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Musical Theatre Duo Slices into the Film World *Horror Musical Winning Awards at World-Class Film Festivals*



“One of the most inventive and groundbreaking horror shorts ever.”

— *Dread Central*

Sitges, CATALONIA – **Jerome Sable and Eli Batalion** (aka **Sable & Batalion**) have made the shift from stage to screen with a splash—of blood, that is: their filmmaking debut, a horror musical short film called *The Legend of Beaver Dam*, was the first short film ever to open the “Midnight Madness” series at the **2010 Toronto International Film Festival** and now has won “Best Short Film” at the number one fantasy festival in the world, the **SITGES Festival Internacional de Cinema Fantàstic de Catalunya**.

The film tells the story of Danny Zigwitz, a nerdy young camper who needs to save his fellow campers from a bloody massacre when a campfire ghost story awakens an evil monster. And—no joke—it’s a full-blown rock musical. At only 12 minutes, the short film has already garnered quite a bit of buzz from U.S. and Canadian media, including several rave reviews. The *Toronto Star* calls the film a “future cult classic,” and *Fangoria Magazine* writes, “*Beaver Dam* will blow your brains and rock your world.”

For the cast, **Sable & Batalion** handpicked musical theatre all-stars **Seán Cullen, Rick Miller**, and newcomer **L.J. Benet**. “We knew we needed actors with some serious pipes, and that’s what these guys are—super-talents who can do it all,” says **Jerome Sable**, who directed the film.

Sable & Batalion grew up as childhood friends in Montreal, Quebec, and are now based out of Los Angeles, where they first moved to for their play *J.O.B. The Hip-Opera*, a retelling of the biblical Book of Job through hip-hop. The show ran in Los Angeles (2005) and New York (2006) where it won awards and earned numerous rave reviews, including the *LA Times*, which described the play as “groundbreaking,” and *Daily Variety*, which wrote, “Not only one of the best shows of this year—it’s one of the best shows L.A. has seen in many years.”

Sable & Batalion's **The Legend of Beaver Dam**

Italian Premiere November 28th at the **28th Torino Film Festival**

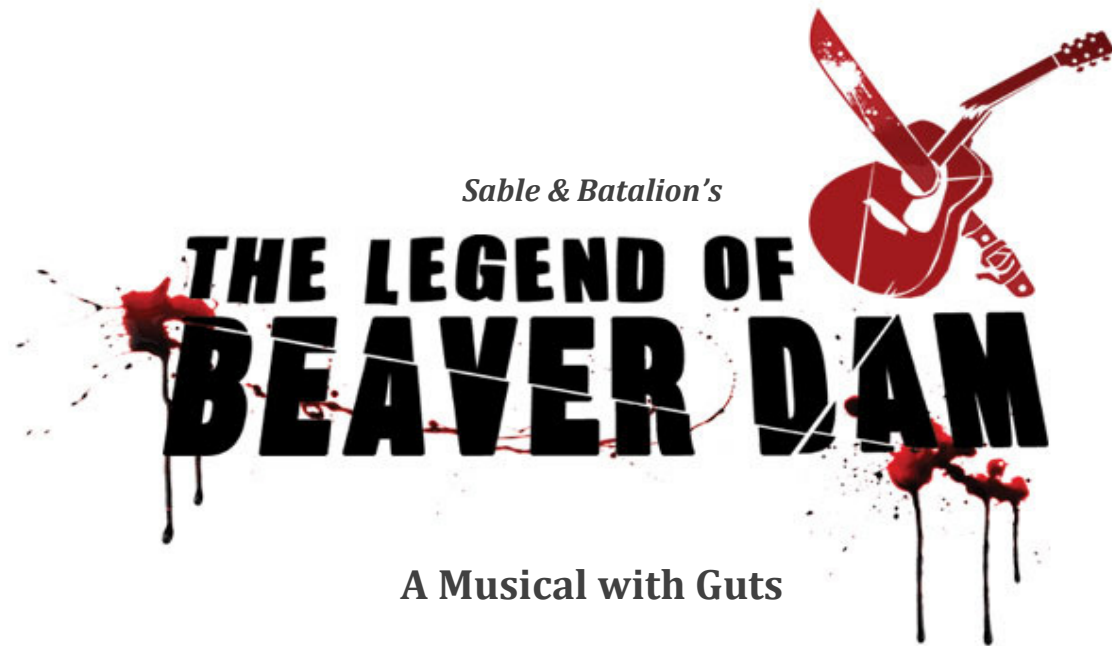
story, music, and lyrics by **Jerome Sable & Eli Batalion**

directed by **Jerome Sable**

starring **L.J. Benet, Seán Cullen, and Rick Miller**

“Pure bloody joy. Bursting with charm and invention, *Beaver Dam* is an ingeniously staged gore-soaked musical comedy that will blow minds across the universe. I adore this film.”

