

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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Campy '80s show 'Friday the 13th' has a devoted cult of fans

Last updated February 9, 2009 4:48 p.m. PT

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P-I REPORTER

This week, another Friday will fall on the 13th, a calendar event that Hollywood will use as a vehicle for the release of a new "Friday the 13th" horror movie.

But, for another fan base, there's a different reason to be excited: The second season of the 1980s horror show "Friday the 13th: The Series" is being released on DVD today.

"The DVDs are great," said uber-fan Jen Greenwood. "Definitely excited about those."

Greenwood and her friend, Jess Sprehn, Southern California roommates, manage a Web site devoted entirely to the series. Devotees discuss favorite characters, share fan fiction and even upload videos with clips from the shows and set them to music.

The television series, canceled in 1990 after just three seasons, had no connection to the story line of the "Friday the 13th" slasher films, although it was produced by some of the same people.

Instead of a maniac in a hockey mask, the series followed the adventures of three people -- distant cousins Micki Foster and Ryan Dallon and their mentor and friend Jack Marshak -- as they hunted down cursed antiques that, in most episodes, killed not only their owners but took plenty of other victims along the way.

At the end of the second season, actor John D. LeMay, who portrayed Ryan, left the show. For the third and final season, a new character, tough guy Johnny Ventura (played by Steven Monarque, filled out the three-person team.

The show, "F13:TS" to its fans, used what are by today's standards B-level special effects, with plenty of fog and flashing lights, and had as its lead actress Louise Robey, a former model whose previous claim to fame was a hit video.

But it developed a cult following that has only grown in the two decades since the shows originally aired.

"I love the characters and the interaction between all of them," Greenwood said. "I also loved Micki's

ARE YOU A FAN?

ON DVD: "Friday the 13th: The Series: The 2nd Season" (six-disc set; 26 episodes; not rated; no extras) is out today

ON TV: The Sci-Fi Channel is showing a mini-marathon of eight episodes beginning at 8 a.m. Wednesday

ONLINE: Visit vendrediantiques.com to meet other fans

clothes and hair -- so fantastically '80s."

Her fellow fans, she said, come from all walks of life.

"A few things they all have in common, besides a love of the show, is a sense of humor, an affinity for '80s music and the ability to enjoy campy TV," Greenwood said.

Added Sprehn: "The show was definitely campy."

Fans got a boost when the first season of the show came out on DVD last year. But that release had its critics. Some viewers were disappointed it had only a few extras -- some commercials aired during the show's original run and a lengthy sales pitch, presumably for distributors.

The second-season DVD doesn't even have that. Still, both releases have carried every episode during those first two seasons and, for most fans, that's enough.

And no wonder: Until the DVDs were issued, watching the show took real work.

Bits of episodes can be seen on YouTube. For people with satellite TV, the Chiller channel carries reruns. On cable, the SciFi Channel shows the series on occasion.

Then there are fans like Sprehn and Greenwood, who watched the show together as children on weekend sleepovers. They still have every episode on videotape, some recorded during the original air date.

"My particular favorite is the tape labeled, 'Awesome, Radical F13!' " Greenwood said.

As young girls, the friends swooned over actor LeMay and tried their best to emulate Robey.

"Her hair was huge! And she has a lot of hair," Sprehn said. "I'm still amazed when I watch some episodes."

Added Greenwood: "I would tease my hair for hours trying to get that height."

Reached in France, Robey -- who now lives there with her husband, said the look of her character, the feisty and sophisticated Micki, was her idea.

Originally the producers "wanted someone in total brown who looked like she came from Boston U or something like that," she said. "And I got bored, and I said, 'OK, I'm going to do everything totally different.' "

In the series, Micki never fails to appear in anything less than glamorous, not difficult for Robey, who got her modeling break by posing in Vogue.

Robey is keenly aware of the show's ardent fans and she's not surprised people are still drawn to the series: "We made what is a beautiful cult show. It's one of those shows that does not go away in the sense that it's not terribly 1950s or '60s," she said. "It has its own sort of era."

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