

Clip Director Marty Callner Copes With Slapstick Backlash

BY FRANK LOVECE

NEW YORK Marty Callner, one of the most highly regarded directors in the industry, has lately been dealing with a reputation of a different sort, due mostly to the graphic (albeit comedic) violence and anti-authority content of some of his most visible clips.

Callner's slapstick video for Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It" was a target of criticism by the U.S. Senate last year. Now, MTV has banned from its playlist Callner's latest Twisted Sister clip, a teenage-zombie comedy done for the Beach Boys cover/pastiche "Be Chrool To Your Scuel."

"I think it's the most ridiculous, insane decision I've ever heard," says Callner, who earlier responded to the Senate charges by putting a tongue-in-cheek "H-for-humor" rating on Twisted Sister's "Leader Of The Pack" clip.

"I was not notified by MTV officially," the director asserts, "though they did tell me unofficially. Frankly, I can't believe the people I know there would do this. It's got to be coming from someone above."

A spokesman for MTV says that the clip was stricken from the playlist because "it simply was not appropriate content-wise to be played at all times of the day on MTV. It was a wonderful idea, but it didn't meet our programming standards."

The clip centers on a high school teacher—played by Bob Goldthwait, the comically psychotic gang leader of "Police Academy 2"

and "Police Academy 3" and the shopkeeper of "Leader Of The Pack." In the faculty lounge, he encounters another teacher, played by special-effects wizard and sometime actor Tom Savini. In an extended fantasy sequence, Goldthwait becomes Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider, Savini becomes guest star Alice Cooper, and the students be-

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come drive-in movie zombies.

The clip was conceived by Callner and Snider, and was based, according to the director, on George Romero's cult-classic zombie movies "Night Of The Living Dead," "Dawn Of The Dead," and "Day Of The Dead." Clip co-star Savini gained prominence in the movie industry as Romero's makeup and special-effects person.

"I haven't really challenged MTV about [the ban]," says Callner in his laid-back Midwestern drawl. "The song's not coming out for 30 or 40 days, so I thought they might change their minds. The video's no gorier than 'Thriller,' and it's funny besides."

The controversy surrounding some of Callner's recent projects is ironic, given his background. As a staff director for HBO from 1975 to 1983, Callner churned out craftsmanlike comedy and music specials starring such middle-of-the-road

acts as Liza Minnelli and Diana Ross. "I didn't know what I was doing," he cheerfully admits. "I mean, I'd been directing TV basketball games, and all of a sudden I'm shooting Robert Klein."

Callner's turning point came with "Stevie Nicks In Concert," a 1982 HBO special documenting the Fleetwood Mac vocalist's "Bella Donna" tour. "Just like that," Callner recalls, "I decided I wanted to be in rock'n'roll." He went on to found his Los Angeles-based Cream Cheese Productions—named, he says, for a thoroughbred horse he owned during his days at the Univ. of Kentucky.

Callner's return to rock was cyclic. Born in Chicago and raised in Cincinnati, he was a self-described "lost soul, bum, rocker" who was ejected from three colleges before winding up at Cincinnati's Xavier Univ, where he earned a communications degree. More aimlessness followed. Then, when Callner was almost 30 years old, "My mother, who was office manager with TV Guide in Cincinnati, got me a job directing news and specials for a local TV station. It was a fluke."

Three years later, however, Callner had apparently proven his talent enough to start directing commercials, and to emigrate to Boston NBC affiliate WBZ-TV. There he directed Celtics basketball games, and became friends with commentator Dick Stockton.

In 1975, says Callner, "Dick introduced me to some people at HBO"—at the time a fledgling cable movie service branching out into self-pro-



Director Marty Callner gets showered with affection by Heart's Ann and Nancy Wilson (right). Callner's wife, Aleeza, is standing behind him.

duced programming—"and they made me a staff director." After a long and successful stint there helming music and comedy specials—during which he also directed the 1980 Broadway revival of "Camelot" and its subsequent HBO showing—Callner moved on.

Though his clips for Twisted Sister are his best known, Callner has worked with a variety of acts, including Heart, for whom he directed the current "Nothin' At All" video.

To his chagrin and surprise, Callner became known outside music video and directorial circles during last September's Senate hearing investigating allegations of unsavory lyrics and visuals in rock music and videos. At the hearing, which included testimony by Twisted Sister's Dee Snider, Callner's clip for the group's "We're Not Gonna Take It" was used as an example of graphically violent videos.

The clip is based on Warner Bros.' popular Road Runner cartoons, which were originally made for theaters but have long been a staple of children's television. In it, an obsessive father's plots to eradicate

Twisted Sister backfire on him. Seltzer bottles and cartoon bombs abound; like the Roadrunner's nemesis, Wile E. Coyote, the father picks himself up and dusts himself off after each setback.

