

John Alan Schwartz



John Alan Schwartz has been called “ The Godfather of Reality Television” for his work as a writer, producer, and director. John has worked on over 250 magazine stories, prime time specials, and syndicated shows. His cult classic *Faces of Death* shocked the masses when all of the scenes were thought to be real. Schwartz’s most recent project *Two Jews on Film* is available now at youtube.com/twojewsonfilm It is an honor to have the chance to bring our readers a glimpse at the man behind the media.

Can you tell us a little about yourself John? What were you like as a child? Did you always have a fascination for things...creative?

I grew up in Westchester county and left home at 14. I attended a boarding school called Storm King at Cornwell On The Hudson I was always President of my school until I got thrown out as a senior. I was supposed to be playing in a basketball but instead I was out picking up girls with the headmaster’s nephew who was a teacher at the school. He also got thrown out. I always wanted to be an actor, but my teacher at Cal Arts, the late Beatrice Manley encouraged me to try something else. (laughs)

When did you first discover your love of film?

My whole life. I used to go to double features with my father and brother when I was just a kid.

Do you happen to remember what the first movie to make an impact on you was?

The Voyage of Sinbad. It had a cyclops monster that I found wonderfully scary. Also after seeing *The Tinger* my brother would come to my room with a towel over his head to scare the shit out of me.

How did you first begin your career in film?

I started at a PA for Dick Clark Productions, then I became an assistant editor at a magazine show called *In Search Of* that Leonard Nimoy hosted, editor, then writer, producer, director first for magazine shows, then *Faces Of Death*.

How do you think the industry has changed most since you first began your career?

When I started I was given the chance to learn about film by apprenticing with very creative, experienced people. I don't think that exists nowadays...at least not on the same scale that I experienced..

You have worked as a writer, producer, and director over the years. Do you enjoy one more than the other or do you love them all equally?

Equally.

How do you feel about being called The Godfather of Reality Television? Would you agree with that statement?

Someone used that phrase and my agent at the time, thought it was a great selling tool. It makes me smile

What are your feelings on reality television? Why do you think it has become so popular in recent years?

People love it because it gives everyone their 15 minutes of fame. You can have a reality show nowadays about anything or anyone.

Why do you think society in general has always had such a love for television in all its forms? Do you think escapism plays a large role in that?

Definitely, it's a great way for people to escape/relax from their lives. Also it can be very inspirational and informative. Shows such as 'Breaking Bad' and 'The Sopranos' are of course on a whole different level of television.

Do you prefer reality television to fictional things?

I love both equally. It's all about their execution.

What was it like making *Faces of Death*?

It was intense, enlightening and at times, horrific.

Were you surprised it was banned in so many countries? Why do you think that is?

It was graphic in its depiction of death and it was the first reality horror film that explored the many faces of death...a topic that people don't usually like to discuss.

Do you think media has too much power over society now more than ever before?

Yes...from the paparazzi, to twitter, to 60 second sound bites...There's no privacy anymore. For the media...it's all about the story. The more outrageous, the better for them. Everyone reports the same thing over and over again, with slightly different slants of the news.

Why do you think the world has always been so enthralled with death and violence and such things?

Because it's a reality that we all face no matter how we've lived our lives

What are your personal feelings on death?

It's the final ride. A Sikh once told me, that when you die, there's a long tunnel with a bright white light. As you walk toward the light, you'll see people from your past who have also died, beckoning you to join them,...The Sikh said, ignore them and head straight for the light.

Can you tell us a little about *Two Jews on Film*? What led you to create this one?

I had magazine called *The Big Picture*. My wife and I would always see films before they came out. Our friends would ask us...What movie to see...My wife would tell them, "You must see...so and soo. It's absolutely fantastic." and I would say, "What a dire piece of shit." One of my closet friend's, actor Chris Mulkey's daughter Amelia said you guys have to do a review show. She named it *Two Jews On Film*. I came out with the bagels and the rest is history. We basically did it as a fluke but two years later it's still going strong.

Is there any one subject you'd most like to cover that you have yet to?

I'll answer that with the next question

What projects are you looking forward to bringing into being next?

Go to youtube and type it *The New American Prophet*. It's about the guy that made one of the darkest films in cinema history, is now changing his focus and exploring religions and spiritual practices around the world. I also want to direct a film I wrote with my brother entitled *Twisted Dreams*. It's a black comedy about an aberrant family who wants to live on a farm.

Anything you'd like to say in closing?

Live with courage, die with honor.

