

## Halloween Screamathon Interview Stephen Horne and Tony Orrell.

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**Ahead of the first ever Screamathon all-dayer at Eden Court on 31 Oct, Georgina Coburn talks to the duo who'll be soundtracking a silent classic.**

This Halloween, on **Sat 31 Oct, Inverness Film Fans(InFiFa), Eden Court Cinemas and Eden Court CREATIVE** have joined forces to present the area's first **Screamathon**, with all day and evening screenings of classic Horror and Suspense films, junior and senior prizes for best costumes, spooky food and drink, free children's CREATIVE workshops and a special live performance of *Häxan- Witchcraft Through The Ages* (*below*) with live music by internationally renowned Silent Film accompanist, **Stephen Horne** and leading percussionist /electronics musician **Tony Orrell**.



Ahead of their Inverness performance **Georgina Coburn** spoke to Stephen and Tony about accompanying the darker side of cinema.

**GC: Stephen travelling all over the world accompanying Silent film sounds like a dream job, what do you enjoy most about it?**

SH: It is a dream job, although it's not one that will ever make me rich! Wherever I perform, at home or abroad, I like the feeling of being a musical conduit, connecting modern audiences with these wonderful films.

Because a lot of the events tend to be repeat bookings, over the years it's started to seem as though I now have a second family in the world of archive film. And like families, the members are dotted over the globe and most of them I only see once a year, but when we meet up again it feels instantly comfortable.

**GC: Tony you've worked with diverse musicians such as Will Gregory (Goldfrapp), Adrian Utley (Portishead), Jerry Dammers (Specials) and renowned conductor Charles Hazlewood accompanying Silent Film. Can you tell us a bit about your musical collaborations?**

TO: Films have ranged from slapstick to Victor Sjöström's epic tragi-comic *He Who Gets Slapped* (*below*) performed at the South Bank with the BBC Concert Orchestra . Although this was scored completely by Will

Gregory, I have also done other improvised concerts with John Garden (Scissor Sisters), Matthew Bourne, Ray Russell, and saxophonist Andy Sheppard, who I've had a musical association with for 35 years.

**GC: What do you enjoy most about accompanying Silent Film?**

TO: The opportunity to mix improvisation with agreed thematic material, as well as experimental electronics with acoustic instruments is one which I relish. I am looking forward to working with Stephen for the first time and performing to Haxan for Halloween in the Highlands! Stephen is rightly praised for his contribution to this genre and it is an honour to work with him.

**GC: Stephen, after last year's sell out performance of *The Phantom Carriage* we're delighted that you'll be returning to Inverness this Halloween. What are some of your favourite Horror films?**

SH: Haxan is definitely one of them, although it's perhaps too weird to count as straightforward horror. In terms of modern films, I have a preference for those which prioritise suspense over shock, where a single horrific sequence will have more power than a succession of jolts. *'Don't Look Now'* (*below*) would be an obvious example.

**GC: Tony do you have any Horror film favourites?**

TO: Max Schreck's amazing performance in *Nosferatu* is the epitome of gothic horror, but *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (*below*) is a personal favourite. It was the first film I worked on with Will Gregory and the German Expressionist sets add modernity to the genre - which encourages an experimental approach to the musical accompaniment. Watershed Media Centre in Bristol commissioned the Caligari score in the early 90s and has supported my development in this area since then.



**GC: The element of shadow play in Silent era Horror is very primal and loaded with associations, how do you both draw on that in musical terms?**

SH: To be honest I don't really analyse my approach greatly. It's very intuitive. Also this will be my first collaboration with Tony, who will be incorporating electronic effects. So that will inevitably necessitate a different approach. Usually I avoid obvious musical anachronism, but we hope that the effect will be other-worldly, rather than 'modern'. I have worked like this on a handful of occasions, when I think the film in question can benefit from music that is somewhat out of the box.

TO: I share Stephen's intuitive approach - the individual musician has to firstly use their own emotional reaction to the film as a starting point, and I agree that the end result has to strive to support the film rather than be 'modern' for its own sake.

**GC: Häxen (below) is a unique and rather strange film; a combination of fact, fiction and fantasy, very shocking for its time and banned for many years outside of Sweden. How would you describe the film and what do you like most about accompanying it?**



SH: I have actually only accompanied it once before, as it's not shown as often as one might expect. It's a film that is divided into very distinct sections, each with a distinctly different feel. That's rewarding, in that it allows the music to have a variety of styles. The central section illustrating various demonic / occult practices is the most fun, as it gives the musician licence to go crazy!

