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MAUL OF THE DEAD



HORROR/DARK COMEDY BY
MITCH BRIAN

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**"A likable, lunatic spree through horror clichés,
pop-culture gags ... it's great fun."**

—Pitch Weekly

MAUL OF THE DEAD

Horror/dark comedy. By *Mitch Brian*. Cast: 5m., 4w., 10 to 25 or more zombies. It's 1978 and zombies in polyester walk the earth. A pair of SWAT officers take refuge with a perfume counter girl in a zombie-infested shopping mall. Hiding out in JC Penney's, they're soon joined by a TV weather girl, her traffic reporter beau, and a suburban punk chick who is still in love with the boy from the record store ... now a zombie! As ravenous hoards attack the frail security gate separating the living from the walking dead, the survivors make a desperate bid for weapons and supplies, eventually forming a makeshift family amidst the consumer trappings of the 1970s. But paradise is short-lived as betrayal, false identities and infection from a zombie bite threaten the belief that "there's got to be a morning after." Danger lurks behind every mannequin in a play that blends horror, satire and melodrama with punk rock and disco music into "a whirlwind of zombie mayhem." (*Kansas City Star*) Area staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour. Code: MH3.

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By
MITCH BRIAN



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MITCH BRIAN

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The Coterie Theatre presented the world premiere of *Maul of the Dead*, October 16-31, 2009, at Off Center Theatre, Kansas City, Missouri. Jeff Church was the producing artistic director and Joette Pelster was the executive director.

Cast – in order of appearance

Usherette Keely Siefers
Frank Tosin Morohunfola
Lewis Matt Weiss
Cody Cody Wyoming
Charlie Ashliegh Murray
John Greg Krumins
Wendy Kimberly Queen
Donna Meredith Wolfe
Chainsaw Michael Simbroff
Throttle Matt Weiss

Production Staff & Crew

Director Ron Megee
Set Designers Ron Megee, Scott Hobart
Properties Designer Ron Megee
Costume Designer Megan Turek
Lighting Designer Art Kent
Sound Designer David Kiehl
Composer Cody Wyoming
Make-up and Hair Design Kimberly Queen
Make-up Design Associate Matt Weiss
Production Stage Manager Jaclyn Larson
Technical Director, Master Carpenter Scott Hobart
Assistant Stage Manager Tim Davis
Special Effects Delinda Pushetonequa
House Managers Keely Siefers, Tim Russel
Carpenter Matt Larson

MAUL OF THE DEAD

CHARACTERS

USHERETTE - female

CODY - a guitar-playing zombie

FRANK - a SWAT officer, African American

LEWIS - a SWAT officer, Caucasian

CHARLIE - a teenage perfume-counter clerk (female)

JOHN - a helicopter pilot traffic reporter

WENDY - a TV weather girl

DONNA - a punk chick employed by Orange Julius

CHAINSAW - an outlaw biker

THROTTLE - his sidekick (can be played by Lewis actor)

ZOMBIES - as many as desired

TIME & PLACE

1978 - A JC Penney store in a shopping mall.

MAUL OF THE DEAD

IN THE AUDITORIUM...

The crowd finds their seats, waiting for the show. An USHERETTE wearing an old-fashioned usher uniform and cap (or as much of it as the management makes her wear) circulates, eventually making an announcement as LIGHTS DIM.

USHERETTE. Ladies and gentlemen, please take the time now to turn off any cell phones or electronic devices so we can get the show underway. Please note that the taking of photographs or recordings of any kind is strictly prohibited...

(HOOOOOOOOOONK! An AIR HORN suddenly blasts from outside the theatre doors, preferably at the rear of the theatre.)

FRANK'S VOICE. In here! In here!

(FRANK bursts into the theatre. He's in SWAT gear—just like Hondo Harrelson in the '70s TV show—black pants, shirt and boots, holstered pistol and an AR-15. He shouts to somebody following.)

FRANK. Come on, come on. This way!

(ANOTHER SWAT OFFICER, a white guy named LEWIS, same outfit and gear—1970's mustache, runs in behind him.)

FRANK. I need a clip.

LEWIS. My rifle's got no ammo. We're all out!

FRANK. Damn! *(He scans the now dim theatre.)* Gimme a light. *(LEWIS pulls out a ZIPPO LIGHTER.)* A flash-light, man! It's dark in here. *(LEWIS, feeling stupid, pulls out a HEAVY-DUTY FLASHLIGHT. FRANK has shouldered his rifle and drawn his HANDGUN and FLASHLIGHT, one in each hand.)* We gotta get the power back on.

LEWIS. I'm right behind you.

(LEWIS shoulders his rifle and draws his handgun. FRANK reacts to the sight of LEWIS' drawn gun. Not trusting:)

FRANK. Holster that sidearm, Trooper. *(LEWIS does as he's told.)* You just gimme some light. Okay?

LEWIS. Flashlight on.

FRANK. Okay. Follow me.

(FRANK leads LEWIS toward the stage, but before they reach it...)

THE USHERETTE SCREAMS. She's now standing by the rear door—or a second one if there are two—screaming at what she sees outside.)

