

Interview with Pascal Payant

Everybody that has been following Zeraphine, which are definitely the readers of the official Zeraphine Fanzine, are also familiar with the name Pascal Payant, since he worked on a project with Zeraphine and Sven Friedrich.

Because of the video clip *Tomorrows Morning* the fans are curious to know a little more about the man behind the scenes, Pascal Payant. Luckily, he has given us his time to answer a few questions.

[Shadowplay / SP] Pascal, what were your ambitions in becoming a director?
 [Pascal Payant / PP] When I was young, I was in front of the TV watching movies all day. I missed school to watch movies. When I was 16, I bought my first camera with my best friend. We practiced, made silly movies, and then at 18 I bought another camera and made my first amateur movie. That's when I totally fell in love with the medium, the process of creating, and capturing great images and moods. I found that you can achieve many things that I didn't know were possible. At that point, I focused on the path of being a director and the hope of creating more art, and I haven't stopped.

[SP] According to what criteria do you cast your actors/actresses? Do they have to be models or do you work with non-professionals also?
 [PP] I always say that anybody can be a great actress or actor, you just need to have the passion and dedication in of you. Once you have that, you can accomplish anything. I've worked with all kinds of people; non-

actors, models, professional actors, etc. If it is what you want and it's the vision you had in mind, then it doesn't matter if they are professional or not. For the *Tomorrows Morning* video, Esther is a professional actress in Germany and Mexico. For *White Blossoms*, the woman speaking is a professional actress and model, and the rest of the cast are models. Combined, everything fit, so it's a great example. The end result just needs to be perfect for the project.

[SP] How did you get in touch with Zeraphine?
 [PP] Last summer I was browsing MySpace and I did a search for „gothic rock“, and I found Zeraphine. I listened to their new album, *Whiteout*, and thought, „Wow, this is freaking awesome.“ I fell in love with *Tomorrows Morning* right away. It was melancholy and Sven's voice was gorgeous. Everything was a perfect blend in my mind. It's my favorite song on the album, so I wrote to Sven and asked, „Hey, do you want to do a music video?“ Then we went from there :)

[SP] What was the reason you decided to work on a video with Zeraphine?
 [PP] I always go for passion first – I'm a very driven person. I'll go wherever, whenever – I will travel anywhere to create art. When I offered to make a video for the band, they said yes, so I said I would come to Europe, bring my things, and let's make something gorgeous and different. I wanted to create something classy, elegant and poetic with a gothic mood, and I think we achieved that.



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[SP] To you, what is fascinating about Zeraphine and their music? Or is it just one of many projects for you? [PP] It's a beautiful relationship between artists. Sven is an amazing guy, super nice. We had a blast shooting the video. What I think is great about the band is that they make music for themselves, not to try to please anyone. They don't want to get too big because they might lose their creativity, so I think it's wonderful to see, and a great way of thinking. They are just regular guys, having fun creating music, and they respect the art. That's the most important thing, and I feel the same way.

[SP] Can you describe your feelings and/or thoughts while listening to Tomorrow's Morning for the first time? [PP] Every time I hear a song, I see images, mood, locations, etc. When I heard the song, I said I would love to do a music video, since it's my kind of music. I envisioned a castle and the band in a very elegant setting. My goal

was to create something different from what they have done in the past. Creating a mood and a feeling that the audience can say, „Wow, it's stunning.“ I don't like CGI or special effects because I feel like it creates a specific time/date for your video. If you watch it again in 3 years, you might say it looks bad or dated. I want my films to be timeless, and I think with Tomorrow's Morning we achieved that.

[SP] Where do you get the ideas and inspiration for your films? [PP] All of my films are very personal, all the characters are me, in a way. I want them to have a dreamlike, surreal feeling to them. Even if I'm talking about a very down-to-earth subject, I want it to be unique in the dialogue, music, and vision. You are living a normal life every day, so why take the time to create a film about the same thing? I want to escape and experience something different. I want to go into another world for five minutes and then come back to

reality. Music is a very unique tool to create imagery in your head. Everyone has many ideas, scenes, visuals in their head when they listen to music. It's the same for me, I just go and put that into a video.

