

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, May 4, 1989 O&E

(C)7C

Back to being a bad guy

By Kevin Teevens
special writer

THE MOVIE THEATER audience was settling down, Max, the maniacal, meat-cleaver-toting, joke-cracking mass murderer — finally was dead.

Or was he?

From the back of the theater came the blood-curdling promise of a repeated in "The Horror Show" — "This isn't finished!"

Actor Brion James, who plays the evil Max Jenko, was out in the lobby stalking moviegoers at the film's Detroit-area premiere at the Americana Theatre in Southfield. Instead of a meat cleaver, he was armed with a pen for autographs.

"With a lot of actors, when they're done filming, they say goodbye to the project," said James, in an interview the next morning at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Southfield. "I'm more than happy to visit Detroit." This stop was one on a five-city tour to promote the opening of "The Horror Show."

Character actor Brion James has played lots of bad guys — and good guys, too — in the movies and on television. He is nearly again, as maniacal Max in "The Horror Show" (R), at Detroit-area theaters.



Patricia Ward (left), Mark Watzi and Michael Gravame appear in the Birmingham Villa Players production of the comedy "The Foreigner," opening Friday, May 12.

upcoming things to do

Deadline for the Upcoming calendar is one week ahead of publication. Items must be received by Thursday to be considered for publication the following Thursday. Send to: Ethel Simmons, Entertainment Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

NEW SEASON

The Birmingham Theatre's 11th season will begin Sept. 19 with the second national company of the Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy "Driving Miss Daisy," followed by the musical "Oil City," which is still playing in New York, opening Oct. 31. The Gershwin musical "Oh, Kay!" co-produced with the Goodspeed Opera House of East Haddam, Conn., begins Dec. 30. The Tony-nominated musical "Romance, Romance" opens Feb. 14; the mystery "Wait Until Dark," April 3, and a new production of "Jesus Christ Superstar," May 16. For

information about the season's subscription call 644-9225.

ALBEE PLAY

"Seascape," a humorous look at change and the inevitability of change written by Edward Albee, is scheduled for 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, May 5-6 and 12-13, at Smith Theatre on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. A matinee is scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday, May 7. Director Sandra Sutherland, English and philosophy faculty member at the college, will lead a symposium immediately following the performance. OCC faculty and cast members will assist her. Reservations and details may be obtained by calling 471-7700.

COFFEEHOUSE CONCERT

Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester features folk singer/

Please turn to Page 8

THE LAST TIME the actor was in the Detroit area, he was causing mayhem and driving around town in a van with a giant stuffed rat on the roof, playing a hit man/exterminator in the locally produced horror-spoof "Crimewave."

"I was here filming for three months in the dead of winter. You can keep your Michigan winters," the actor, who resides in California, said with a laugh.

The "Horror Show" is a cut above your run-of-the-mill slasher flick. In the film, Max is a twisted mass murderer bent on the destruction of the detective who put him behind bars, no matter what it takes. "Horror Show's" different because the terror is psychological," said James, breaking into the voice of Max.

"In a lot of horror movies there isn't much emotion or tension because you can't identify with any of the good guys. They get bumped off before you can get to know them. In this film, you care for the detective and his family. And Max isn't a faceless monster. That's one of the reasons why this movie is different. Freddie (Freddie on Elm Street) is a dream and Jason (Friday the 13th) is a moron. Max is a real guy, just gone very, very bad."

Bad in more ways than one. Max wears Armani clothing.

Max is truly one mean dude in "Horror Show's" horror-II story — a combination of horror and science fiction. He has murdered 116 people before being caught and stopped by a police detective played by Lance Henriksen. We join the story with

Max awaiting his fate on death row.

PRIOR TO his arrest and conviction, Max, who is no dummy, evidently studied electricity, psychology and the great beyond. He had been exercising, working out with a home version of the electric chair with some strange results.

From his cell, he manipulates the reality of the detective and his family. Max causes the detective to hallucinate. Detective McCarthy doesn't understand this at first. And his family begins to think he's not firing on all cylinders. This doesn't stop when Max is executed because the essence of Max is catapulted from the electric chair into another dimension, where he can continue to wreak havoc on McCarthy and then the general population.

James, 44, brings almost 20 years acting experience to the role of Max. His film credits include "Southern Comfort" with Keith Carradine and Powers Boothe, "48 Hours" with Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy, and the now-classic science fiction film "Blade Runner," with Harrison Ford and Rutger Hauer. He also has appeared in numerous television shows from "Gunsmoke" to "Dynasty" and "Miami Vice."

James grew up in Beaumont, a city in southern California. It was there he developed a fascination with movies that led into acting.

"My father built a movie theater in 1939. From the time I was very young, I saw a lot of movies. I lived

in movies. And as I got older, I became a big reader. I found this fantasy world in books and movies and I liked it there. That fantasy world, probably more than anything else, sparked my interest in acting."

