As Ledbetter recalls, 'we printed a couple of thousand copies for each issue'.<sup>51</sup> As of the first issue of volume 2, published in November 1990, there is a shift towards a more professional package designed and laid out by Tim Paxton and Dave Todarello, and typeset by Heidi Todarello, all of Kronos Productions, whose know-how with their production of their own horror film fanzines *Naked! Screaming! Terror!* (1983–89), *Video Voice* (1987–90), and *Monster!* (1988–92) raised not only *ETC*'s production values but also its circulatory reach by providing access to specialist distribution channels through Capital City Distribution, one of the major distributors of comics books in the USA. Circulation was complemented via subscriptions, and, more often than not, through fans sharing photocopied reproductions of the fanzine.

While Paxton and the Todarellos left their stamp on issues 1, 2 and 3 until they parted company with Ledbetter to focus on making their own zines, comics artist Bissette would provide the fanzine with its 'new' look by illustrating the front cover of most issues, initially with black and white artwork (see Figure 1) and

later on with coloured artwork inspired by scenes from Italian horror films (see Figure 2). Bisette's front cover work furthered *ETC*'s horror credentials: he was a noted comic artist renowned for his work *Swamp Thing* (DC Comics, 1983–86) and his editorship of horror comic anthology *Gore Shriek* (FantaCo Enterprises Inc., 1986–89); he had contributed to Chas. Balun's fanzine *Deep Red* as well as to *Fangoria* and *Gorezone*; and, he linked the fanzine to genealogies of horror culture with the quality of his illustrations, which had the same visual impact as those created by Basil Gogos, Virgil Finlay or Wally Wood for many a pulp and horror publication. The first four issues in the second volume retained the reviews as the main structuring element, although Ledbetter would include new sections such as the 'European Trash Comments' where readers shared their views and valued certain films and directors over others, filmographies of Italian directors,<sup>52</sup> and, a number of columns which lasted across a small number of issues. Among them was Ledbetter's own column 'Shootin' the Shit', which worked as a list of film, mail-order video companies and fanzine recommendations, 'The View From Twin Shore. A Biased Look at European Trash Cinema' written by Weisser under the pseudonym Pompano Joe Torrez (published between 1990 and 1994 in issues 1–9), and 'Trashman on the Prowl' by Robert Monell (published in 1996 in issues 13–16). Further variation was introduced with the publication of special issues: the Giallo Special (1992), which featured 125 mini-reviews written by Ledbetter, the Ricardo Fredda Special (1996), and the Jess Franco Special (1996).

Spanning the period 1991–98, volume 2 experienced a number of changes. Issues 1–10 saw Ledbetter working closely with his publisher Weisser and his mail-order video business, Video Search of Miami (hereafter VSoM), which specialised in the selling of European and East Asian genre films. Their collaboration extended within the fanzine, where Weisser contributed the already mentioned column 'The View from the Twin Shore', in which he reviewed video releases; and outside the fanzine with the launching of a parallel fanzine venture, *Asian Trash Cinema (ATC)* in 1991.<sup>53</sup> After the end of their partnership, Ledbetter became sole publisher from issue 11 onwards until the fanzine ceased publication with issue 16 in 1998. In this final phase, Tim and Donna Lucas designed all of the covers, stamping the *Video Watchdog* look on to *ETC*. Like other fanzine editors of the 1980s and the 1990s, Ledbetter continued his Euro trash commercial and critical activities as a mail-order service at the turn of the twenty-first century, which went online in 2014, specialising in the selling of DVD-Rs at [www.eurotrashcinema.com](http://www.eurotrashcinema.com) and in the reviewing of European genre films.

It is worth dwelling on Ledbetter's and Weisser's interactions for they shed further light on the ways in which fanzines thrived, creative alliances coalesced and folded, and networks developed and died out. In general terms, the creative, as well as commercial, bond with Weisser brought about the natural interdependence between fanzines, video stores and mail-order video catalogues in the pages of *ETC*.<sup>54</sup> In the editorial for the second issue of the newly revamped *ETC*, Ledbetter ardently praised Weisser's 'behind-the-scenes sleuthing'<sup>55</sup> of Euro and Oriental trash cinema:



**Figure 1** A tribute to the mastery of Umberto Lenzi by Bissette featured in the cover for *European Trash Cinema*, volume 2 number 3. Artwork © 1991, 2015 Stephen R. Bissette, used with permission.



**Figure 2** Gory cannibalistic detail featured in the cover for *European Trash Cinema*, volume 2 number 7. Artwork © 1993, 2015 Stephen R. Bissette, used with permission.



an awful lot of these films are gaining circulation due to the efforts of Tom Weisser, *ETC*'s humble publisher. Tom has supplied myself, Chas. Balum [*Deep Red*], Barry Kauffman [*Demonique*], Tim Lucas [*Video Watchdog*] and others with these films and without Tom's fanaticism and dedication, a lot of genre publications would be the poorer for it.<sup>56</sup>