USHERETTE. They're everywhere! They're coming this way!

(A ZOMBIE lunges into sight, seizing her by the throat, dragging her out the door.)

FRANK. Secure that door, Trooper!

(LEWIS rushes to the door, pushing back ANOTHER ZOMBIE, closing the door.)

LEWIS. Got it! *(He closes the second rear door if needed. Runs back to join FRANK.)*

ON STAGE:

We're inside a DARK, JC PENNEY store. A FEMALE MANNEQUIN in a '70s dress stands frozen downstage on a pedestal. UC is the store entrance blocked by a retractable metal SECURITY GATE.

THE MALL is visible beyond it: two darkened STOREFRONTS, "Musicland" and "Orange Julius." On one side of the security gate is a DISPLAY WINDOW, the mall visible outside. On the other side of the security gate is A CURTAINED DRESSING ROOM. The rest of the store: a PERFUME COUNTER, racks of clothes—at least two of which are overturned making a BIG PILE OF CLOTHES DC.

FRANK's and LEWIS' flashlight beams cut the hazed air, looking like Star Wars light sabres. LEWIS makes a

light-sabre SOUND, swinging his beam at FRANK—who plays along for a minute.)

FRANK. Stop that! Straighten up. We gotta get some lights on. Look for light switches. Check over there.

LEWIS. I don't see anything. There must a master control. This is the anchor store. Look for a central control box.

FRANK. There!

(FRANK disappears into the darkness as LEWIS explores alone, flashlight streaking across the space, revealing a poster for this year's 1978 JC Penney Christmas Catalog. Then it shines on a MAN'S CORPSE upstage. LEWIS screams.)

FRANK shouts from offstage or appears in the control booth in the back of the auditorium.)

FRANK. There's a control panel here. What's this do?

(SPEAKERS CRACKLE TO LIFE, playing Musak. Lights begin to flicker on in the corridor out in the mall.)

LEWIS *(looking out through the gate)*. The fountains just came on in the mall. *(Turning to look up to FRANK.)*

FRANK. What about this? See anything?

(A light flickers on in the rear of the store.)

LEWIS. Women's pantyhose!

FRANK. This do anything?

(AN ALARM suddenly blares. Startling us. LEWIS covers his ears.)

LEWIS. Turn off the alarm!

FRANK *(after the noise stops)*. Sorry 'bout that. What about this?

LEWIS. Home decor. Just hit every switch, power the whole place up.

(Ugly green fluorescents flicker to life—illuminating even uglier brown walls, orange floors and beige dressing-room curtains.)

LEWIS. Now we're cookin'!

(Behind him, the SECURITY GATE automatically rises. NOTE: While the security gate is vital to the play, a simpler solution to it going up and down might be to use plastic chainlink hung from a traveler rod, which would mean the gate could be opened side to side with a drape chord instead of up and down with a motor.)

An ELECTRIC-GUITAR CHORD screams, drowning out the Musak as a ZOMBIE MUSICIAN rises up inside "Musicland." NOTE: This guitar-playing ZOMBIE is "CODY" a character in the play and will also provide a live score for the show.

ZOMBIES now come into view, headed for the OPEN GATE.)

LEWIS. Frank! The gate! The gate's open!

FRANK. Close it!

LEWIS. You opened it! You close it!

FRANK. I don't know what I did. Check that wall plate by the gate.

(LEWIS runs to the WALL PLATE CONTROL just inside the store by the dressing room. A number above it reads 222. A ZOMBIE staggers in. LEWIS shoves it back out into the mall.)

LEWIS. It needs a key! There's no key.

FRANK. There's a key ring up here. Heads up!

(FRANK tosses a RING OF KEYS to LEWIS, who fumbles with keys. LEWIS inserts one key after another into the wall plate. ZOMBIES lumber toward the now fully raised gate.)

FRANK. Hurry up!

LEWIS. I can't find the right one! There must be two hundred keys here!

FRANK. Are the keys numbered?

LEWIS. Yeah!

FRANK. Find 222!

(A ZOMBIE staggers toward LEWIS. FRANK rushes in and fires his pistol. BANG! The ZOMBIE falls. FRANK runs into the mall, firing at approaching ZOMBIES.)

LEWIS. I think I found it!

FRANK. It's about time!

(LEWIS inserts the key and turns it. The gate shudders to life, descending. FRANK fires. Click. Click. Click.)

FRANK. I'm all outta ammo!

(FRANK ducks under the descending gate, joining LEWIS inside. The gate reaches the floor, sealing the SWAT guys in.

ZOMBIES' hands come through the gate, trying to get to FRANK. He bangs the butt of his rifle against ghouls' faces on the other side of the gate, knocking them back.

LEWIS withdraws the key, turning to shout to FRANK.)

LEWIS. We're A-OK, man!

(WHOOSH! TWO DECAYING ARMS shoot out from the dressing room behind LEWIS, grabbing him. He drops the key ring. A ZOMBIE wraps its arms around LEWIS, who screams for help. The ZOMBIE's teeth are gnashing, trying to bite LEWIS, but the angle is off.)