He studied acting at San Diego State and with Stella Adler in New York. Along the way he performed as a stand-up comic and served a stint in the National Guard as a cook.

WHEN JAMES arrived in Hollywood, his dream to act in westerns wasn't realized. Westerns were out and cops and robbers were in. So he started out as a bad guy biker.

"When I started in film, there was a pool of bad guys. The pool got smaller over the years as people branched out into different areas. I moved from a biker bad guy to a good ol' bad guy to white-collar heavies. Before 'Horror Show,' I was crossing over into good guy cops and more sympathetic roles."

He considers himself a character actor and greatly admires Lee Chaney, Wallace Berry, Lee Marvin and Charles Laughton.

"I've always wanted to play the Hunchback of Notre Dame," he said. The big break came for James in 1981, in "Southern Comfort." He played the role of the one-armed Cajun Trapper so convincingly, it was thought a local Louisianian was used for the part. Roles started coming in after that.

Interestingly, James prefers to work with younger directors.

"They're much more flexible than the guys who have been in the business a long time. More willing to experiment with a scene."

He recalled the time he met director and filmmaker Sam Raimi, who is from Birmingham and is a member of the Fright Pack — a group of Detroit-area writers, actors, directors and producers working in each other's horror movies in Hollywood.

"I WAS WAITING in an office to meet with a director. In walks this young guy. I figure he's 20-21, and just an office worker or something. I almost fell off my chair when he introduced himself. But, hey, if you've got the vision, it doesn't matter how old you are. Sam is great."

Current projects for James include "Camp Horror," in which he plays a flesh eater "who bites a little old lady from Pasadena — and she turns into one, too. It's the story of how a son deals with Mom after her transformation. The story works on a self-film called 'Street Asylum,' where I play a street preacher. And in another project, I'm the hero. In 'Time of the Beast,' I play a scientist who saves the girl and then saves the day."

One more time James turned into Max. Laughing menacingly, he signed another autograph. "Any way you slice it, the cutting edge is where to be."

Machus MOM

This one's for you!

Present this certificate at Machus 160 anytime during the month of MAY and receive a **FREE MACHUS PASTRY** with your lunch or dinner.

(Not valid with any other promotion • One coupon per mom)

Good Thru 5/31/89

160 W. Maple • Birmingham 644-1018

Make this Mother's Day Special! Bring Mom to...

MEDALLION

Serving from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Creative American Cuisine (and Grandma too!)

Join us for a sumptuous buffet featuring an array of cold salads, delicious hot entrees and tempting desserts. Mothers \$12.95 • Adults \$14.95 • Children \$6.95 • Under 5 Free • Reservations Requested

Lunch: M-F 11-2:30 p.m.
Dinner: T-Th 5-10 p.m.
Fri. & Sat. 5-11 p.m.

851-5540

4943 Orchard Rd. Rd. (at Low Point)
N.E. Corner of Crestwood Mall

St. Florian Parish

Invites you to the

21st Annual - International STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

on the beautiful grounds of the POLISH - AMERICAN PLAYGROUND OF THE MIDWEST

ST. FLORIAN PARISH

Hantramack East of I-75 South of Division (North of I-94)

Saturday - Sunday May 6 & 7 Noon till 9 p.m.

• Fantastic Strawberry Bakery • Games • Live Vegas FOODS, STREET DANCING, OUTDOOR CAFE

5 GOOD REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD EAT AT TRINI & CARMENS

1. Independent and family owned.
2. Centuries of knowledge and culture.
3. Serving this area for 25 years. We are now serving the children and grandchildren of our earliest customers.
4. We were the first with our own style Nacho- and copied by many.
5. We serve quality food!

NOW INTRODUCING: STEAK & CHICKEN FAJITAS!

NEW LOCATION TRINI & CARMENS

ANN ARBOR 60 N. Territorial 665-3987

WATERFORD 1715 Telegraph 332-6851

Pearl's Garden

Serving the Finest in Chinese & American Cuisine

Luncheons • Dinners • Carry Out Orders
Szechuan and Mandarin
Open 7 days a Week

Mon.-Thurs. 11 AM-10 PM • Friday 11 AM-11 PM
Sat. 12-11 PM • Sunday 12-10 PM

469 S. Woodward • Birmingham 644-2913

SERRAVALLE

RESTAURANTE & LOUNGE

Fine Northern Italian and Continental Cuisine

Join us for a relaxed dinner. We feature a variety of Veal and Homemade Pasta entrees along with Steaks, Seafood, and Poultry selections...all at moderate prices.

Also Serving Business Lunches Monday thru Friday

HAPPY HOUR Mon.-Fri. 4-7 PM 1/2 Off Most Drinks in Lounge

Private Banquet Room Available For 25 to 100 People Entertainment Thursday, Friday & Saturday

645 E. Big Beaver
1 Block West of Rochester 655-5520