The inside cover of this issue further demonstrates their partnership: an ad for a Miami video store, Piwi Video, featured a photograph in which Ledbetter, the video store owner Eduardo 'Piwi' Celorio, Weisser (as Pompano Joe Torrez) and David Todarello posed together like Euro trash brethren (see Figure 3). This group portrait presents them, I would suggest, as what Bourdieu described in *Distinction* as 'need merchants', those 'sellers of symbolic goods and services who always sell themselves as models and as guarantors of the value of their products, who sell so well because they believe in what they sell'.<sup>57</sup> The photograph's placement within the ad functions as a framing device whereby Ledbetter, his publisher and his designer present themselves as cultural intermediaries bringing Euro trash products to the *ETC* reader and as taste makers reviewing and facilitating access to these products – a second advertisement on page 17 explicitly highlights in capitals that 'ALL THE FILMS DISCUSSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE AVAILABLE MAIL-ORDER FROM VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI'.<sup>58</sup>

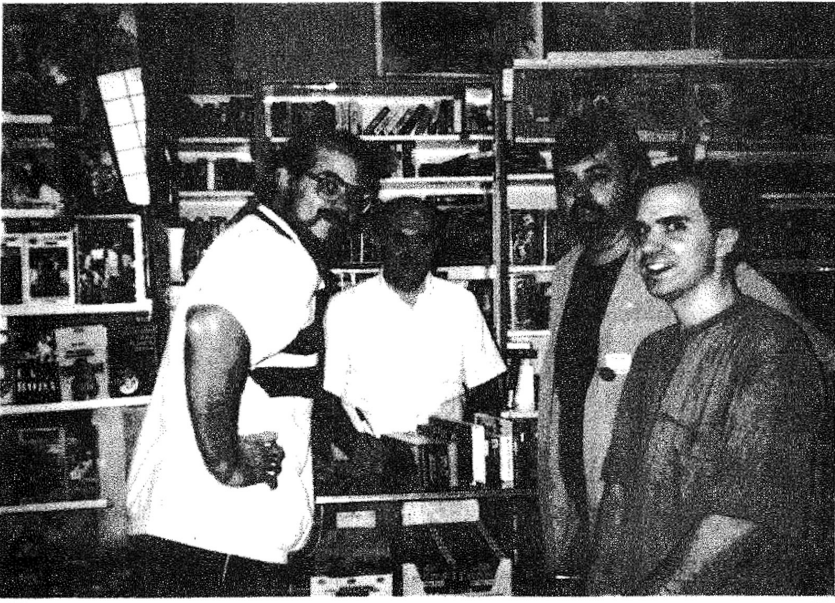
The Miami connection would be a defining moment in Ledbetter's treasure-trove of European trash cinema and marked a turning point in the life of the fanzine. Video-searching in Miami, Ledbetter unexpectedly stumbled upon a copy of *Death Laid An Egg* in a local video store – now packaged as a Venezuelan video – triggering memories about his first encounter with this Italian film in 1972 on a Saturday midnight-movie screening at Texas A&M University. Ledbetter's joyful re-encounter with Quest's film eighteen years later was related in *ETC*'s editorial of issue 9/10,<sup>59</sup> and recounted by him in a piece entitled 'Venezuelan Video Safari – Miami style!', published not in *ETC* but in the debut issue of Lucas's *Video Watchdog*.<sup>60</sup> The article was accompanied by a Bissette caricature portrait of Ledbetter wearing traditional safari attire, hat and jacket, and holding a videotape from its reel in his right hand while looking knowingly and proudly at the reader. 'Bagging the Elusive Venez Video ...', the image caption read (see Figure 4). The elusive Venezuelan tape raises interesting questions about the bewildering and often messy circulation of European trash cinema. With the burgeoning of video companies and bootlegging rampant throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Venezuelan provenance of many of these (bootleg) tapes is questionable, to say the least; the labelling could well have been a way of misleading the authorities on the part of fly-by-night video companies who were releasing movies they had no legal right to sell.<sup>61</sup>

The collaboration between Ledbetter and Weisser went further when the editorial of *ETC*'s fourth issue announced: 'Tom Weisser and I will debut *Asian Trash Cinema*, a digest-size zine with color covers. Issue 1 will contain over 300 film reviews by Tom Weisser (continuing his opus from the *Naked! Screaming!*

**WHEN IN MIAMI VISIT**

**4655 W. FLAGLER ST., MIAMI, FLORIDA 33126 (305) 444-0803**



**PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CRAIG LEDBETTER, EDUARDO (PIWI) CELORLO, POMPINO JOE TORREZ, AND DAVID TODARELLO**

**BEST SELECTION IN FLORIDA**

**Figure 3** Selling Euro Trash videotapes. The Euro Trash brethren at Piwi Video Store in Miami. Advertisement published in *European Trash Cinema*, volume 2 number 2, 1990, used with permission.



**Figure 4** Bissette depicting Ledbetter as an explorer of Euro Trash treasure troves in the first issue of Tim Lucas's *Video Watchdog*. Artwork © 1990, 2015 Stephen R. Bissette, used with permission.

