

Pacifica Tribune



courtesy photo

John Stanley admits he thinks horror films are a scream.

'House of the Gorgon' opens door to horror host

By Jean Bartlett
Tribune Writer

What is a gorgon? Medusa was a gorgon and so were her two sisters. They were, in fact, the original gorgons. All wore the same fashionable snake hairdo and each sister enjoyed the innate ability of turning anyone who looked at them to stone. But what became of these ancient Greek horrors?

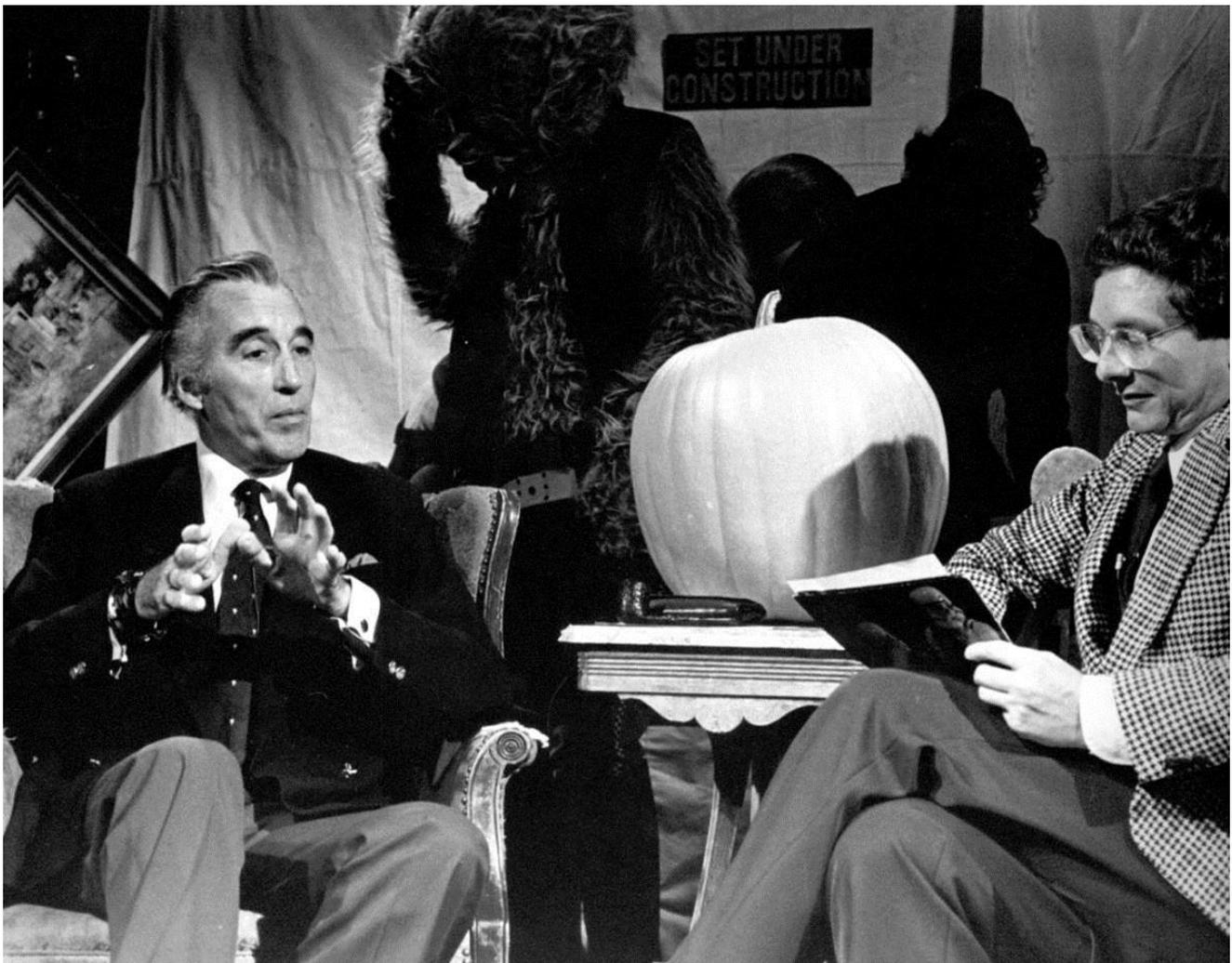
In 2018, Joshua Kennedy wrote, directed, produced and acted in "House of the Gorgon," a story that undoubtedly lays out all the facts. The 25-year-old filmmaker, previously known for such films as "Attack of the Octopus People" (2010) and "Dracula A.D. 2015" (2015), has been fascinated by horror since he first saw the 1964 Hammer film "The Gorgon," when he was all of six. Since then, Kennedy has dedicated his life to not only the pursuit of creating horror films, but to getting the word out on Gorgons.

