

# MIDNIGHT MADNESS

Originally designed as a cheap marketing gimmick to attract younger audiences into the Festival fold, the Midnight Madness programme has taken on a life of its own. With large enthusiastic crowds, the programme has demonstrated to the city burghers that Toronto is an all-night city and an important launching pad for films normally ignored by major international film festivals. Seeking the groovy and unusual mixed with the ferociously hip, we have explored several streams of cinematic experience, all of which gladden our demented little hearts.

Midnight Madness has been a testing ground for much of the new cinema of mega-violence that has swept the world of late. Free from the need to endlessly defend their brutality – after all, at the witching hour, the red stuff is allowed to fly – films such as *Man Bites Dog* and *Tokyo Decadence* have found their critical and popular defenders. This tradition continues with Junji Sakamoto's *Tokarev* from Japan and C.W. Talkington's freewheeling *Love and a .45*.

Still violent, but with a lighter tone, the mad martial arts films of Hong Kong have also been a key component of the Midnight oeuvre ever since they were introduced to this Festival by David Overbey's Eastern Horizons programme.

Starting with our first film, Penelope Spheeris's *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part Two: The Metal Years*, we have celebrated movies which come from the MTV playpen, deploying and satirizing the music-video culture we love. This year's *S.F.W.* is a new riff on this theme, with great music and starfucker status intertwined to great effect.

We have also sought out the very best films from genres not normally explored in any Festival. That has meant a select few horror and splatter-gore films that have made a difference in international cinema – Peter Jackson's *Braindead* and Bernard Rose's *Candyman* being the best examples.

Sexually explosive animation, weirdo Finnish fantasies and lowbrow American-schlock film noir complete the package.

Our latest addition has been a music video showcase, running from 11 pm to midnight twice during the Festival. Those who attended last year's event will concur that the eye-popping projections of premiere vids was an event not soon forgotten. This year, there will be an additional hour-long programme of sadistic Asian shorts, trespassive and creepy enough to merit special attention.

This is our vision of Toronto after Midnight. And, with only a hint of immodesty, we think it's pretty cool.

– Noah Cowan