*Terror!* days), while future issues will feature reviews and articles by Fandom's Finest on the phenomena of Asian Trash Cinema.<sup>62</sup> Under the publicity tag-line 'Good Trash Knows No Boundaries ...', the fanzine offered a subscription to both zines.<sup>63</sup> Two very different contexts of production, Europe and Asia, therefore, intersected historically in the same context of reception and of consumption. It is not the purpose of this article to examine the affinities and differences between *ETC* and *ATC*, nor to compare and contrast how they reviewed European and Asian genre films respectively, but to highlight these as areas worth exploring and to establish how waves of reception of international traditions of genre cinema shared common networks of exchange, mobilised similar critical tropes, and fetishised certain formal and stylistic traits over others which have become common currency in discussions of Euro trash cinema and East Asian cinema.

Like Mike Vraney through his *Something Weird Video*, Ledbetter's drive was

to track down obscure and rare films and 'to connect the material with people who were interested in it',<sup>64</sup> whether collectors, completists, or, simply, fans. Tracking down and connecting – and related tropes – are constants in Ledbetter's writing. The debut issue encouraged readers to participate in the search, to broaden their knowledge of Euro horror and to navigate their way through mail-order outlets:

If you live in an area where Spanish language videos are rented ... check those places out. I have found such rarities as the uncut TENEBRAE, Bava's LISA AND THE DEVIL, Luigi Cozzi's THE KILLER STRIKES AGAIN, Umberto Lenzi's FROM BROOKLYN TO CORLEONE, Jesus Franco films such as FURIA EN EL TROPICO ... If you have access to Spanish language TV you could have copies of Riccardo Freda's IGUANA WITH A TONGUE OF FIRE, Fulci's BEATRICE CENCI, and Bava's 5 DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON. If none of these options are available then, here's something everyone can do. There's a video label in New York called DOMO VIDEO. They have a huge catalog of Italian language videos and their titles sell for \$19.95. Now you can have quality copies of such rarities as Fulci's MURDEROCK or how about the 121 minute version of Dario Argento's PROFUNDO ROSSO. These are high-quality pre-records and not 2nd generation dupes ... As you slowly build up your collection, the next step is to branch out and trade with other people thru the mails ... I'll gladly use my resources to help track down any and all rare titles. If you see a title on tape or TV that you feel the readership should know about send it to me so I can make my readers aware of its existence. The point of *ETC* is to expose people to films they would not normally get a chance to see. I want to expand people's horizons not narrow them. There's an outfit that advertises in various video magazines called Video Finders, who for a certain fee will track down titles and tell you if they exist on video. If you're looking for Euro-horror don't bother with these people as they don't know an Umberto Lenzi from a Lucio Fulci.<sup>65</sup>

I have quoted at length because this is a clear instance of the mundane workings of fan practices: video stores, TV networks, video labels, tape-trading, collector culture and so on. The geographics of the search was localised in video stores, extended stateside through mail-order catalogues and tape-swapping, and became an international endeavour. Ledbetter's words conjure up an entire cultural economy of retailers and distributors, of tape-traders and Euro-trash lovers who actively contributed to the democratic conversation among writers, video retailers and fans and who advocated for a politics of access.<sup>66</sup>

### ***ETC's* Contributors**

As editor, Ledbetter brought a rich and varied pool of contributors into the *ETC* fold. In some cases contributors were fellow US fanzine editors like Jeff Smith from *Wet Paint*, Richard Green of *Confessions of a Trash Fiend* (1982–84) and Bob Sargent from *Videooze. Your Guide to European Horror and Exploitation in Videotape* (1990–96); others have made their names as reviewers in contemporaneous American fanzines (Michael Secula and Conrad Widener in *Demonique. Journal of the Obscure Horror Cinema* (1980–83) and *Monster!* respectively).



While the majority of contributors were drawn from the USA, the European dimension of the fanzine was reflected in Ledbetter's committed and frequent relationship with contemporary British fanzines, as the presence of names such as David Kerekes (*Shock Xpress* (1985–94)), David Flint (*Sheer Filth*, 1988–90) or John Martin (*Samhain*, 1986–97) attested, as well as with French – Lucas Balbo from fanzine *Nostalgia* (1982–88) – and Italian – Max della Mora from *Gorezilla* (1988–89).

*ETC's* transnational connections were also flaunted in the fanzine directories which Ledbetter included in many issues. I do not attempt here to provide an exhaustive topography of contributors, as the whole run includes close to fifty names, some of whom only featured once or, at most, twice. Several names, however, appeared across a number of issues, as was the case with Michael Secula, Conrad Widener, or della Mora. Their writings brought a plurality of distinct and personal voices to bear upon the field of European trash cinema. Of particular relevance to the cultural ethos of *ETC* were Ledbetter's association with Lucas and Bissette, whom he considered as his 'mentors'.<sup>67</sup> Their contribution to the fanzine extended beyond writing since they were also central in the fashioning of *ETC's* look with the design of the covers, as already noted, and in the connection of *ETC* with existing and emerging brands of horror film criticism. While Lucas's name was readily associated with video reviewing as a distinct genre of film criticism for *Video Times* and his trademark 'Video Watchdog' columns for *Gorezone* and *Fangoria*, which would become fully consolidated with his own *Video Watchdog*, Bissette had been writing for *Deep Red*, made his name as an expert in third-world cannibal films in the pages of *The Deep Red Horror Handbook* (1989),<sup>68</sup> and, like Lucas, produced a column, 'With My Eyes Peeled', for *Gorezone*. The association between these three names would be reciprocal since both Bissette and Ledbetter would be part of the original *Video Watchdog* kennel of contributors.<sup>69</sup> As the early days of *ETC* and *Video Watchdog* show, the beginnings and the makings of specific publications counted on the dynamic feedback loops spawned by interconnected networks of production. Given, therefore, the range of contributors and their individual diverse perspectives, it is more practical and valuable to focus on the reviews written by the fanzine editor – Ledbetter himself – and by Bissette – whose presence linked *ETC* to a wider horror film fanzine culture – as representative of certain critical practices and genre sensibilities within *ETC*.