— Mitch Davis, *Fantasia Film Festival*



A Horror Musical Short Film with
story, music, and lyrics by
Jerome Sable & Eli Batalion

Watch the trailer at: **STUMPYSAM.COM**

High-Res stills at: **tinyurl.com/stumpystills**

(N.B.: Don't 'right-click.' Click on the "Download" drop-down button in the menu at the top of any photo.)



AWARDS

"Best Short Film" - 2010

SITGES International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia

"Best Horror Short Film" - 2010

Fantastic Fest (Austin, Texas)

"Best Short Film" - 2010

Screamfest LA Horror Film Festival

"Rising Star Award" (Special Jury Prize) - 2010

Edmonton International Film Festival



SYNOPSIS

When a campfire ghost story awakens an evil monster, it's up to nerdy Danny Zigwitz to be the hero and save his fellow campers from a bloody massacre. Crank up the volume and scream along to this musical gore-fest in the woods. Heads will rock'n'roll!

STARRING

L.J. BENET, Danny Zigwitz
Seán CULLEN, Pathmaster
Rick MILLER, Stumpy Sam

FILMMAKERS

Directed by **Jerome Sable**
Written by **Jerome Sable & Eli Batalion**
Music composed by **Jerome Sable & Eli Batalion**
Edited by **Nicholas Musurca**
Cinematography by **Matt Egan**
Special Effects Makeup **Hugo Villasenor**
Costume Design by **Carol Binion**
Production Design by **John Lord Booth III**
Sound Design by **Joe Barrucco**
Casting by **Laura Adler, C.S.A.**
Produced by **Michael R. Blaha, Jerome Sable, Eli Batalion**
Co-producers **Mikhail Samonov, Edward Brooke, Jacob Cowles**
Associate Producer **Aaron Greenberg**

THE FILMMAKERS

Sable & Batalion

(story, music, and lyrics) is the creative duo of writers-composers Jerome Sable and Eli Batalion. While now making their foray into filmmaking with the horror musical *The Legend of Beaver Dam*, Sable & Batalion are most known for their work in musical theatre. Both growing up in Montréal, Québec, Sable & Batalion started working together in 1993. Since then, they have written, composed, directed and produced dozens of theatrical productions across the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia. Their shows often combine a high level of literary and academic sophistication with extreme silliness and absurdity, and are often musicals.



They are most known for *J.O.B. The Hip-Opera*, a retelling of the bible's Book of Job through hip-hop, which ran in Los Angeles and New York where it won various awards and earned rave reviews. The *LA Times* called the 90-minute rap musical "groundbreaking," and *Daily Variety* wrote, "Not only one of the best shows of this year—it's one of the best shows L.A. has seen in many years."

Jerome Sable (director/writer/composer) is a writer, director and composer with credits in stage and film, and the "Sable" of "Sable & Batalion" (see above). Prior to *The Legend of Beaver Dam*, Jerome co-wrote and directed the short comedy series "crazy/sexy/awkward" for FremantleMedia, and the dance musical short *Meanwhile...*, which won the 2009 Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker's Award and was screened ahead of feature films on over 21,000 theatrical screens across the U.S., as well as on KCET's "Fine Cut Series."

Jerome received his Bachelor of Arts with honors in philosophy from Brown University and is a graduate of USC's School of Cinematic Arts, where he received the Harold Lloyd Memorial Scholarship, the School of Cinematic Arts Scholarship, and the Avid Academic Scholarship.



