

The Weird, Uncomfortable, Creepy History of Clowns

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Entertainment

Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of episode outline)

We got a voicemail recently and I only bring it up because we've received a bunch of messages like this over the last couple of years and it's probably been a while since we've addressed one.

I'm going to play just a quick excerpt.

"What the hell is Discord?"

That is a fair question, very tired or extremely inebriated insomniac.

Duncan, you're a gamer so I assume you were probably aware of discord before the podcast, but I personally had never heard of it until one of our insomniacs created a server for us. Basically discord is like a little mini fan club with chatrooms where you can hang out and discuss a specific topic or subject, in our case this silly little podcast. You could also just lurk and anonymously hang out and vote on topics and benefit from all the free stuff that we post, including the most

recent full after midnight episode. So you don't even have to be remotely interested in interacting with other humans, which is great for misanthropists like us, although we do chat in there pretty frequently.

The voicemail continues:

"Where is this discord, can you send me a link?"

I CAN send you a link invitation, and you will need one if you're listening on an app like Pandora or Google that doesn't support full-featured show notes. You can message me at [midnightfactsforinsomniacs@gmail](mailto:midnightfactsforinsomniacs@gmail.com) and I'll send a link or you can download Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or Amazon Music for free and just scroll down in the text of our show description and the words Discord and Patreon will be clickable links. Keep in mind that if you want to join Discord on a mobile device you'll need to download the app, but if you're on a laptop or desktop you can use any regular old browser.

And thus concludes the long-winded discord tutorial.

On to today's episode.

If you've been listening to MFFI from the beginning, you'll know that I have a personal connection to this week's topic...I suspect that may be why the discord voted for this one. I'm not sure if they thought they were being helpful

and giving us a subject that they assumed would involve some nostalgia, or if they were low-key fucking with me. Because our topic this week is clowns, and I have mentioned before: I do not like clowns. I do not like them in a box, I do not like them wearing socks. I do not like those creepy clowns, they give me nervous breakdowns. I'm not much of a poet.

For those of you who don't know, I grew up in a circus. True story. Sounds like BS, but it's not, and I've talked about it in various episodes and as a guest on other podcasts so I won't rehash it here, but suffice to say that I have known many literal clowns in my day, and all of them were a little...off. You might find this hard to believe, but it turns out that normal, well-adjusted human adults do not gravitate toward a career that consists of intentionally humiliating themselves in front of children. I find the idea of making money by putting on makeup and taking shots to the nuts at kids' birthday parties to be extremely sus. And modern society largely agrees: in movies and popular media clowns are far more likely to be depicted as horrific rather than endearing. For my research I obviously had to reread IT, and watch all the movies...this was a good excuse to indulge in some classic Stevie K. It was a pointless endeavor from a podcast standpoint, I wasted hours of research time, but it did reinforce my clown phobia. Do you know the official name of a clown phobia? "coulrophobia," and I guess I

don't have a clinical case—I don't experience crippling anxiety around clowns—but I would say that the majority of people these days are at least made mildly uncomfortable by the presence of a clown. Unlike our grandparent's generation, which seems to have had an enduring love of—and nostalgia for—all things clown, in this post John-Wayne-Gacy-world, attitudes have shifted, and Stephen King's paranormal child-killing Pennywise in many ways is the perfect clown archetype for us members of the stranger-danger generation. Random grown men who wear disguises and hang around children just don't seem as wholesome as they once did. Go figure.

However with all of that said, I do respect the circus arts and the legacy of the clown. Say what you want about clowning, when executed competently it is a legit art form that requires discipline and talent. You can't just throw on a wig and start acting like a weirdo and show up at random children's parties and call yourself a clown...I mean, you can but that's a felony. So yeah, I can respect a thing without necessarily enjoying it. See also: jazz.