LEWIS. Get it off me! Get it off me!

(FRANK, out of bullets, pulls a SURVIVAL KNIFE from his belt. Grabs LEWIS' face with one hand to steady him and...

...Drives his knife into the head of the ZOMBIE.

NOTE: One way to achieve this effect is to use a retractable blade to the head followed by the ZOMBIE palming a hidden blood bladder.

ZOMBIE blood spurts onto LEWIS. The creature falls back into the curtained dressing room. LEWIS lurches into FRANK's arms. He's screaming, terrified. Clinging to FRANK.)

FRANK. You're okay! You're okay! Get it together, man!

(LEWIS still screams. FRANK grabs LEWIS' shoulders, shouting into his face. Shakes him with each word:)

FRANK. GET-IT-TO-GETH-ER!

(LEWIS locks eyes with him. Seems to have gotten a grip—or maybe gone into shock. FRANK searches his eyes...unsure.)

FRANK. Are you okay? Come on, talk to me. Talk to me. Tell me something. Uh, what's your name?

(LEWIS just stares. FRANK's back is now to the DRESSING ROOM. A ZOMBIE emerges—headed for FRANK.

LEWIS sees it. Suddenly punches FRANK, knocking him out of the way. The ZOMBIE charges LEWIS, who grabs the female mannequin, pulling the top half off, dress and all, leaving bare legs on the pedestal.

LEWIS tosses it at the ZOMBIE, distracting it. Remembers his pistol and draws it. LEWIS fires at the ZOMBIE, who falls back into the dressing room. LEWIS' gun clicks empty.

LEWIS turns back to see FRANK rising, rubbing his chin.)

LEWIS (*friendly*). Sorry 'bout that.

(FRANK comes close, tense. Then looks away and picks up the key ring—just a mess of keys.)

FRANK. Maybe you better keep track of the gate key so you can find it when we need it.

LEWIS. Oh, yeah, you're right.

(LEWIS turns back to the wall plate, going through the keys again, one at a time. FRANK looks in the dressing room, then to the CORPSE on the floor.)

FRANK. Guess when the security gates dropped not everyone was out of here. Alive or dead.

LEWIS. You think there might be more of 'em around? Lotsa places to hide...

FRANK (*shines his flashlight back into the dark depths of the store.*) Don't see nothing back there. Nothing but... (*he starts to smile*) ...JC Penney! Yeah! This is righteous! We're inside JC Penney. You know what that means? We got everything right here. Hardware, kitchenware, silverwear—

LEWIS (*enjoying it—but still working through the keys*). Underwear, outerwear...

(Downstage, under the PILE OF CLOTHES from an overturned rack, something moves, shiny fabric catching the light.)

FRANK. And anything else we need is just outside this gate. We can hole up forever in here while the world out there eats itself up. Let it all go straight to hell. Lewis, my man, we are set up!

(A HAND thrusts up out of the pile, like the undead from a grave. FRANK doesn't see it.)

LEWIS *(turns to FRANK, holding up a key)*. Found it! *(He sees the hand. Points.)* Frank, look out!

(FRANK raises his rifle like a club as IT springs up from the pile of clothes and screams. "IT" is A TEEN-AGE GIRL: CHARLIE.)

CHARLIE. Don't hurt me! I work here!

(FRANK freezes. CHARLIE rushes to LEWIS, slamming into him—making him drop the keys again. She clings to him, afraid of FRANK, who stands frozen with the rifle in mid-swing. LEWIS picks up the key ring. He's lost the key again.)

LEWIS. Oh, man...

(CHARLIE screams again, seeing the CORPSE ON THE FLOOR. LEWIS grabs her.)

LEWIS. It's okay. It can't hurt you. It's dead!

(The CORPSE suddenly sits up. CHARLIE screams as it rises to attack. FRANK charges it. Kills it with his knife.)

LEWIS. Okay, now it's really dead.

CHARLIE. What's "really dead"?

FRANK. You gotta destroy the brain to really waste 'em. Shoot in the head, stab 'em in the skull, decapitate 'em, sever the...

CHARLIE *(disturbed)*. I get it. *(She now sees the wrecked store around her. Gasps at the sight of the bare, bottom half of the mannequin on the pedestal. Professionally removes the legs, carrying them back behind her perfume counter, explaining, looking at her hiding place:)* They didn't know I was here. If you don't move, they don't see you. They wandered around me for hours. I just stayed still and didn't move.

FRANK. Seen any others inside?

CHARLIE. No. Just those two. But it's a big store.

FRANK. What are you doing here, anyway?

CHARLIE. I told you, I work here. Perfume counter.

FRANK. Yeah, but there ain't anybody else around—I mean—except for those things.

CHARLIE. Everybody ran. Right out into the mall—right out into those things. I was back in the break room when I heard the screams. I locked the door. When I finally came out everybody was gone—except for Mitzi, she's the other perfume girl. She was...two of those things had her right outside there. Mitzi saw me. She yelled to me for help and one of them...bit into her. Then all the lights went out. I hid under there, like I said. I just hid and didn't move.