Sunday, July 7, "House of the Gorgon" will have its West Coast Premiere at Creatures-Con 2019. Held at the San Ramon Marriott, this 8th annual Creatures-Con event includes Pacifica's own John Stanley on the "Special Guests" list. Not one to let nature take its corpse, Stanley has willingly agreed to cross that Gorgon threshold and enjoy the day immensely. He's gone willingly before; in fact, he's well acquainted with a number of the event's special guests. One of them is Veronica Carlson. She is a former horror Hammer Films star and she came out of retirement to star in "House of the Gorgon," alongside fellow Hammer stars: Caroline Munro, Martine Beswick, and Christopher Neame. Stanley has been friends with Carlson since they met back in 2008. His friendship with special guest Jon Provost also dates back more than 10 years.

Provost is known by many for playing Timmy Martin, from 1957 through 1964, on the iconic television series "Lassie." Special guest Lord Blood-Rah, a Saturday night "psycho cinema host" and self-proclaimed "High Lord of Geekdom," is additionally a longtime friend of Stanley's, as is special guest Miss Misery, horror hostess of the syndicated television show "Miss Misery's Movie Massacre."

"Strephon Taylor, also on that guest list, is a longtime friend," Stanley added. "He is a one-time star on Channel 20's horror series 'Creepy KOFY.' He played Slob."

Other special guests include: Charlotte Stewart of "Twin Peaks" and "Tremors;" Vincent, Tangella and Mr. Livingston, hosts of the 21st-century version of "Creature Features;" and award-winning documentary film producer Tom Wyrsh. And there are more.



courtesy photo

KTVU "Creature Features" host John Stanley and Hammer Film Productions "Dracula" star Christopher Lee pay no attention to the hairy ghoulish standing behind them in this early 1980s interview.

A native of Santa Maria, California, John and his wife Erica moved to Pacifica in 1967 where they raised their two children, Russ and Trista. A graduate of San Francisco State University with a degree in creative writing, Stanley began writing for the San Francisco Chronicle in 1961 as a pop culture reporter. Eventually becoming the Chronicle's Entertainment Writer, Stanley worked in that capacity for more than three decades interviewing legends who included: Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, Milton Berle, Imogene Coca, Mae West, Phyllis Diller, Sid Caesar, Joan Rivers, Woody Allen, Jim Nabors and Carol Burnett. He wrote a book about some of those legends in 2016: "The Funniest Comedy Icons of the 20th Century." After Stanley formally retired from the Chronicle, he returned in 2005 to do interviews with showbiz celebrities and write film/television DVD reviews, though due to changes in the market, he no longer does the latter. In addition, since the mid-1960s, he's the man behind the Chronicle's Sunday Datebook cypher. But there was something else that Stanley did and this one marked him indelibly as a horror/sci-fi luminary. From 1979 through 1984, he was the host of KTVU's Saturday night cult classic "Creature Features."

"Creature Features" ran on KTVU in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1971 to 1984. When its first host, the hilarious straight-faced Bob Wilkins left the show to work with his friend George Lucas, Wilkins asked Stanley to take over. A fan of EC Comics since he was a kid and a lover of numerous sci-fi and horror films since his teens, Stanley's host casting was perfect.

Besides introducing a cornucopia of sci-fi, horror and fantasy box office hits and bombs, Stanley got to interview a slew of writers, directors, actors and producers of the represented genres. Those interviewees included: Ray Bradbury, Christopher Lee, Cloris Leachman, Leonard Nimoy, Elvira, Adrienne Barbeau, Vincent Price, Roger Corman and Chewbacca.

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This Creatures-Con event, which additionally includes dealers, panels and programs, is dedicated to Bob Wilkins and John Stanley. Sunday, July 7, San Ramon Marriott, 2600 Bishop Drive, San Ramon, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The screening of "House of the Gorgon"

will be hosted by the film's creator Joshua Kennedy, and the premiere will be followed by a Q&A with Kennedy and star Veronica Carlson. Details on the event at: www.creaturescon.com. More information on John Stanley can be found at: <http://www.creaturesatlarge.com>.

Tribune writer Jean Bartlett can be reached at: jean.bartlett.writer@gmail.com.



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. Contact her through her website, www.bartlettbiographies.com.