And now I'm going to mildly contradict everything I just said by admitting that there is still plenty of mainstream affection for the figure of the clown: one of the most famous and beloved characters in the world without a doubt is a white-faced, red-haired

hamburger salesman; in fact, according to an often-cited survey, Ronald McDonald is the second most recognizable figure to American schoolchildren, behind only Santa Claus. Who is also kind of a creep, let's be honest. He runs a sweatshop toy factory with a bunch of tiny vulnerable workers located in the arctic tundra, far away from the reach of OSHA and labor laws. What's with kids and creeps? But I guess I'm not the target market for clowns or Christmas fairytales, so whatever. Kids are dumb, that's all I'm saying.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, *wait: Isn't a standup comic basically just a modern version of a clown?* Well, touché, imaginary smartass. There are similarities. Clowns and comedians both get up in front of an audience and entertain them by making them laugh. But there are also very significant differences. For one, comedians talk...that's kind of the whole act. Most clowns are silent, and employ physical comedy to get a laugh. I've never been a huge fan of comedy that consists of clumsiness and humiliation. Pratfall, banana-peel-based comedy is not my jam. And that's basically how clowning started: with the jesters and buffoons who would make literal fools of themselves to entertain the wealthy and powerful.

"Clowns, as pranksters, jesters, jokers, harlequins, and mythologized

tricksters have been around for ages. They appear in most cultures—Pygmy clowns made Egyptian pharaohs laugh in 2500 BCE.” These were the “Dangas,” who would dress in masks and costumes and tell stories to amuse the pharaohs. Later, Ancient Greek clowns appeared alongside the main characters in plays and farces; they were traditionally depicted as bald men with padded suits—like primitive fat suits—and they would parody the other characters in the play and occasionally pelt the audience with nuts. Seems disrespectful, but also...free nuts. Bonus. In the theaters of Ancient Rome a similar character appeared in checkered outfits with pointed hats. “Ancient Rome’s clown was a stock fool called the Stupidus; the court jesters of medieval Europe were a sanctioned way for people under the feudal thumb to laugh at the guys in charge...” So early clowns most likely offered catharsis, and that theme of mocking the privileged would extend to court jesters of the medieval era. Jesters and fools were employed to entertain aristocrats via juggling and acrobatics and clowning...they were like a one-man circus, and they often got away with mocking their employers with crude and even political humor that would have gotten anyone else’s bodies separated from their heads.

Other famous proto-clowns around the world include mythological figures like the shapeshifting trickster Loki from Norse mythology, a scheming

troublemaker who frequently undermined and mocked his more serious divine relatives. Side note: in non-marvel mythology Loki and Thor are not brothers. They are not related by blood or even adoption. Loki's father was a Jotunn, often depicted as a giant, though in another departure from Marvel lore he was not a *frost* giant. And many Jotunn were human-sized, so I guess moral of the story is don't rely on comic book characters for your history lessons. Loki often changed shape and even switched gender: in one famous tale he transformed into a mare, mated with a stallion, and gave birth to the 8-legged horse—Sleipnir—that would become Odin's mount. The gods were pretty freaky.

Continuing our geographical clown tour of the ancient world, now to the Americas. (Geographical Clown Tour sounds like the worst form of tourism. You just know you're going to be packed with 100 other people in a tiny little Volkswagen bug, all they serve for dinner is whip cream pie... cannot recommend.) The Native American Sioux tribe—whose history extends back some 3,000 years—revered clown-like figures known as the Hayuka. A combination of shaman and jester, Hayuka would often mock people by mimicking them in reverse, mirroring all of their actions backward. Pretty annoying, to be honest. They sound like dicks. Or kids. I wonder if "Hayuka" was just the Sioux word for an 8-year-old, and historians misinterpreted. Similarly, "Hopi Native

Americans had a tradition of clown-like characters who interrupted serious dance rituals with ludicrous antics." So Native American clowns were trolls, way before the internet. Just mocking everyone and acting immature and generally causing chaos.

So the ubiquity of clowns—the fact that some version of clown or jester or joker crops up in every civilization—is apparently a function of human nature. Psychologist Carl Jung famously considered the clown to be an archetype, which he described as the "trickster." "From a British psychotherapy institute: "In modern psychology 'Trickster' is often used to refer to a universal force or pattern within the mind...that represents the irrational, chaotic, and unpredictable side of human thought and behavior. This aspect of the mind is contrasted with the logical, analytical, and intellectual side that values order, precision, and control. According to the tenets of depth psychology, a balance between these two vectors of the psyche is required for optimal mental health."

So there's a clown inside us all, and it's important to occasionally indulge your wacky side so that you don't lose touch with the unpredictable and spontaneous aspects of your personality. Just don't go too far in that chaotic direction, or you end up in a padded room.