Ledbetter's reviewing practice in *ETC* can be seen as part of a longer, sustained consumption of genre films driven by archivist and completist tendencies – which has continued to this date on his European Trash Cinema blog – and by the generation of knowledge around Italian lowbrow products and their directors with a particular focus on the *giallo*. In addition to the more than two hundred reviews penned to his name during the ten-year life of the fanzine in various formats and within different sections (from the standard 250 to 500-word review, to the 100-word to 300-word mini-review in the 1992 *Giallo Special* to the more personal ruminations in his 'Shootin' the Shit' Column), Ledbetter generated 'complete' filmographies of directors such as Lucio Fulci, Umberto Lenzi or

Antonio Margheriti. His reviewing reflected his personal taste, consumption and experience of European genre films and, by extension, the identity of the fanzine. The 'Special Collector's Issue' on *gialli* is, perhaps, the most sustained example of Ledbetter's brand of film criticism. In its editorial and introductory pages Ledbetter acknowledged his indebtedness to contemporary and past discourses on horror film criticism in his approach to this particular issue. 'It's my version', Ledbetter wrote in the editorial, 'of the mini-review trend. You've seen it utilized by Chas. Balun in his *Deep Red* and most recently in the debut issue of *Asian Trash Cinema* by Tom Weisser. But here is where I differ: I'm concentrating not only on one country – Italy – but one genre, the thriller or *giallo*.'<sup>70</sup>

Ledbetter's compilation built on an international horror fan publication, as he explained in the 'Introduction': a 'French edition of the Warren magazine's *Vampirella* [October 1974]',<sup>71</sup> supplied in photocopied form by Michael Secula, in which French genre critics Alain Petit and Jean-Marie Sabatier presented a filmography of over sixty Italian thrillers produced between 1963 and 1973. The mini-review format allowed Ledbetter – and the imagined *ETC* reader – to 'reveal here-to-fore unknown treasures that had never played in this country',<sup>72</sup> to identify trends and recurring narrative and stylistic elements across a fertile generic tradition, and to enjoy generic pleasures such as detecting 'a consistent threat of actors and actresses that appear in this genre that, especially after watching over 100 of them, you'll learn to appreciate when they play against type'.<sup>73</sup> Two review samples capture these features, *Il coltello di ghiaccio/Knife of Ice* (Umberto Lenzi, 1972) and *Il tuo vizio è una stanza chiusa e solo io ne ho la chiave/Gently Before She Dies* (Sergio Martino, 1972). 'What a shame that Lenzi's most accomplished work in this field is not currently available in this country',<sup>74</sup> opened Ledbetter's review on *Il coltello di ghiaccio*. The discussion of the plot, which was a reworking of Robert Siodmack's *The Spiral Staircase* (1946), is organised around the female cast roles and performances: while actress Evelyn Stewart played 'true to form [for] she is killed off early on, her throat slashed',<sup>75</sup> regular Carroll Baker had 'to deliver a well-crafted performance'<sup>76</sup> as a mute, representing 'a very bold departure this time for the Lenzi / Baker team as ... they were too tired of the [*giallo*] formula'.<sup>77</sup> As for Martino's *Il tuo vizio*, Ledbetter described it as a 'masterwork' in which the director and 'his scriptwriters are able to effortlessly work Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* into the plot along with the *giallo* staple of having two different killers plying their trade'.<sup>78</sup> Habitual *giallo* actress Anita Strindberg who 'usually play[ed] second-fiddle or a total goody-two-shoes ... gets here to pull out all the stops as she goes from an abused meek little mousey individual to a full-blown cold-hearted murderess'.<sup>79</sup>

Bissette's reviews on two films associated with the Third World cannibal cycle coming out from Italy, *Emmanuelle e gli ultimi cannibale/Trap Them and Kill Them* (Joe D'Amato aka Aristide Massaccesi, 1976) and *La montagna del dio cannibale/Slave of the Cannibal God* (Sergio Martino, 1978), were characterised by a distinctive style attentive to the films' circulation as part of wider industrial and cultural trends and sensitive to the generic bloodlines flowing through them.<sup>80</sup>