**GC: How do visuals inspire you both as musicians and composers? Has this always been part of your creative process or is it something which evolved as a result of working with film?**

SH: Well I have always loved film as much as music. When studying music at University I probably attended the cinema more than the concert hall. When I was young I had a generalised creative interest and dabbled both in painting and writing. Although music has become my specialism I think that things could easily have gone down a different path.

TO: Film is **THE** twentieth century medium and consequently we all grew up with it and has absorbed the visual language. Today's YouTube generation are testimony to its influence. So it's natural for musician's to be inspired by visuals - especially as there so much to draw from. From the early hand tinted beauty of Melies, via the German Expressionists, through to people like Brakhage and Jeff Keen - there's a huge vocabulary. Not forgetting more 'mainstream' directors such as Hitchcock!



**GC: Stephen you're a multi-instrumentalist, using not just the external piano keys but the interior of the instrument, accordion and flute in your live performances, sometimes simultaneously (as above), how much of the performance is improvised and how does a soundtrack evolve when you're working with other musicians?**

SH: It varies greatly. When I play solo the performance is always improvised, but the amount of preparation I put in will vary - sometimes for quite prosaic reasons, such as how busy I am! I will certainly admit to recycling my own musical material, but even then the application of that material is improvisatory.

When I work with other musicians it's different of course. Obviously it's harder to improvise in the same way and on some occasions I have composed fully notated scores. It's easier with non-melodic percussion and this performance won't have a score as such. However Tony and I will do our best to prepare in advance - considering that we don't live in the same cities!

**GC: Tony what's your approach to accompanying film live as a percussionist also using experimental electronics? Can you tell us a bit about your creative process?**

TO: I started as a drummer in the 60's, and soon developed parallel interests in pop and jazz. Since then I've been trying to 'square the circle' of this schizoid approach. Film accompaniment is definitely one way! Soundtracks often incorporate wildly different styles within the same movie. Using music technology in a live situation facilitates the use of this range - especially samplers, which allow you to both create your own sound world and also reference existing genres. Adding live percussion into the mix allows spontaneity and more traditional musical skills.

**GC: There's nothing quite like seeing a Silent film with live music, there's an immediate sense of energy and connection with the audience that really can't be beaten. Why do you think this kind of cinema experience has become so popular with audiences all over the world in recent years?**



SH: The reflex answer would be to say it is because of the success of *The Artist* (*above*)! That helped certainly, but I think also that the interactivity of our digital age has made some people want more than a purely passive artistic experience. Although the audience doesn't directly interact with a silent film screening, the element of live music means that each event is to some extent unique and unrepeatable.

TO: Now that we can download artistic content free on the internet, the emphasis is reverting to live performance as something unique and spontaneous. Musicians have always worked his way.

**GC: What is the most important element for you in interpreting film through sound?**

SH: To understand from moment-to-moment what effect the film is trying to have on the audience and produce music that will have an equivalent effect.

TO: That it works!

#### **A REMINDER OF THE ATTRACTIONS IN STORE AT THE SCREAMATHON**

**A feast of Horror and Suspense film screenings all day and evening.**

**Silent Film *Häxan* with live music by Stephen Horne and Tony Orrell.**

**Free children's Under 8's Mask Making and Over 8's Horror Makeup workshops.**

**Dress up and win fantastic prizes for best junior and senior costumes!**

**Spooky food and drink in the Eden Court Café Bar.**

Films include; frightful fun with the children's animated feature **Monster House(PG)** (*above*), the iconic **Bride of Frankenstein(PG)** starring Boris Karloff and Elsa Lancaster, British Hammer Horror's **The Mummy (PG)** starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing, Iranian Vampire classic-in-the-making **A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night(15)** (*below*), silent film Documentary/Fantasy/ Drama **Häxan- Witchcraft Through The Ages (15)** with mesmerising live music by Stephen Horne and Tony Orrell and a late night screening of the 1968 Horror Classic **Rosemary's Baby(18)** starring Mia Farrow and John Cassavetes.



Screamathon adult 3 and 5 film passes available.

For tickets and info: Eden Court Box Office 01463 234 234  01463 234 234

Full details of times of screenings [here](#)

Inverness Film Fans [website](#)

[Stephen Horne Website](#)

[Tony Orrell Website](#)