Of course these historical proto-

clowns that we've been discussing didn't look anything like the white-faced, wild-haired clowns of today. Jesters and harlequins and early comedic performance artists typically made do with just a bit of rouge or blush to make them look worked up and flustered, or to indicate that they were intoxicated and buffoonish. And speaking of harlequins, these iconic stock characters with their checkered costumes originated in the famous Italian theater movement of the 1600s, Comedia Dell'Arte. There were in fact multiple ancestors of the modern clown that you can find in the plays of the "Comedy of the profession" or "Comedy of the arts": the harlequin was the lighthearted and fleet-footed trickster, while the Pierrot (Peer-oh)—introduced by Parisian theater companies—was the white faced "sad clown" character who often lost the object of his romantic affections to the harlequin. Harlequin was like the Chad, in incel lingo. The Comedia Dell'Arte is one of the origins of the pantomime, silent performances in which the plot and emotions are expressed via highly exaggerated movement and gestures, which obviously describes the technique of modern mimes or clowns. Interestingly, Comedia Dell'Arte represented one of the first popular theatrical movements in which female characters were actually played by women, launching some of the first famous European actresses. If you remember, female Shakespeare characters were traditionally played by men and young boys. Can't have a

woman cavorting around on stage with filthy actors. Women should remain pure and modest and do nothing but make babies constantly. You have to protect females from the evils of the world so that they can be bred like mares starting promptly at age 14.

The modern-day archetype of the white-faced clown was created by a single man. 18th century British actor Joseph Grimaldi embodied every modern clown stereotype: he wore white makeup with bright red lips and dark red rouge, he died his hair and wore garish outfits, and despite the fact that he made a living by bringing laughter to audiences he was a sad, tragic man who was constantly in pain due to his clowning antics. He once quipped, "I am GRIM ALL DAY, but I make you laugh at night." In fact, performing took such a toll on Grimaldi that shortly before his retirement he was diagnosed with "premature old age." Is that still a legit diagnosis? I mean it sounds like an insult, but I kind of like this idea. I'm pretty burnt out with life in general. I want to claim retirement early, you should be able to call the government and be like, I have given up on life, send my social security checks now. I still look ok but I am mentally 75. I might be physically healthy but I am as jaded as a man twice my age.

The iconic clown character that Grimaldi created was named Joey, and became so famous that according to many sources, clowns are often still

referred to as Joeys. Ok, sources. And I mean look, we're not just talking Wikipedia, this comes straight from the oxford dictionary, So...maybe? I only grew up in a circus, what do I know. Never heard of a clown called a Joey. The Joey character's white makeup was Grimaldi's own unique creation. "He began by painting a white base over his face, neck and chest before adding red triangles on the cheeks, thick eyebrows and large red lips set in a mischievous grin." The grin was large so that it could be viewed at the back of the auditorium. That's not monstrous at all...*I can't see that guy's expression from here, but can clearly make out his giant gaping maw.*

When Grimaldi died, having cemented the iconic figure of the modern clown, Charles Dickens took on the task of editing a memorial of his life, which didn't pull punches. It exposed the disturbing truth behind the myth, and would later contribute to the public distrust of clowns, and the (in my opinion highly credible) belief that there's turmoil and potentially even danger below the surface.

Clowns were simultaneously becoming a fixture of circuses starting around the 1740s, when Englishman Philip Astley created the modern circus by combining popular performances like equestrian acts, jugglers, acrobatics, tightrope walkers and clowning into a single outdoor or bigtop show. He created the 42ft diameter circus ring, which is still considered the standard.

There were four types of clown in the traditional early circus: the whiteface, the Auguste, the character, and the hobo. The whiteface is the lead clown, often the instigator of the shenanigans, while the auguste (or "red clown") is more of the hapless henchman, often the humiliated recipient of pies to the face and squirting flowers. The circus version of the betamale Pierrot. The character clown on the other hand plays a specific role: a policeman, baker, housewife, etc. The hobo is really a type of character clown but was so prevalent that most historians consider them a distinct form. They were very popular because hey, who *doesn't* enjoy laughing at the least fortunate members of society? Mocking the downtrodden and defenseless, that's just good fun. The template for the hobo clown was created by a performer named Emmet Kelly, whose character "Weary Willie" struck a chord with audiences during the Great Depression. Apparently it was relatable to people who were either struggling or surrounded by the economically disadvantaged, and that kind of makes sense—you either cry about a bad situation or laugh—but not everyone who attended the circus was unemployed or poor, and I'm generally just kind of baffled as to how you can laugh at destitution. It definitely feels like punching down. We don't have clowns dressed up as Covid patients in hospital beds, that just wouldn't be