*Emmanuelle e gli ultimi cannibal*, Bisette wrote, was the ‘porn cannibal entry’ to the ‘six Emmanuelle sexploitation films Massaccesi directed in 1976–77 as Joe D’Amato ... spawned by the resounding international success of French director Just Jaeckin’s *Emmanuelle* (1974)’.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the conventional discussion of the plot and its construction around repetition (a true-story narrative framing and staged anthropological footage; cannibal motifs, gore violence and sexual encounters punctuating the narrative) and variation (the sexual exploits and escapades typical of the Emmanuelle series embodied here in the role of Asiatic model Laura Gemser), Bisette is primarily interested in locating the film’s generic affiliations and lineage: ‘Massaccesi’s Emmanuelle [embodied] the Amazonian “jungle queen” stereotype’,<sup>82</sup> which has fuelled the ‘male sexual fantasies [of the] jungle adventure genre’;<sup>83</sup> ‘there are resonances of the Goona Goona and MONDO films’;<sup>84</sup> and, ‘[the film] is a pale imitation of Deodato’s horrors’.<sup>85</sup>

His review of the uncut European version available via an unknown Venezuelan video company of *La montagna del dio cannibal* was construed along similar lines. Martino’s film ‘was first and foremost an adventure film peppered with horrific elements’<sup>86</sup> evoking both ‘the adventure literature of the colonial era, the pulps, silent serials, and Trader Horn’<sup>87</sup> and ‘the adventure traditions of H. Rider Haggard and the archetypal Hollywood jungle film, lending *Slave of the Cannibal God* a flavour unlike any other film in the cannibal cycle’,<sup>88</sup> while, at the same time, providing viewers with a ‘plethora of cannibal gore’.<sup>89</sup>

Fanzines like *ETC* were assembled around reading protocols which scrutinised and documented horror (and exploitation) films on video but also held on to traditional viewing pleasures like understanding films, directors and subgenres in relation to each other and to other related media which shared a common ground. In his review of *Vierges et vampires/Requiem for a vampire* (Jean Rollin, 1971), Marshall Crist’s affirmed that his appeal for the films of Rollin lay in repetition and variation. For Crist, ‘it is [the] constant re-teaming of ... actors that ... makes Rollin’s early films acutely enjoyable, while his later ones [are] more emotionally remote’,<sup>90</sup> as well as his recurrent return ‘to the theme of innocence defiled by barbarism, with a curious twist [in *Requiem*]: the two girls have compassion only for each other, and the antagonist winds up being the most benevolent character’.<sup>91</sup> On *Les démoniaques/The Demoniacs* (1974) he welcomed the ‘French language videocassette version’ over the available ‘dubbed and watered-down edition [based] on the US release retitled *Curse of the Living Dead*’<sup>92</sup> and concluded that ‘Rollin movies are best reviewed in relationship to each other rather than as cinema per se’.<sup>93</sup> In many instances, therefore, the reviews published in *ETC* displayed viewing and reading protocols which reveal modes of reception and of consumption more akin to the film’s history of production, distribution and circulation, than with paracinematic reading strategies.

Sconce’s elastic concept of paracinema ‘whether thought of as a subculture, an aesthetic or a sensibility’,<sup>94</sup> seized scholarly attention on the ways in which trash cinema and trash aesthetics could be theorised since the mid-1990s. Critical responses to Sconce’s work focused on the struggles for distinction within, and

between, different fan groups and fanzine publications, which have contributed to analyse specific cultures of consumption. Twenty-five ago Sanjek, whose 'Fans' Notes' did not make its way into Sconce's influential essay nor into the works of those scholars who engaged with Sconce, recorded a wide range of the critical sensibilities and genre pleasures at work in horror film fanzines of the 1980s and the early 1990s, among them the archival and the connoisseur sensibilities of editors who used 'their fanzines as a forum to fill black holes in the analysis of commercial cinema by their encyclopaedic knowledge of internationally produced exploitation material'.<sup>95</sup> The re-reading of a fanzine like *ETC* reveals unmapped networks of production connecting an energetic horror film writing culture of editors, reviewers and readers.

The creative alliances and interactions examined in this article among Ledbetter, Bisette and Lucas could be extended to other US fanzine editors and their printed zines, like Kilgore's *Ecco* or Sargent's *Videooze*, to name just but two, and to British publications like Stefan Jaworzyn's *Shock Xpress*. Further research into the material history of horror film fanzines and their networks will serve to rewrite some of the iterative narratives about European horror film that still persist in many a popular and scholarly study. Fanzines functioned as carriers of valuable information, as temporary deposits of cultural histories of European horror films, as toolboxes for navigating the pages of mail-order video catalogues embracing a profound moment of change brought by VHS technology, and as the cultural and commercial mediators of restored and uncut versions circulating in the DVD and Blu-ray market today. As Bisette tellingly put it, 'sans the zines, none of this would exist'.<sup>96</sup>

## Notes

- 1 In his article Sanjek listed the following fanzines: *Slimetime*, *Grind*, *Trashola*, *The Gore Gazette*, *Samhain*, *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, *Hi-Tech Terror*, *Cold Sweat*, *Sheer Filth*, *Temple of Schlock*, *Exploitation Retrospect*, *Wet Paint* and *Ecco*. Sanjek's article was originally published in the journal *Film/Literature Quarterly* 18:3 (1990): 150–9. References in this article are to the reprinted version in Ken Gelder (ed.), *The Horror Reader*, Routledge: London and New York, 2000, pp. 314–22.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 315.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 316.
- 4 Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing" the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style', *Screen* 36:4 (1995): 371–93, and Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-garde*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- 5 Mark Jancovich, 'A Real Shocker: Authenticity, Genre and the Struggle for Cultural Distinctions', *Continuum* 14 (2000): 22–35.
- 6 Mark Jancovich, 'Cult Fictions: Cult Movies, Subcultural Capital and the Production of Cultural Distinctions', *Cultural Studies* 16:2 (2002): 306–22. Here Jancovich directed his analysis to conflicting reading strategies and position-takings in *Film Threat* and *Psychotronic Video* as an example of the ways in which cultural distinctions

