



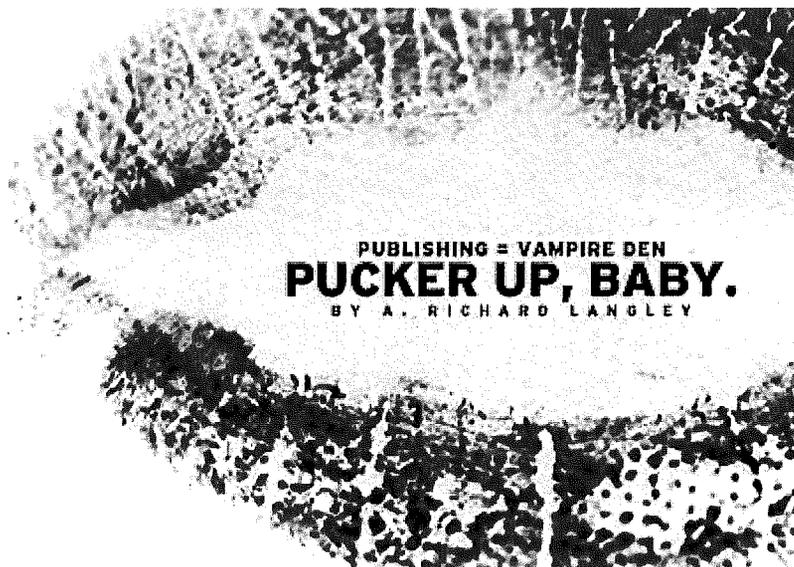
SHINYGUN

magazine

THE AUTHOR

a. richard langley lives and writes in atlanta. his day job as a technical writer pays the bills, but he yearns to write for a pop culture publication and document "complex" entertainers. his byline has appeared in *film threat* and *atlanta citymag*.

CINEMA.



RECENTLY

LIGHT & DARK.

A dark night of the soul: Ghosts linger amid the temporary Towers in Light at ground zero.
 by paul w. morris

GRRR! ARGH!

A girl can get tired of saving the world. Just ask Buffy -- er, Sarah Michelle Gellar. Joss Whedon is making it more and more difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins.
 by anaheed alani

PREDICTIONS.

A visit to a New Orleans psychic uncovers Joy -- or something like it -- in my future. Part one of two.
 by damon brown

LOVE & MATING.

Starter marriages and the single man. What's with the stampede to the chapel?
 by ben kim

LOVE & MATING.

I'm 24 and a virgin. Am I saving myself? Yes -- for a girl who will have sex with me!
 by elijah marshall

THERE'S A REASON CORPORATE FOLK ARE SO OFTEN DESCRIBED AS "BLOODSUCKING."

[posted 03.26.02]

A RIVETING CHARACTER STUDY creepily documenting the last days of a young, New York City literary agent's mental, physical and spiritual breakdown, *Vampire's Kiss* may not sound like a funny movie. But for those who have toiled in or within shouting distance of the hostile publishing milieu, no matter the pay or the post, the 1989 film from writer Joseph Minion (*After Hours*) and director Robert Bierman plays like a twisted documentary.

In one of his most over-the-top and best performances, Nicolas Cage is the aptly named and longing-for-love Peter Loew. Aside from his annoying part-British, part-Valley guy accent, Peter seems to

SCREWED.

There are two kinds of luck. Only one of these is to be trusted.
by meredith zeitlin

E-PROFILE.

The Playboy Advisor talks about being a sexpert, a zine fiend and a successful Playmate interviewer. Meet Chip Rowe.
by s. bornemann

BRUTAL LIZA.

Episode Six: For Valentine's Day the man in whose eyes I can do no wrong chose to dwell on the one thing I just can't do. Fabulous!
by ellen shanman

CINEMA.

The Royal Tenenbaums: A series of beautiful stills doth not a "genius" movie make.
by ben kim

CINEMA.

Royal Tenenbaums: The music and the message.
by bryson meunier

BRUTAL LIZA.

Episode Five: Happily coupled, Liza nonetheless finds herself dateless -- but not alone -- as she rings in 2002.
by ellen shanman

BOTTOM RUNG.

Fear and paranoia: How do you keep it together when the office body count keeps rising?
by s. bornemann

BOTTOM RUNG.

Unemployed and undermined at every step. Who let the world get so cold?
by meredith zeitlin

BOTTOM RUNG.

A dream job found and lost, her dotcom gig remains an affair to remember.
by alison evans

BRUTAL LIZA.