super funny. I guess to some people it would. Hey, now that Elon Musk owns Twitter I guess anything goes, as long as it's mean or racist. I love how for the American right, "freedom of speech" literally just means the ability to say the N-word. They claim to be all about free speech and yet want to control what teachers can teach in their classrooms—you can't say gay and you can't talk about the legacy of slavery, because that might make white people uncomfortable—they want safe spaces—freedom of speech is super important only when it comes to our ability to say awful shit that they agree with. Tell story of Facebook group. And by the way cancel culture sucks unless you're canceling Disney for having gay characters or black mermaids. Good times. Emmett Kelly also contributed to the trope of the sad clown for personal reasons... when he and his wife divorced he famously worked that into the performance. Sounds hilarious. Nothing funnier than a struggling, depressed, lonely dude... kind of less funny in the era of AK-47s. Get your laughs in before this guy takes you hostage. Kelly spent 14 years with the Ringling brothers circus, and appeared in the Oscar winning movie "the greatest show on Earth," and Wikipedia claims that when he died in 1979 he was considered the most famous clown on earth. Though Bozo would like a word. We'll get to him.

Obviously we have to touch on some ancillary clown figures, the celebrities who were, if not full-on clowns, then at

least clown-adjacent, giants of the entertainment industry like Charlie Chaplin who used the techniques of clowning to great effect in silent movies for his Little Tramp character. Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin Jr. was born in England to a pair of music hall entertainers and was in show business for basically his entire life, picking up his skills via years spent as a music hall and vaudeville performer. Vaudeville was essentially interchangeable with "music hall," and in many ways mirrored the circus template—a series of unrelated acts of skill and silliness, but it generally took place indoors in a theater rather than outside or in a big top. Like the circus, vaudeville featured clowns, trained animal acts, music, magicians...it was basically America's Got Talent, with more talent. Here's something I didn't know, are you familiar with the term "Mukbang"? Apparently there's something compelling about watching people eat, because the Mukbang originated as a popular act in vaudeville shows; it consisted of a performer dragging a table on stage and enthusiastically digging into a giant, comically large pile of spaghetti while the audience went wild. No, that's a mind-bogglingly stupid modern internet craze, and I was banking on your online ignorance. Chaplin's father died when he was young from cirrhosis of the liver due to alcoholism and his mother was mentally ill, he would in many ways become the poster boy for pulling yourself up by your bootstraps,

making lemons from lemonade, insert other success-related cliches. Chaplin worked his way through the vaudeville circuit and eventually landed a starring role in a successful traveling comedy show touring America. "The young comedian headed the show and impressed reviewers, being described as "one of the best pantomime artists ever seen here". His most successful role was a drunk called the "Inebriate Swell", which drew him significant recognition." If we've learned anything from this episode it's that there is nothing funnier than the tragic mental prison of alcohol addiction. It's so crazy that for years the pinnacle of comedy was making fun of homelessness and drug dependency. Chaplin's success would come via silent films, and he used the tricks of the clowning trade to impressive effect, silently conveying his emotions and using his body as a comedic prop. He was incredibly athletic and skilled as a physical comedian, almost a mix between a clown and an actor and a mime. And speaking of mimes that are also ancillary clown-figures, another famous performer who dabbled in clowning—Marcel Marceau—rocketed to fame in the late 1950s via his alter ego Bip the Clown, a character that—despite the label of "clown"—most people would recognize as the prototypical mime, with the stark white face, horizontally striped shirt and black rivulets under each eye. Marcel would eventually become the most recognizable mime and mime-teacher in the world. He also would become

close friends with Michael Jackson, and Marcel's ability to glide smoothly across the floor would inspire the moonwalk. According to Marcel, "... when [Michael] arrived in France he declared that the two people he wanted to meet were Marlene Dietrich and Marcel Marceau." "The king of pop was captivated by the artist's silent cry and it was when he saw Marceau walking against the wind, his famous movement, that he had the idea to create the legendary Moonwalk." I watched a video and yeah, MJ straight up stole the Moonwalk. I'll post the video in the discord. Or someone will. I always say I will and then I forget, and then June or Llama or Wendigo or Lydia does it for me.