- are established between and within groups of fans. Similarly, Matt Hills in his *Fan Cultures* discusses *Psychotronic Video* as ‘a textbook example of the processes of cultural distinction analysed by Bourdieu’ (p. 58) in order to assess the validity and the shortcomings of Bourdieu’s model, to account for ‘the social and cultural regularities of fan cultures’ and for ‘fan cultures dialectic of value’, whereby ‘fans’ intensely felt “possession” and “ownership” of their fan object’ (p. 63). See Matt Hill, *Fan Cultures*, Sussex: Studies in Culture and Communication, Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2000.
- 7 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (trans. Richard Nice), Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1984.
  - 8 Sconce, “‘Trashing” the Academy”, 372.
  - 9 *Ibid.*, p. 373.
  - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 372.
  - 11 *Ibid.*, p. 373.
  - 12 David Church, *Grindhouse Nostalgia. Memory, Home Video and Exploitation Film Fandom*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015, p. 14.
  - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 14. Sconce himself acknowledged, in the ‘Introduction’ to *Sleaze Artists. Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), his reliance on Bourdieu’s mapping of taste in *Distinction* to articulate his views on the practices of paracinema fans. Here he revised his views on paracinema in the light of critical responses to his 1995 article, and recognised that ‘Bourdieu’s rationalist economies have less to contribute in understanding issues of pleasure, affect, and even obsession that attend a sincere passion for cinema’ (p. 8). For a critique of Sconce’s concept in this volume, see Matt Hills, ‘Para-Paracinema: The *Friday the 13th* Film Series as Other to Trash and Legitimate Film Cultures’, in Jeffrey Sconce (ed.), *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style and Politics*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 219–39. And, for a summary of examples of critical responses to Sconce’s paracinema, see section ‘Critical Responses to Paracinema’ (pp. 91–4) in Ernest Mathijs and Jamie Sexton (eds), *Cult Cinema*, Oxford and Boston: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
  - 14 For example, Ian Olney has noted ‘the samizdat-like network of “gray-market” mail-order video companies such as Video Search of Miami, Something Weird Video, Sinister Cinema, and Midnight Video’ (p. 14), as well as the ‘sites of fan-scholar work on Euro horror cinema in American and British fanzines like Tim Lucas’s *Video Watchdog*, Steven Puchalski’s *Shock Cinema*, Allan Bryce’s *Dark Side* and Stephen Thrower’s *Eyeball*’ (p. 12). See Ian Olney, *Eurohorror. Classic European Horror Cinema in Contemporary American Culture*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013. Raiford Guins discusses the work of Chas Balun in *The Gore Zone, The Gore Score* and *Horror Holocaust*, and of John McCarty in *Splatter Movies: Breaking the Last Taboo of the Screen* or *The Official Splatter Movie Guide* as articulating the construction of Italian horror film in videocassette as ‘gore-object’ (p. 17) in ‘Blood and Black Gloves on Shiny Discs: New Media, Old Tastes, and the Remediation of Italian Horror Films in the United States’. See Steven Jay Schneider and Tony Williams (eds), *Horror International*, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005. Work on the video nasties phenomenon in the UK has focused on specific sites: for example, David Kerekes and David Slater, *See No Evil. Banned Films and Video Controversy*, Manchester: Critical Vision, 2000, and Kate Egan, *Trash or Treasure? Censorship and the Changing Meanings of the Video Nasties*, Manchester: Manchester