In light of this, Callner asserts, the Senate hearings "were a joke. I grew up respecting the people in Congress and the Senate, and trusting them. And then to hear them take an obvious slapstick thing and treat it as if it were real, graphic violence is absolutely sickening—especially when things like [the movies] 'Rambo' or 'Commando,' where hundreds of people are killed in explicit, graphic ways, are glorified.

"I honestly can't believe that anybody could have missed the Coyote-Road Runner schtick of 'We're Not Gonna Take It.' That's why we put that 'H' rating on 'Leader Of The Pack.' And that's why we made 'Be Chrool To Your Scuel' so out-there. I mean, Lainie Kazan is making her rock video debut here, and somebody's going to take [the clip] seriously? Gimme a break."

Video Track

NEW YORK

THE AWARD-WINNING directing team of Kevin Godley and Lol Creme was called upon to create a clip with Lou Reed for "No Money Down." The piece, which recently debuted on MTV, was shot on location in New York and supports the first single from Reed's latest RCA album. Other productions recently completed at Godley & Creme's London-based Videolab include "No One Is To Blame" with Howard Jones, co-directed by Mike Coulson and Nichola Bruce; and "Mystic Rhythms" for Rush directed by Gerald V. Casale.

It's been a year in the making, but the HearN'Aid video—heavy metal's contribution to world hunger relief—is finally premiering on MTV. Set to the single "Stars," written by Dio band members Jimmy Bain, Vivian Campbell, and Ronnie James Dio, the piece was directed by Wendy Charles, who also produced it with Marie Cantin. It features acts such as Judas Priest, Lita Ford, the Scorpions, Iron Maiden, Quiet Riot, Motley Crue, and Y&T and is available through PolyGram Records.

Manic/Tango Ltd. produced the "Scorpio Rising" video for Elektra recording act 10,000 Maniacs. Tal Yarden directed it; Abigail Simon produced. Other projects recently

completed by the production company include clips for Terry Mann (Fly By Night Records) and For Beauty's Sake (Dream Records).

LOS ANGELES

INTERNATIONAL ROCKERS Krokus' video for "Burning Up The Night" is hot in more ways than one. Directed by John House, the clip features a multitude of pyrotechnic effects. The video supports the group's first single from its latest Arista album, "Change Of Address." Fiona Fitzherbert produced for Razor Productions.

Gasp! Productions edited the Ozzy Osbourne video for "Shot In The Dark" at the Post Group in Hollywood. The clip, currently MTV's most requested video, was shot at Laird International Studios and employs some 600 extras. Andy Morahan directed it; John Hoppood produced. Steve Purcell edited for the Post Group.

While on the subject of Osbourne, Panavision just lensed the British rocker's Kansas City show at Kemper Arena. The concert supported his latest CBS album "The Ultimate Sin" and was staged especially for the filming. The completed production will be used for future promotional clips as well as a one-hour concert longform. John Diaz produced for Calhoun Produc-

tions; Morahan again directed.

OTHER CITIES

LONDON-BASED MIDNIGHT FILMS recently announced its new association with Australian directors John Whitteron and Richard Lowenstein. The former's track record includes promotional clips for Paul Young, Men At Work, and Midnight Oil, while the latter has done projects for INXS, the Church, and the Models. Future videos under the new pact will be filmed in the U.K., U.S., and Australia.

The Clip for "Chains" by Canadian recording act Arrow uses "a house and an attic as a metaphor for the inner mind" and "portrays the images of past and present," according to its director Robert Quartly. Great shades of Jung! Produced by Allan Weinrib for Champagne Productions, the piece supports the single from their album "The Lines Are Open," distributed by A&M Records Canada.

Edited by Linda Moleski

Production companies and post-production facilities are welcome to submit information on current projects. Please send material to Video Track, Billboard, 1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036.

CBS Records Sits Out MTV Top 20

NEW YORK The "MTV Top 20 Countdown" syndicated series, cleared in 81% of the country and on 104-broadcast television stations, made its debut without any videos by artists who record for CBS Records or its associated labels.

At presstime, a source close to the situation said no agreement had been reached between the label and the cablecaster regarding the use of CBS clips on the countdown show. CBS and MTV had been involved in discussions regarding secondary licensing of the label's artists' videos to the syndicated program (Billboard, March 8). However, CBS maintained that there are more "countdown-type" video shows currently on the air

than the market can handle.

The one-hour weekly show first aired April 12 and will be seen in most major markets, including New York (WCBS), Los Angeles (KTLA), Chicago (WFLD), Philadelphia (WGBS), Boston (WBZ), Houston (KRIV), Pittsburgh (KDKA), and Cleveland (WOIO).

Viacom Enterprises is handling syndication of the program, and MTV is selling the national advertising. MTV is also providing merchandising materials to record retailers around the country, including Record World, Sound Warehouse, Record Factory, Budget Records, and National Record Mart.

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