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 ALBERT FISH

May 29, 2007

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 SERIAL KILLERS

The John Borowski Film

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It's difficult to imagine making a film about a person as perverse and demented as Albert Fish, and it's equally difficult to imagine anyone doing a better job than John Borowski. He's producer, director and writer, which means he literally lived with this subject morning and night for a long stretch of time. Given his passionate attention to detail, as well as his willingness to persist inside the mind of a sexual deviant who killed children, he's emerged with a piece of engagingly visual art that has raised the bar on this subject. He knows just how to pair merciless brutality with benign period footage and illuminating commentary to keep it from getting too intense.



John Borowski

TEXT SIZE

- T default
- T+ increase
- T- decrease

CHAPTERS

1. A Knock at the Door
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6. Where Have You Gone Billy Boy?
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9. A Letter From Hell
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 WEEKLY SCHEDULE
 COURT TV HIGHLIGHTS

Forensic Files

Walking Terror
 Monday@9:00pm E/P

- It's up to a jury to decide between forensic evidence and the mysteries of the human brain.

North Mission Road

One-Way Ticket - NEW!
 Thursday@10:30pm E/P

- Police investigate the puzzling case of a doctor found dead in her apartment.

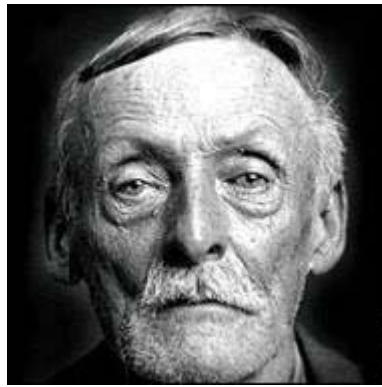
TOP NEWS STORIES

- County Ohio Identified As Those of Kiva Gazaway
- Paul Robinson Commits Suicide After Telling Police He "Hurt" His Wife
- Shawn Bentler Found Guilt of Massacring His Entire Family
- Serial Killer News Briefs from Around the World:
- Jeremy Hull's Girlfriend Admits She Helped Dispose of Lewis Wilczek's Body
- He May Be Crazy, But He's

advertisement



That said, this documentary will have narrow appeal, attracting those who can tolerate a lot of gory detail. Viewers will come away with the impression they were flies on the wall during Fish's atrocities, because even after unrelenting re-enactments have set the disturbing images, Borowski presses toward more. He clearly wants viewers to experience what Fish was like.



Albert Fish

Although Albert Fish is most famous for the sadistically detailed letter he wrote to the mother of Gracie Budd, the 10-year-old girl he took away in 1928 to kill and eat, in fact, he might have murdered as many as fifteen children, being particularly brutal with young boys. He was both cannibal and vampire, sadist and masochist, indulging in long forays of inflicting pain on others and on himself. He liked to whip and cut, removing sensitive parts while a victim was still alive. In addition, he molested at least one hundred children.

20. A True Sadist

21. "Pins and Needles"

22. Legally Insane?

23. The Trial

24. Testimonies

25. On Hands and Knees

26. Signs of Psychosis

27. From the Frying Pan into the Fire

28. **The John Borowski Film**

29. Bibliography

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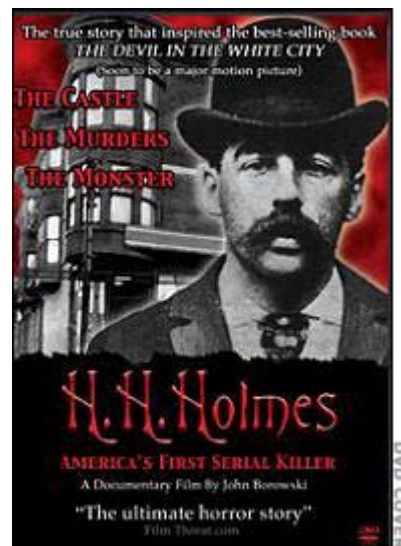
[Not Insane](#)

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Gracie Budd

The story is well-told, spare yet layered with numerous depictions from Fish's deviant life and confession. He was young when his father died and his mother abandoned him at an orphanage. He's the poster boy for issues arising from interrupted attachment, as during his vulnerable transition from safe harbor to authoritarian regime, he claimed to have witnessed the beatings of many boys. He stated that these experiences contributed to his later predilections.

DVD Cover: *H. H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer*

I was invited to comment on Fish's life for this documentary and I accepted because I had seen Borowski's meticulous work on a prior film, the life and deeds of [H. H. Holmes](#), one of America's earliest known serial murderers. I found that just as Borowski brought Holmes's world alive with terrific footage, photos, and articles from the time period (and made Holmes's writings widely available), he'd done the same for Fish. Viewers will definitely

experience the period. If I could have asked for more, it would have been further commentary from the records of Dr. Fredric Wertham, the psychiatrist who studied Fish in depth.



Dr. Fredric Wertham

Nevertheless, the 86-minute documentary offered a comprehensive exploration of Fish's most perverted ideas and actions. Fish viewed himself as both Christ and Abraham, and his delusions are aptly conveyed through the juxtaposition of his debased self-indulgence with incandescent images from biblical art. He was a self-described sacrificial figure with a craving for urine, blood, and rectums. Unlike many sexual predators, he could sustain an erotic trance for days as he inflicted excruciating pain. The fire consumed him, he said, and it's little wonder that his appetite for torture expanded. If not for the way Borowski winds it down with Fish's execution, the film would probably leave viewers psychologically depleted.



Nico Claus

In addition to the documentary, Borowski includes captivating special features, among them an interview with him about his inspiration and process as an artist, an interview with former French cannibal [Nico Claus](#), a [history of the electric chair](#), and the detailed portrait that [Joe Coleman](#) painted of Albert Fish. Coleman's provocative commentary, pieced throughout the film, boldly proposes Fish as a symptom of society

and a dark shaman. He'd acquired Fish's original letter about Gracie Budd, which he considers a privilege to own (an interesting tale in itself), and anyone who knows about serial killer art will recognize this unique opportunity to hear Coleman's observations.



Joe Coleman next to one of his outlandish paintings

Fish was the oldest person to be sent to New York's electric chair. Borowski has his own opinion about what society should do with such killers, so he seems determined to show that executing this offender was a mistake. In sum, he offers plenty of material in his second docudrama to generate many conversations, raising his work above B-movie gore into the realm of philosophical discourse. More information can be viewed at www.albertfishfilm.com.



Albert Fish

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