Full filmography at <http://imdb.me/jeromesable>

Eli Batalion (writer/composer) is a writer, producer and composer for film, TV and the stage with a B.A. from Brown University and an M.B.A. from École des Hautes Études Commerciales in Montréal, Québec. Working together with longtime collaborator Jerome Sable, he's written, composed and produced dozens of touring musical comedy productions across North America, the UK and Australia (including shows at such festivals as Montréal's Just For Laughs Comedy Festival, the Melbourne Comedy Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe), earning awards and critical acclaim from such sources as *Daily Variety* and the *LA Times*. He's also written for several films, including Dan Schachter's *L'homme qui se croyait l'eau*, a Top 5 Finalist of the 2010 RBC Emerging Filmmakers competition, and has the starring role in *Meanwhile...*, the dance musical short directed by Sable which won the 2009 Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker's Award.



Seán Cullen (Pathmaster) has been touring and performing as a comedian for the past 20 years. He started out as a member of Corky and The Juice Pigs, and has gone on to be one of Canada's premiere musical comedians, winning three Gemini Awards, starring in multiple comedy specials, and finishing in the Top Ten on NBC's "Last Comic Standing." In 2004 Seán starred as Max Bialystock in a successful run in the Canadian production of Mel Brooks' *The Producers* and toured parts of Canada and the U.S. with the Barenaked Ladies. He can be seen at this year's 2010 Stratford Festival in George F. Walker's *King of Thieves* and *Peter Pan*.



Rick Miller (Stumpy Sam) is one of Canada's most respected multi-disciplinary performers, with credits ranging from classical theatre to the avant-garde, from musicals to live comedy, from voice work to film & television. He is the host of ABC's hit primetime series "Just for Laughs", and Entertainment Weekly has called him "one of the 100 most creative people alive today." His award-winning theatre work includes starring in and co-creating Robert LePage's epic 9-hour play *Lipsynch*, creating and performing *MacHomer* (150 cities, over 700 performances, over 500,000 fans), and *Bigger Than Jesus* (winner of three Dora Awards in 2005). Rick lives in Toronto with his wife Stephanie Baptist and their daughters Vivian and Ellen.



Praise for **The Legend of Beaver Dam**

"Pure bloody joy. Bursting with charm and invention, *Beaver Dam* is an ingeniously staged gore-soaked musical comedy that will blow minds across the universe.

I adore this film."

– Mitch Davis, *Fantasia Film Festival*

"If George A. Romero and Meat Loaf made a musical horror comedy, it would probably look and sound a lot like this. Consider it a future cult classic."

– *Toronto Star*

"As hilarious as it is vomitous. It will blow your brains and rock your world."

– *Fangoria*

"One of the most inventive and groundbreaking horror shorts ever produced."

– *Dread Central*

Praise for **Sable & Batalion**

"I have followed their career for many years now. They're great storytellers, full of passion and intensity, hugely imaginative and wildly entertaining."

– Atom Egoyan

"Sable & Batalion are innovative and mature filmmakers with a knack for musicals."

– Paul Reiser

"Geniuses. Sable & Batalion make one hell of a double act."

– *Toronto Star*

"Polished, dazzling, unexpected, clever, funny, exciting, political and pop-cultured... Sable & Batalion will take your breath away."

– *Eye Magazine*

"Winner of the 2009 Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker's Award"

Meanwhile...

Written & directed by Jerome Sable; Starring Eli Batalion

Watch it at sableandbatalion.com/coke

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2010

THE BIG INTERVIEW JEROME SABLE AND ELI BATALION

Richard Ouzounian's Saturday feature on the most intriguing names in entertainment

Blood, guts & rock 'n' roll

Montreal duo gets another big break: opening Midnight Madness at TIFF

Jerome Sable and Eli Batalion became famous in 2002 when they knocked the Toronto Fringe festival on its ear by combining the Old Testament and urban beats in *Job, the Hip-Hop Musical*. Now they're cross-pollinating again, rocking out while they tell a blood-and-guts campfire story in *The Legend of Beaver Dam*.

The movie is only 12 minutes long, but it impressed Cameron Bailey so much that the TIFF head honcho picked it to lead off this year's Midnight Madness series, on Sept. 9 at (when else?) 12 a.m.

"We're totally floored that this happened," says Batalion from Montreal. "We would have been happy to have wound up anywhere in TIFF but to open Midnight Madness? Wow!"

"I mean, do you know who else is part of the series? John Carpenter!" says Sable. "Man, for someone like me that's like winning an Oscar."

Their gore-drenched, profanity-laden, hard-rocking horror musical breaks about as many taboos as you can in 12 minutes, and does so on a tidal wave of laughter, thanks to sharp writing, clever direction, and over-the-top performances from the likes of Sean Cullen (as the archetypal ghost-telling camp counsellor) and Rick Miller (as the demonic spirit, Stumpy Sam).