Episode Four: Life takes a twist for the better, and Dr. Right appears.
by ellen shanman

NEVERLAND.

have everything a media-minded young professional craves: a great job at a venerable literary agency, cool digs and an active social life. But we know from the outset that he has deep-seated issues about life and love. About yet another woman he met at a club and took back to his place, he tells his psychiatrist, "I wanted her the same as always, I wanted her to disappear, I wanted her to be the hell out of there...and she got the hell out of there."

Peter can cajole whatever, or whomever, he wants. While talking business and finance at a bar with a couple of buddies one night, he eyes something far more interesting and satisfying: a ravishing, dark-haired stunner (Jennifer Beals) in a nearby booth. He compliments Rachel's earrings, they exchange greetings and the scene cuts to Peter's bedroom.

The first time I saw the seduction sequence, I expected it to have more dialogue and to make clear whether Rachel was a figment of Peter's imagination. Even though Peter is good-looking, successful and charming, I expected he would have to work harder to woo the fetching Rachel. But after reflecting on the sequence a few weeks later, I realized it made perfect sense. We are so used to inane, stilted dialogue in love scenes that the efficient yet effective wordplay between Peter and Rachel catches us off-guard. More significant, Peter's effortless seduction of Rachel exemplifies what the media has led so many of us young professionals to believe: that we deserve to experience personal and professional happiness NOW. Unfortunately, the volatility of today's social and business climates proves the opposite.

Has Peter turned into a vampire? The movie, much like Peter, sends mixed messages. The morning after he beds Rachel, a chipper Peter brings her coffee in bed. But when he passes her the cup of coffee, hand trembling, the camera pulls

Nirvana ruined my life, sure, but thank god for that. Exploring the real impact of a watershed 1991 album.
by bryson meunier

BOYS W/BUZZ.
An attempted email debate on well-hyped band the Strokes and the machine they rode in on.
by michael solita

SOMETHING STINKS.
The defecating burglar: My cat saw it all, but she's not talking.
by s. bornemann

FILMMAKERS.
Moulin Rouge director Baz Luhrmann has a single aim. His films are meant to make you -- every last one of you -- not think, but feel.
by s. bornemann

back to show that no one is there. Naturally, sunlight bothers him, but he still goes to work during the day. In one of the film's funniest scenes, a deteriorating Peter stares at himself in the mirror at work and freaks out when he thinks he doesn't see his reflection. "Where am I?" he repeatedly shrieks to himself. Finally, a man in one of the stalls yells to him that he's in the men's room -- and *shut up*.

Initially, the "bitten" Peter is innocently eccentric. He wears dark shades and mutters to himself like some dysfunctional, ultra-chic Conde Nast editor one moment and stares forlornly out his window to a happy young couple in the park the next.

But Peter's behavior soon moves from benign to dangerously unpredictable. He mercilessly browbeats a secretary for failing to find an old contract a key client has requested. When Alva still hasn't unearthed the contract after a few days, he jumps on an empty desk to admonish her and then chases her down the hall into the women's bathroom. A twisted game of mental torture follows, with Peter ultimately raping her late one night at work.

In a sane and structured office, the higher-ups would (hopefully) not tolerate such irrational and criminal behavior. But, if myriad gossip columnists, magazine insiders (two excellent diatribes against Conde Nast come from ex-staffers: Ted Heller's *Slab Rat* and Toby Young's *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*) and media pundits are to be believed, key publishing players have free reign -- so long as their titles are profitable and attract the right demographics. Accordingly, Peter's superiors (all males), colleagues and even strangers on the street ignore the golden boy's venomous behavior, as when, arms flapping, Peter runs undeterred through the streets, screaming, "I'm a vampire! I'm a vampire!"

Peter is just as ruthless and unpredictable with his dates. Because Rachel has such a "hold" on him, he has many false starts. Guilt-ridden after leaving one woman stranded at an art show, he arranges to meet her to apologize, but as he's about to leave his apartment building he "sees" Rachel, who lures him back under her spell. Lonely and mentally tortured, Peter eventually kills a woman at a disco when he bites her -- with fake, plastic fangs -- on the neck.

Many of us may -- like Peter, Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* and the narrator of *Fight Club* -- float in and out of a strained dream state from time to time. While we obviously do not want to follow Peter's insanity-fueled lead, we do need to have healthy, constructive outlets to escape our shitty realities.

Peter, however, has no escape. At the end of the movie, Alva's brother tracks a totally deluded Peter to his apartment. He finds Peter hiding under the couch (his makeshift coffin) and fittingly avenges her death. Spared of any more lonely and torturous days, Peter truly finds peace and happiness.

We should all be so lucky.

--- -- ---

[about ShinyGun](#) | [return to index](#) | [our hack staff](#) | [submissions](#)
Join the discussion.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. | SHINYGUN PUBLISHING.