Now back to the timeline of mainstream clowns. I mentioned that there was one clown who might take issue with the "world's most famous clown" moniker that Wikipedia posthumously awarded to Weary Willie. Billed as "The World's Most Famous Clown," Bozo was a clown character that debuted in 1946 as a children's storytime record, which consisted of a vinyl record and an accompanying storybook. Nothing more relaxing at bedtime than wacky tales of clownery.

So yeah, I sense a clown rivalry when it comes to the title of most famous. Though I would argue that even in the 70s, other clown characters like the joker and Ronald McDonald had all eclipsed weary Willie on the clown-fame scale. Also John Wayne Gacy.

Maybe Wikipedia was claiming that Weary Willie was the most famous real-life clown portrayed by a single person? Because the "real-life" requirement would disqualify Ronald, and Bozo wasn't played by a single guy. The character was created by a man named Alan W Livingston but would be portrayed by a number of other twisted child-hating wackjobs throughout the years. I mean I don't know for sure that everyone who played bozo was a sociopath, I'm just extrapolating from the evidence. Because Bozo is absolutely the stuff of nightmares. This clown, for me, is the first truly terrifying what-the-fuck-were-they-thinking clown. Can you picture bozo? White face with a red nose and massive arched eyebrows that extend halfway up the dome of the skull, and this huge red mouth—like massive as if its gaping...more of a maw than a mouth...bald head with two giant conelike tufts of thick red hair completely consuming the ears. This creature is heinous. I think it's scarier than pennywise.

Three years after the storytime record, Bozo infiltrated the television airwaves, portrayed by the same actor who played Bozo on the records, Pinto Colvig, who also originally voiced the Disney characters Goofy and Pluto. Pluto didn't talk much, he was a legit dog, so not a ton of skill required, but Colvig did the barks. Pinto's real name was **Vance DeBar Colvig Sr** but he went by Pinto to sound less like a railroad tycoon, presumably. I'm pretty

sure that's the name of the monopoly man.

Bozo is unique among famous clowns in that he became a franchise... individual tv stations could purchase the rights to create their own Bozo shows with their own slightly distinctive version of Bozo. However there were always similarities. Bozo wigs were manufactured by the Emil Corsillo company, a famous Hollywood toupee and hairpiece manufacturer, "Bozo's headpiece was made from yak hair, which was adhered to a canvas base with a starched burlap interior foundation. The hair was styled and formed, then sprayed with a heavy coat of lacquer to keep its form. From time to time, the headpiece needed freshening and was sent to the Hollywood factory for a quick refurbishing. The canvas top would slide over the actor's forehead. With the exception of the Bozo wigs for WGN-TV Chicago, the eyebrows were permanently painted on the headpiece." That's a serious piece of equipment...sounds like a freaking Viking helmet. That would have been much more intimidating...I know Vikings didn't actually wear the horned helmets for raiding, but just imagine being chased down by a mob of Vikings in Bozo wigs.

The rights to Bozo the clown are now owned by the eccentric actor David Arquette, and somehow I wasn't surprised to learn this fact. Here's a story: I once performed at the comedy

store in Hollywood, and after the show me and a bunch of comedians were sitting around and we were approached by a woman who said that she was the assistant for David Arquette and he had sent her to apologize for the fact that he had so rudely been called away and had to leave the show early and to make up for it he instructed her to give us each an armful of fresh flowers. None of us had any idea that David Arquette had been at the show and we all just stood around staring at each other with this entire garden of foliage. It was perplexing but a very nice and totally unnecessary gesture. My point is that David Arquette is not an entirely normal person and I'm not surprised that he bought Bozo. Him or Nick Cage, those would be my guesses. I guess it's possible that he's making a Bozo biopic or some weird Netflix clown show involving Bozo but my instinct says he just wanted to own the essence of a creepy ass clown.

We've talked about fear of clowns, and it is not rare. From an article in Smithsonian magazine, "Even the people who are supposed to like clowns—children—supposedly don't. In 2008, a widely reported University of Sheffield, England, survey of 250 children between the ages of four and 16 found that most of the children disliked and even feared images of clowns. The BBC's report on the study featured a child psychologist who broadly declared, "Very few children like clowns. They are unfamiliar and

come from a different era. They don't look funny, they just look odd."