"It was all a big 'what if' to us," confides Sable. "What if that old camp counsellor ghost story saga was true? Oh yeah, and what if it was a rock musical?"

"What if" has been the mantra for these two, with random flights of inspiration coinciding with talent and luck to propel them along a decidedly eclectic career path.

They're both 30, born a few months and a few blocks apart in Montreal, and although "we were aware of each other since kindergarten," as Sable puts it, "we didn't actually connect until we were 13."

Their family backgrounds were slightly different, with Sable's father being a lawyer and his mother a Freudian analyst, while Batalion's father, in his words, was "a doctor who would have liked to be a stand-up comedian in another life. The pin-

nacle for him would have been Jackie Mason."

Sable took music lessons at an early age and was also a popular child magician, entertaining at parties from age 11, but once he and Batalion got together, their path became clear.

"We started making movies for fun and we just couldn't stop," recalls Sable. "I was more concerned with operating the camera and Eli was way funnier as the on-screen talent."

They breezed through their high school years playing in bands and

making spoofy films. "Some were absurdist, heavily in debt to Monty Python," says Sable. "Others were Mr. Bean-styled educational videos and some were mockumentaries in the style of Chris Guest and Rob Reiner."

They both went off to the Ivy League (Brown) but kept honing their silliness, creating shows that played the Montreal Fringe with titles like *Carl Rosensweig, How Was Your Vasectomy?* and *Everything You Wanted To Know About Yourself But Were Afraid To Ask Freud*.

They might have continued indefinitely as kooky, clever kids performing for audiences of a dozen, but fate took a hand in the proceedings.

"We'd landed a slot in the Montreal and Toronto fringe festivals in 2002, but we didn't have a show," remembers Sable. "Well, we had one, a drama about two Wall Street bankers, but it was one of the worst ideas ever."

With the clock ticking and Montreal's *Hour Magazine* offering to put them on the cover, they had to come up with something.

"Well, we were really into hip-hop at the time," Batalion says, "and we thought it might be funny if we did an Old Testament story."

"I don't know why we picked Job," says Sable, laughing. "Maybe because we felt we were suffering so much through the creative process."

"The writing process was truly biblical," Batalion concurs. "We did it in six days, but on the seventh, we didn't rest."

The show exploded, following a triumphant run in Montreal with an ever bigger success in Toronto, and everything changed for the two guys forever.

"Yes, it brought us success and recognition," admits Sable, "but even more importantly, it offered validation for all the silly projects we'd been doing all our life."

The show spawned several sequels (including *Hip-Hop for Dummies*) and wound up with successful runs in Los Angeles and New York before, in Batalion's words, "we laid it to rest in September 2006."

Actually, Sable wasn't there for the show's death throes, because he had already enrolled in film school in Los Angeles. Batalion went on to tour the show as far afield as Australia, but Sable was busy learning how to be, he thought, a serious filmmaker.

"The movies I kept trying to make were the exact opposite of what Eli and I had been doing. Psychological thrillers, suspense, horror films. But then I realized I couldn't leave comedy alone, or music, and it all came together in the idea for *The Legend of Beaver Dam*."

The partners decided to reunite for this project, and Batalion flew out to Los Angeles, but a funny thing happened on the flight out. Literally while he was in the air, Sable got word that a project he had put into a Coca-Cola contest for new filmmakers had been selected.

"I met Eli at the airport," says Sable, "and told him *Beaver Dam* was going to have to wait for a while." The end result of their impromptu labours, *Meanwhile...*, once again scored, winning the Coca-Cola 2009 Refreshing Filmmaker's Award.

Fortified by success, the pair put together a crack production team to finally come to grips with *The Legend of Beaver Dam*, which they shot in California.

The kids at the camp are all from the top drawer of Los Angeles child actors, but for the two leading roles, Sable and Batalion went back to the true north, strong and crazy.

"No one could play those parts better than Sean Cullen and Rick Miller," insists Sable. "There wasn't an actor in L.A. who could touch them. They were absolutely unique."

Following the launch at TIFF, *The Legend of Beaver Dam* has already been invited to festivals in London, Los Angeles, Calgary, Edmonton, Austin and Barcelona. After that? You can practically see the glint in Sable's eyes as he describes their next project.