- University Press, 2007, in particular chapter 4 entitled 'Mapping Out the Territory of a Fan Culture: Video Nasties and the British Horror Magazine' (pp. 105–27) where the author looks at *The Dark Side*.
- 15 David Sanjek, 'Fan Notes: The Horror Film Fanzine', in Gelder, *The Horror Reader*, p. 323.
  - 16 Gingold himself was editor and publisher of the xeroxed fanzine *Scareaphanalia* (1983–92) before he fully devoted himself to *Fangoria*, where he became managing editor. See 'Homemade Horrorzines', *Gorezone*, 18 (1991): 54–7, 63.
  - 17 Tim Lucas, 'Editorial'. *Video Watchdog* 1 (1990): 4.
  - 18 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 115. The 'subfield of large-scale production' would be represented by mass culture, popular culture and its address to a wider audience.
  - 20 I understand 'cultural intermediary' in the sense intended by Bourdieu as cultural commentators or critics: 'the producers of cultural programmes on TV and radio or the critics of "quality" newspapers and magazines and all the writer-journalists and journalist-writers'. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique*, p. 325.
  - 21 Stephen Neale, *Genre*, London: British Film Institute, 1980.
  - 22 Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, London: British Film Institute, 1999.
  - 23 Chris Atton, 'Popular Music Fanzines: Genre, Aesthetics, and the "Democratic Conversation"', *Popular Music and Society* 33:4 (2010): 517–31. Atton draws on the works of Simon Frith, in particular *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, where he claims that popular music pleasures 'can only be understood as genre pleasures' (p. 91), and 'Fragments of a Sociology of Rock Criticism', in Steve Jones (eds), *Pop Music and the Press*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002, pp. 235–46, where he claims that fans are the meaning-makers of popular music, as well as Jason Toynbee's *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions*, London: Arnold, 2000, more specifically chapter 4, 'Genre Cultures'.
  - 24 Atton, 'Popular Music Fanzines', p. 523.
  - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 517.
  - 26 *Ibid.*, p. 530.
  - 27 *Ibid.*, p. 519.
  - 28 *Ibid.*
  - 29 *Ibid.*, p. 518.
  - 30 Sean Lathan, 'The Mess and Muddle of Modernism: The Modernist Journals Project and Modern Periodical Studies', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 30:2 (2011): 410.
  - 31 Sean Lathan and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', *PMLA* 121:2 (2006): 318.
  - 32 Lathan, 'The Mess and Muddle of Modernism', p. 412.
  - 33 *Ibid.*, p. 425.
  - 34 Lathan and Scholes refer here to the fact that researchers making use of 'digital editions of periodicals are discovering, the print archive we thought was there is actually, in many cases, not. Or, rather, there is a hole in the archive' whereby advertising pages had been stripped. Lathan and Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', p. 520.
  - 35 John Szpunar, *Xerox Ferox. The Wild World of the Horror Film Fanzine*, London: Headpress, 2013. *Xerox Ferox* is a substantial volume edited by John Szpunar, former

head of foreign horror specialist DVD label Barrel Entertainment, which includes interviews with forty-five editors and writers who contributed – and, in many cases, still are contributing – to the fanzine culture scene emerging in the USA and the UK since the early 1980s.

- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 37 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial', *Hi-Tech Terror* 1 (1985): 1.
- 38 *Ibid.* In *High-Tech* Ledbetter reviewed videotapes released by companies such as Mogul or Monterey Home Video which released foreign genre films for the US VHS rental market in the early and mid-1980s.
- 39 Issues 14–17 were edited by Tim Ferrante who took over the reins from Ledbetter since he could no longer afford to produce *HTT*. Ferrante's horror credentials were impeccable: reviewer for gore fanzine *Splatter Times*, writer for the popular *Fangoria* and *Gorezone*, and business partner in horror media entertainment publisher IMAGINE Inc. Ferrante was also the founder of the fanzine *Westerns ... All'Italiana!*, first published in 1983.
- 40 Sanjek reproduced it in his 'Fans' Notes: the Horror Film Fanzine' to establish a contrast between the coverage of horror in prozines such as *Fangoria* and fanzines. Sanjek, 'Fan Notes: The Horror Film Fanzine', p. 316.
- 41 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial'. *Hi-Tech Terror* 33 (1987): 1.
- 42 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial'. *European Trash Cinema* 1:1 (1988): 1.
- 43 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial'. *European Trash Cinema* 2:1 (1990): 2.
- 44 Some readers might expect a discussion of Kael's 'Trash, Art, and the Movies' (1969) at this juncture, but any attempts to draw links among *ETC*, *Trashola* and *Confessions of Trash Fiend* and Kael's article cannot extend beyond their love of trash movies.
- 45 Szpunar, *Xerox Ferox*, p. 198.
- 46 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial'. *European Trash Cinema* 2:2 (1990): 2.
- 47 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial'. *European Trash Cinema* 1:7 (1989): 51.
- 48 There were regular correspondents like Julian Grainger from England, who at the time had done some work for *Shock Xpress*, and from Max della Mora from Italy, who provided additions and corrections to the Margheriti and Lenzi filmographies.
- 49 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial'. *European Trash Cinema* 1:4 (1989): 27.
- 50 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial', *European Trash Cinema*, Special reprint issue (1991): 2.
- 51 Information provided by Ledbetter in an email exchange with the author, dated 23 June 2015.
- 52 To name but a few, Aristide Massacesi in issue 1, Antonio Margheriti in 2, Ruggero Deodato in 7, or Jean Rollin in 8.
- 53 *Asian Trash Cinema* ran from 1991 to 1997, at which point changed its name to *Asian Cult Cinema*.
- 54 Another example of such a symbiotic relationship between fanzines and mail-order video catalogues is that between Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic Video* magazine and Mike Vraney's Something Weird Video company in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As Eric Schaeffer has observed, '*Psychotronic Video* ... served as an outlet for interviews and criticism – not to mention advertising for outfits like SWV. Mike [Vraney] was able to ride this bandwagon at the beginning but eventually he was helping drive it. *Psychotronic*, *Cult Movies*, and other prozines depended on SWV for content in the form of reviews and the like, in turn they provided SWV with a platform for drumming up business, announcing new releases' (Schaeffer in Church, 58). See David