There are so many reasons to distrust clowns. They are walking, stumbling, prat-falling red flags. Clowns are impulsive, socially inappropriate and unpredictable; if anyone acted like a clown in the real world, that person would be promptly institutionalized. Clowns hide their true identities behind garish costumes, they act like petulant children, and they often remain eerily silent, unable or unwilling to explain their motivations. So it should have been no surprise in 1940 when DC comics first introduced Batman's arch rival the Joker, subverting the popular image of the harmless clown in favor of a psychopathic, serial killing criminal mastermind. The original iteration of the joker was legit scary, a chemist and thief who killed his victims via a poison that caused a grotesque post-mortem rictus grin. If that sounds familiar, it's because the original version of the joker was the model for the 1980s film with Jack Nicholson and Michael Keaton. Keaton, in my opinion still by far the best Batman, and Nicholson the second best joker. The joker murdered dozens of people in those first few 1940s issues of Batman comics, finally acknowledging via pop culture what people have always subconsciously known: clowns are fucking scary. The Joker character would be toned down in subsequent issues and fully neutered for decades after the introduction of the censorship board known as the comics

code authority, culminating in the campy and divisive BANG POW tv show of the 60s, but Joker would regain his darkness in the 1970s with publication of a comic called the "jokers five way revenge." The Joker resurgence led to joker making history as the first supervillain to score his own comic: the creatively titled "the joker" from 1975. Which was a failure, btw, it was still hobbled by the vestiges of the comics code and lasted only nine issues, but in the 1980s the joker reappeared with a literal vengeance in Frank Millers the dark knight Returns, one of the greatest graphic novels of all time.

The next milestone in creepy clown history was the aforementioned publication in 1986 of Stephen King's IT. And for anyone who isn't familiar with the story, it does not feature a psychopathic killer clown, but rather an alien who feasts on children's greatest fears...further evidence that even children instinctively know that clowns are not ok.

And various nefarious actors over the years have used the widespread fear of clowns for sinister purposes. Most of us will remember that in the fall of 2016, the entire country was gripped with what was dubbed "clown hysteria." It all started in South Carolina with reports—none of which were ever confirmed or substantiated—of random creepy clown sightings. "One woman filed a report with the sheriff because her son saw "clowns in

the woods whispering and making strange noises." The phenomenon went full-on viral with sightings reported in more than half of US states. And then the trolls went to work. In Alabama, at least nine people were arrested and seven charged with felonies for committing terrorist threats after identifying themselves as clowns.

According to Rainbow City Police Chief Jonathon Horton, "We wanted to make an example and crack down on clown-related activity in our city." I think that's a good idea, we should crack down on all clown-related activity, including clowning.

"In Escambia County the sheriff's department arrested a 22-year-old woman and two juveniles in connection with a 'Flomo Klown' incident Sept. 15." This was a FB account that had sent threatening messages. "Two juveniles also were identified in Troy related to a social media 'clown' threat...the juveniles posted a Facebook video Sept. 18 under the account of

"ClappyAndslappy DaClown." The two wore clown costumes and masks, wielded a knife and talked for nearly five minutes about "coming for you in Troy, Alabama." I'm generally scared of the idea of clowns but "clappy and slappy daclown" don't exactly strike fear in my heart. I'd slappy dat clown.

But the panic continued to spread, in some cases genuine and in others most likely sarcastic. "Hundreds of students in Pennsylvania State University swarmed surrounding

campus streets to carry out a mass clown hunt. A Connecticut school district said it is banning clown costumes and any 'symbols of terror.' And an armed clown hoax temporarily put a Massachusetts college on lockdown. The issue even made it all the way to the White House, where press secretary Josh Earnest was asked about the phenomenon on Tuesday." Earnest, the press secretary for Obama, responded, "I don't know that President has been briefed about this particular situation." That's press secretary speak for "Go fuck yourself."

As far as I'm aware, the only person who was injured during the panic was a 16-year-old Pennsylvanian who was stabbed to death *while wearing a clown mask*. And yeah, I'm not happy that this happened, but if you're running around thinking you're going to scare the crap out of people in open-carry America, best of luck with that. In this particular case it seems that the kid actually had the mask pushed up on his forehead and there may have been some other, unrelated beef involved, but in general it's a bad idea to wear scary masks in public on the 364 days of the year that are not October 31st.

