



PATRICK O'DRISCOLL AS BLOWPOP THE CLOWN IN *KILLING ME*

Serial Killing 101

Local filmmaker Henry Weintraub premieres *Killing Me*

Many of us secretly harbor unreasonable dreams. Maybe you want to be an Olympic medalist at a sport you've never tried, or fantasize about starring in blockbuster action films but have never set foot on stage. I like to imagine that in some alternate world, I learned to dance at a young age. (In reality, when I was little I wanted to be a librarian.)

Aaron Schwartz (Patrick O'Driscoll)'s dream is slightly more troubling: "As far back as I can remember," he says in voiceover, "I've wanted to be a serial killer." He studies the greats, learning (and trying to use) their tactics; he imagines himself on magazine covers, the focus of a shocked nation's attention.

But Aaron lacks whatever it is that makes a person capable of serial killing — and it's not like serial killing is the sort of thing where you can easily put in 10,000 hours of practice. He fidgets discontentedly inside his normal life, working at the post office and going home to his pretty wife. His fixation remains private — until a real serial killer arrives in his sleepy little town.

That sleepy little town, of course, is Eugene (mostly). *Killing Me* is director Henry Weintraub's latest feature-length film, following the horror comedy *Melvin* and the noirish *The Darkest Corner of Paradise*. *Killing Me* sits neatly in a space between those two films.

If Aaron had a different hobby, his story might make for a quiet drama about an unfulfilled man. Instead, his aspirations give the film a dry sense of humor that's most delightfully apparent when Aaron dresses up as a clown named Blowpop in an attempt to get close to some potential young victims. "My dad really hates clowns," a snotty child tells him. "And so do I."

Like Weintraub's previous films, *Killing Me* was created by a sizable cast and crew dotted with friends, family (his wife Sara appears briefly, shares credit for hair and

makeup, and is responsible for the film's stylish and fun graphic design) and other talented locals. His close friend O'Driscoll (who also produced and did audio engineering for the film) starred in Weintraub's last two movies; Joe van Appen, who plays Charles, studied acting with Weintraub at the UO; musician Zac Sawyer, of The Sawyer Family, once again contributes an eerie, apt score (as he did for *Darkest Corner*).

This time, Zac isn't the only Sawyer involved. *Killing Me* is based on a story by Ryan Nyburg, who produced *Melvin*, but the screenplay was written by Jarod Rhoades — also known as guitarist Judge Jarod Sawyer. Weintraub and O'Driscoll transformed Nyburg's story into an outline, then handed it to Rhoades, who had mentioned to Weintraub that he was interested in writing. Weintraub says Rhoades, "used a lot of the outline but also put his own spin on it. I think the whole process was very beneficial to the project because we got so many different takes on the same idea."

Those different takes give Aaron's serial-killer fixation a lot of depth, and the film spends plenty of time building his personality and obsession. Less time is spent on his relationship with pretty, bubbly Erin (Sonya Davis), and while this makes perfect sense — their relationship is a thing that Aaron stumbles into, not the real focus of his life — it also renders the film's domestic scenes a little less believable. Erin and Aaron seem less like a married couple than like unlikely roommates, still getting to know each other.

Odder sparks appear when Aaron uncovers the local killer's identity and seeks him out, hoping for an apprenticeship of sorts. What ensues nods back to Weintraub's earlier, gorier work, but a streak of darkness runs through the whole enterprise. Revenge doesn't motivate the killings; nothing motivates the killings. The murderer, though he's something of a natural, doesn't even

seem to take much pleasure in death. It's just what he does, like a bad habit.

Killing Me was made on a tiny budget — about \$3,000 — and shot over 11 days last summer. Its strength lies in the conflict between the small, internal story of a frustrated man and the peculiar scope of his unlikely dream, which can only be realized in the strangest of fashions.

The film marks another solid step in Weintraub's evolution as an independent filmmaker — an evolution that's evident not just on screen. Over the years, Weintraub's goals have changed. "I feel as though when I was younger I had a very unrealistic dream of becoming this famous Hollywood director," he says. "All I needed to do was finish my first feature length film, someone would see it, like it, distribute it and give me millions of dollars to make my next movie."

"The reality is," Weintraub continues, "*Killing Me* is my fourth feature-length film and will more than likely end up like my other three: being distributed by a small DVD distribution company while I tour around Oregon showing it as much as possible and selling copies off of my website and through local businesses. The difference now is, I'm OK with that."

Weintraub's movies don't come across as calling cards, as a means of selling himself to the film industry. They're fiercely independent, with a dark sense of humor, and it's obvious that these are the stories Weintraub and his writers and crew want to tell. The end goal isn't fame and fortune, but the satisfaction of making a movie, and that's what they do.

"Movie making is something I love doing, and reaching someone who likes my movies is incredibly rewarding," Weintraub says. "But the most fun and rewarding part of making a movie is making a movie."

A special premiere screening of Killing Me takes place 8:30pm Saturday, July 7, at the Bijou; \$10 admission includes DVD copy of the feature; for further info & tickets, visit bijou-cinemas.com

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