



The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan

By Jimmy McDonough

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From 1965 to 1988, Andy Milligan made an astounding 29 exploitation movies, including Gutter Trash, Torture Dungeon, The Ghastly Ones, Seeds, Bloodthirsty Butchers, and Fleshpot on 42nd Street. For most of the shlockmeisters, exploitation was a joke. But for Milligan—a sadist, a misogynist, a maniac—this was his own private reality. The Fassbinder of 42nd Street, Milligan brought a crazed intensity to his work, making films of the heart in a milieu where the only art was the con. Based on hundreds of interviews, excerpts from lost movies and plays, and ranting narratives from Milligan himself, this is a story of how one unrelenting soul attempted to escape his demons and create his own twisted universe, a universe peopled by abortion-clinic bombers, undercover transsexuals, disgruntled hustlers, and bestiality-loving exhibitionists. This is a tale of violence—physical, sexual, and psychological. Even the author himself got sucked in, appearing in one of Milligan's last gore-fests and nearly getting killed in the process. The sick secrets revealed in this book will unnerve even hard-core grind house fans. But *The Ghastly One*—profusely illustrated with rare and strange stills shot by Milligan himself—isn't just about a lone lunatic with a movie camera. It's a funny, unbelievable, and oddly moving history of exploitation films as well as a vivid portrait of New York's infamous Caffé Cino, the Warhol crowd, and the vibrant but malevolent place called Times Square and what got lost when it sold its soul to Mickey Mouse.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Milligan's greatest films were *The Orgy at Lil's Place*, *The Naked Witch*, *Fleshpot on 42nd Street* and *Monstrosity* (a violent, bloody rape revenge fantasy that was a cross between *Frankenstein* and *The Golem*). Shooting on budgets that hovered around \$10,000, Milligan who turned out 29 movies between 1965 and 1988 was infamous; his movies were appallingly shot, often ludicrously plotted shock films that played in 42nd Street grind houses, drive-ins and avant-garde film festivals. No easy subject for a biographer, Milligan, who died of AIDS in 1990 at the age of 61, was drawn to (in no particular order) drugs, violence, s&m sex, misogyny and general weirdness. McDonough's verbatim interviews, which form the spine of the book, reveal a man who could be alternately brutally honest, obstructionist, deceitful and quite kind. McDonough (who has written for the *Village Voice* and *Spin*) is careful to add well-researched, nuanced context. His portrait of Milligan's importance to the famous *Caffe Cino*, for example, considered to be the beginnings of Off-Broadway, are startling, notable additions to theater history. Although McDonough is a loyal fan he even worked with Milligan's production team as part of his research he maintains a critical eye and provides a worthy historical overview of both the aesthetics and business of exploitative cinema. Students of popular American culture, film, as well as of gender and gay and lesbian studies, will relish this intelligent portrait. 91 b&w photos. Agent, Jeff Posternak/Andrew Wylie.

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From Library Journal

The Marquis de Sade had nothing on filmmaker Andy Milligan, who between 1965 to 1988 cranked out a prodigious number of plays and 29 sex-and-exploitation films, many of which are now lost, with such sleazoid titles as *The Filthy Five*, *Gutter Trash*, *Fleshpot on 42nd St.*, and *Torture Dungeon*. It would be (sl)easy to dismiss Milligan, who died of AIDS in 1991, as a grindhouse auteur, but that, as journalist and biographer McDonough so wonderfully and effectively explicates, would be an egregious mistake. Juxtaposed with Milligan's story, told with the help of a cornucopia of interviews, including trenchant commentary and extended passages from Milligan himself, are the colorful and significant tales of the developing Off Broadway scene, the birth and rise of the exploitation film industry, and that Ber-nude-a Triangle of "all sizzle, no steak" celluloid called the Deuce, or 42nd Street. Chock-full of movie stills, lurid poster art and advertisements, and some great excerpts from Milligan's film scripts, McDonough's book succeeds overwhelmingly in making the respectability case for Milligan. Undoubtedly, it will also lead many to seek out Milligan's work; may y'all have better luck than this reviewer had at your local video store. Clearly, this title will not be everyone's bowl of borscht, but it is enthusiastically endorsed for all large public and academic library film and American studies programs. Barry X. Miller, Austin P.L., TX
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From [Booklist](#)

McDonough tells the strangely fascinating story of Andy Milligan, a fashion designer and off-off-Broadway producer and a big fan of rough trade. His movies, like the stage productions he mounted mostly at the notorious *Caffe Cino*, exhibited and exploited sadism, misogyny, and similar lifestyle options, fascinating viewers in the same way that "gawk[ing] at car accidents, read[ing] lurid detective magazines, [and] eyeball[ing] the dead two-headed baby in a jar" would. Such Milligan features as *Bloodthirsty Bitches*, *Torture Dungeon*, and *Depraved!* never did big box office, yet his story is engrossing, though not for the

squeamish. It is a saga of creative perversion, ugly sex, and bent filmmaking that includes a cultural history of Times Square, off-off-Broadway theater, and the burgeoning drug culture in the early '60s. *Mike Tribby*
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