If you aren't convinced by now that clowns are trash, allow me to present: the Juggalos. I'm assuming you know what I'm referencing. Since 1989 the horrorcore rap-rock duo known as the Insane Clown Posse has been

steadfastly hammering the final nails into the coffin of clowning credibility by epically sucking as musicians, humans, and a pop culture movement. The band consists of two rappers known by their monikers Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope, who rap about rape and murder while dressed as clowns and encourage their fans—known as jugalos—to abandon any final shreds of self respect and dignity by doing their hair in a style known as “spiderlegs,” dressing in a fashion described as “hillbilly goth,” guzzling—and even showering in—gallons of a foul soda pop called Faygo, and “making and responding to ‘whoop-whoop’ calls.” That’s the worst part. The fashion and Faygo are bad, but don’t whoop-whoop, ever. That’s obnoxious.

Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope are also hardcore evangelical Christians. After more than 20 years singing about raping sluts and murdering people with hatchets, ICP came out to their fans as full blown Christians in 2010 with the song Thy Unveiling, which included the statement

“All secrets will now be told
No more hidden messages
...Truth is we follow GOD!!!
We've always been behind him
The carnival is GOD
And may all juggalos find him
We're not sorry if we tricked you.”

This from the duo that once rapped
“I'm hating sluts
Shoot them in the face, step back and
itch my nuts

Unless I'm in the sack
Cos I fuck so hard it'll break their
back."

But see it's ok as long as you're shooting sluts and breaking their backs in the name of Jesus. It's like a slut sacrifice. God appreciates a violent sexual back-breaking as long as your intentions are pure. Just don't step over the line, one slut per day or you'll be punished. You must say two hail Marys for every additional slut-back you've broken.

So these days ICP's songs primarily celebrate our lord and savior while also casting dispersions on the band's perceived enemies...enemies like science. For instance their most notorious song *Miracles* features the inspiring pro-ignorance lyric

"I don't wanna talk to a scientist
Y'all motherfuckers lying, and getting
me pissed"

Other classic lyrics from that bangin track include musings on the mysteries of the universe with meme-inspiring lines such as "water, fire, air, and dirt, fucking magnets—how do they work?" Some other choice lyrics, "Look at the mountains, trees, the seven seas

And everything chilling underwater,
please

Hot lava, snow, rain and fog
Long neck giraffes, and pet cats and
dogs." I can't stop, here's some more:
"I've seen shit that'll shock your
eyelids

The sun and the moon, and even Mars

The Milky Way and fucking shooting stars

UFOs, a river flows

Plant a little seed and nature grows

Niagara Falls and the pyramids

Everything you believed in as kids

Fucking rainbows after it rains

There's enough miracles here to blow your brains"

In a sign of inevitable societal decay and the downfall of American hegemony, Insane Clown Posse has racked up five gold albums and two platinum.

I'll be honest I had never listened to anything other than miracles and some of the songs are catchy...and they *should* be because they are blatant ripoffs of house of pain and cypress hill. Listen to their biggest hit called hocus pocus and it's 100% the cypress hill song "insane in the membrane." But hey, they're millionaires, so I'm sure they're not too concerned about the opinion of a dude on a podcast. Plus, they have Jesus on their side. And an army of sluts with broken backs.

The most recent clown panic in the media involves a horror movie called Terrifier 2 which features a serial killer named Art the Clown. Not a classic killer-name, "Art" doesn't strike fear in the soul. I'd be more scared of ClappyAndslappy DaClown. But supposedly this film is causing people to "vomit, faint, and walk out in droves" I believe that last part.

"[a social media user] shared a photo from the theater that showed emergency personnel attending to an individual, writing, "My friend passed out and the theater called an ambulance. Highly recommended." Horror fans are a masochistic bunch. I think the so-called overwhelming aspect of this film has less to do with the terrifying clown and more to do with the terrifying 2 hour and 18 minute runtime, the bulk of which consists of torture porn. That's a marathon. I can handle 120 minutes of scalping and disemboweling and eye gouging, but that final 18 is a bit excessive.

We have a new five-star review!

Awesome

★★★★★

My favourite podcast of all time. The topics are always really interesting and there's never a dull moment, even when Shane decided that making an episode on taxes was a good idea. I always look forward to my weekly dose of MFFI

iroAhte22r1e via Apple Podcasts · Australia
·11/06/2022

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