"It's called *Pine Rock*. Another summer slasher special. This one is set at a performing arts camp and the kids are 17, not 12."

"THINK OF HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL WITH A SERIAL KILLER."



Jerome Sable, left, and Eli Batalion have been working together since they were 13-year-old Montreal kids. "We started making movies for fun and we just couldn't stop," says Sable.

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 15, 2005

DAILY

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Information

VARIETY



DAILY VARIETY

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2005

[Legit Reviews]

J.O.B. The Hip-Hopera

(Stella Adler Theater;
99 seats; \$30 top)

A FDLT production with the support of Foreign Affairs Canada presentation of a play in one act by Jerome Sable and Eli Batalion. Directed by Stefan Novinski and Hassan Christopher. Sets, Donna Marquet; lighting, Steven Young; sound, Joe Barrucco and Martin Carrillo; original music, Jerome Sable, Eli Batalion and Joe Barrucco; choreography and staging, Hassan Christopher; production stage manager, Michele Cecilio. Opened Oct. 28, 2005, reviewed Nov. 11; runs through Dec. 11. Running time: 1 HOUR, 30 MIN.

Louis Saphire 1, Job Lowe,

MC Abel, others Eli Batalion

Louis Saphire 2, Job Lowe,

MC Cain, others Jerome Sable

Ensemble: Ervin Arana, Shawn Beck-Gifford, Hassan Christopher, Meredith Flores, Carin Noland, Naomi Rhoads, Aimee Zannoni.

Vocals: Nikkema Taylor.

Turntables: DJ Creativity.

By TERRY MORGAN

The world premiere of Jerome Sable and Eli Batalion's "J.O.B. The Hip-Hopera" is dazzling, a spectacle of such dense wordplay, energetic movement and musical diversity that it's almost too much to fully savor in one viewing. Directors Stefan Novinski and Hassan Christopher bring tremendous visual innovation to the show and have honed the perfs of the two leads to razor sharpness. Although this play is a loose retelling of the biblical story of Job, author-stars Sable and Batalion are really commenting on the current hip-hop scene, and the free-flowing wit and invention of their writing is stunning in its dexterity.

Hoover Records is the biggest hip-hop company in the world, and Job Lowe (Sable and Batalion alternate in the role) is head of A&R. Most people in the company, from the devilish VP of finance Louis Saphire (S/B) to the higher-than-



Jerome Sable, left, and Eli Batalion wittily adapt the biblical story in their musical play "J.O.B. The Hip-Hopera."

thou president J. Hoover (S/B), are simply in it for the money. Lowe, however, wants to get away from gangsta rap and instead embrace hip-hop's inherent artistry.

Unknowingly, he becomes the victim of a bet between Saphire and Hoover and has everything stripped away from him, just to see where his true loyalties lie. Wannabe rappers MC Cain (Sable) and MC Abel (Batalion) see this demotion as an opportunity for themselves to get noticed, and if Job can swallow his pride, they might be his shot at redemption.

Sable and Batalion are excellent, trading off playing characters from moment to moment in a dizzying display of acting prowess. Sable seems to get more of the sympathetic material, and he's convincing as the idealistic Job and MC Cain, though his bitchy interpretation of Saphire has a wicked edge to it. Sable's wizened, bent-over, garrulous J. Hoover is hilarious, an ancient Gilbert Gottfried maddened with power. Batalion excels with the angrier roles, and his version of Saphire seems barely able to contain his boiling rage. He is also very

funny as the well-meaning if not brilliant intern Eleanor, intoning her slacker motto: "I can do, like, whatever, if my heart is pure..."

An integral part of the production, the fantastic ensemble sings and dances — and these performers can move. Aimee Zannoni, in particular, has a lithe, graceful authority. Christopher's choreography and staging are so impressive that one could remove the words from the piece and the show would still be electric. His use of moveable metal frames is ingenious — first as desks, then as doors slamming shut and finally as a series of hoops for Job to leap through — and the concept of turning the circular logo of Hoover Records on the floor into a giant turntable is simple but brilliant.

Nikkema Taylor adds her lovely voice to the proceedings, and DJ Creativity lives up to his moniker with wizardly work on the turntables. The original music by Sable, Batalion and Joe Barrucco feels authentic and is toe-tappingly catchy. "J.O.B." is not only one of the best shows of this year — it's one of the best shows L.A. has seen in many years.