- Church, 'Something Weird This Way Comes. Mike Vraney (1957–2014)', *The Moving Image* 14:2 (2014): 51–67.
- 55 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial', *European Trash Cinema* 2:2 (1991): 2.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique*, p. 365.
- 58 Craig Ledbetter, 'One on Top of the Other', *European Trash Cinema* 2:2 (1990): 12.
- 59 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial', *European Trash Cinema* 1:9 & 10 (1989): 71.
- 60 *Video Watchdog* (June 1990); 14–17. The exploration of instances of European trash cinema through Venezuelan tapes had some continuity in the pages of *Video Watchdog*, more specifically in the regular feature 'Video Around the World' in which Ledbetter and other 'foreign' correspondents kept *Video Watchdog* readers abreast of international releases and the availability of (un)cut versions in the format of capsule reviews. Lucas ran this regular section from issues 2 (1990) to 8 (November/December 1991). In addition to Craig Ledbetter (Venezuela), the regular correspondents were Lucas Balbo (France), Simone Romano (Italy) and Erik Sulev (Asian-American).
- 61 I am indebted to Tim Lucas for pointing this out in an email to the author, dated 23 April 2016.
- 62 Craig Ledbetter, 'Editorial', *European Trash Cinema* 2:4 (1991): 3.
- 63 In 1994 the partnership ended. *ETC* remained with Ledbetter and *ATC* with Weisser.
- 64 I borrow here Eric Schaeffer's recollections on the legacy of Mike Vraney for histories of exploitation cinema as told to David Church in e-mail correspondence for the obituary-cum-article, 'Something Weird This Way Comes. Mike Vraney (1957–2014)', *The Moving Image*, 14:2 (2014): 53.
- 65 Craig Ledbetter, 'News', *European Trash Cinema* 1:1 (1988): 11.
- 66 A contemporary advocate of video companies was Tony Williams who stressed their significance in two dossiers published in the journal *Jump Cut*: 'Video Sales and Rentals', *Jump Cut* 37 (1992): 99–109 and, 'Mail Order Video Companies and laser Companies II', *Jump Cut* 41 (1997): 110–18. In Williams's words, 'these diverse companies provide much needed "democratic access" to source material for academic researchers and general devotees so that everyone can explore media history and variety without restrictive hierarchical and elitist barriers' (p. 110).
- 67 Craig Ledbetter, 'Emmanuelle in America', *European Trash Cinema* 2:1 (1990): 6.
- 68 Chas. Balun (ed.), *The Deep Red Horror Handbook*, New York: FantaCo Books, 1989.
- 69 Bissette's encounter with Lucas came via *Fangoria* where Lucas had published a piece on Mario Bava in 1985; as Bissette recalls in *Xerox Ferox*, '[w]hen the article appeared in *Fangoria*, I wrote to Tim, via Starlog Press. They forwarded the letter to him, and Tim wrote back to me. We struck a correspondence and we're friends since then' (p. 32). Collaboration with Lucas extended to being part of the so-called *Video Watchdog* kennel of contributors from the first issue published in 1990, where he contributed comic cartoons and a detailed analysis of Italian director Ruggero Deodato's different available VHS versions of *Cut and Run* (aka *Straight to Hell*, 1984), and to providing the artwork for the front cover of Lucas's compilation *The Video Watchdog Book* (1992). Like Bissette, Ledbetter encountered Lucas through the pages of *Fangoria*, in particular a two-part article on the films of Jess Franco published in 1988. As Ledbetter recalls in an email to the author (dated 23 June 2015), 'I let Tim know of some obscure US video releases and that began a long and wonderful correspondence.'



- 70 Craig Ledbetter, 'The Color of Fear: Giallo. Introduction', *European Trash Cinema* 2:6 (1992): 2.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 72 *Ibid.*
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 74 Craig Ledbetter, 'Il coltello di ghiaccio', *European Trash Cinema* 2:6 (1992): 20.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 *Ibid.*
- 78 Craig Ledbetter, 'Il tuo vizio', *European Trash Cinema* 2:6 (1992): 24.
- 79 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 80 Bissette published a total of seven reviews across the two *ETC* volumes, from two fairly obscure German titles (*Der Fan/Trance* (Eckhart Schmidt) and *Fleisch/Spare Parts* (Rainer Erler) to midnight movie favourite Alejandro Jodorowsky (*Santa Sangre*) to the three Italian films discussed here.
- 81 Stephen Bissette, 'Emmanuelle e gli ultimi cannibal', *European Trash Cinema* 2:1 (1990): 20.
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 *Ibid.*
- 84 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 86 Stephen Bissette, 'La montagna del dio cannibal', *European Trash Cinema* 2:4 (1991): 11.
- 87 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 89 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 90 Marshall Crist, 'Requiem for a Vampire', *European Trash Cinema* 2:1 (1991): 4.
- 91 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 92 Marshall Crist, 'The Demoniacs', *European Trash Cinema* 1:2 & 3 (1991): 16.
- 93 *Ibid.*
- 94 Sconce, "'Trashing" the Academy', p. 375.
- 95 David Sanjek, 'Fan Notes: The Horror Film Fanzine', p. 320.
- 96 Writing on the folding up of Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic* fanzine on his blog, Bissette considered the role of printed fanzines and their legacy. Blog entry dated 25 July 2006 in [srbissette.blogspot.co.uk](http://srbissette.blogspot.co.uk) (accessed 20 May 2015).