[SP] And in case of Tomorrows Morning video? [PP] A long time ago, I wrote a musical piece that I wanted to shoot in a castle in Scotland, so when I heard this song I thought, „I can use that idea for the Tomorrows Morning video.“ The song was like a story, but at the same time I wanted a simple clip with a cool mood, normal pace, and a go-with-the-flow feeling.

[SP] Looking back to working with Zeraphine: What was your experience like working with them and did you enjoy it? [PP] Yes, I had a blast working with Zeraphine. I had a chance to hang out with Sven for six or seven days and we talked about art, the style of music in Germany compared to the states, and the process of creating. It was very nice to talk with another artist and compare how we create. We are very similar, so that was nice. It was my first time in Germany too. I traveled to seven countries in 20 days, plus I shot two music videos. It was pretty intense, but fun. When we shot the video, I didn't get to talk much with the band. I was too nervous trying to make everything right. I was the only person doing the technical aspect, so I was busy playing with the lights, camera, etc. Everyone helped, of course, but it was pretty hectic in my head :) I think they were all a little too shy to speak English at the beginning, but after a while I was able to coax some words out of them. The band was

very enthusiastic and they give it their all. When they saw the castle, I think they got an idea of my vision and we were able to connect.

[SP] It's quite a long distance for you, traveling from abroad to Germany for just one project. Was it worth it for you? [PP] Yes, it was also a vacation, and I didn't stop for 20 days. I went to France, Germany, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic. If it's worth the experience, I'll do it. Money will always come and go, but creating art and leaving an impression on people is more important.

[SP] How do you find the perfect location for your film? [PP] Location is always the third thing. First is the actor, the music, then the location. Every aspect of your film needs to be perfect or have the „Wow“ factor – that's what I call it. When you see the actor, they need to fit the mood, the piece. Then the music needs to be perfect for the same reason, and the location too. You can't have use an ugly location when you have a song like Tomorrows Morning. It's very important to pay attention to detail. For example: the candles, the lighting, the piano angles, the wardrobe, the movement of the band, etc. Sven was a natural. When the band was behind him and it was time to shine, they were all there. It was funny when we shot the low angle, Sven was like the German version of Keith Richards of Rolling Stones :)

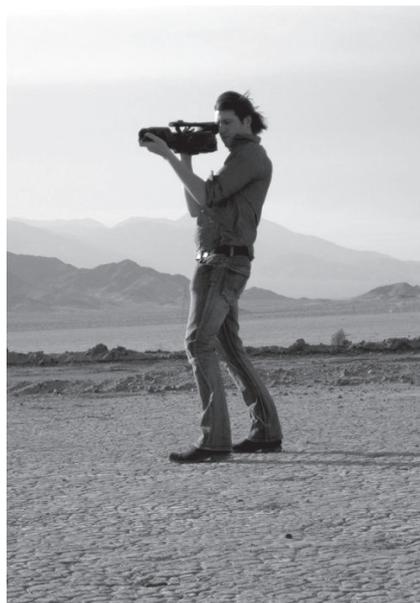
[SP] How do you manage the financial aspects to do your director's work? [PP] It costs me almost nothing since I always have my gear with me. I have

a job as a videographer in Montreal, so it gives me the freedom to do whatever I want. I save a little money, then I do a few projects. Most of my money is used for traveling. For White Blossoms, all of my money was used to rent a hotel. I'm lucky to have this kind of job because it pays enough to let me do what I love.

[SP] What is the most exciting thing about being a director? [PP] What I love the most is the collaboration with other artists. In Germany, for example, talking with Sven, traveling, seeing the band, creating something beautiful. Looking into your camera and knowing it will look amazing when it is finished. Directing a team of people who really believe in the project is the best feeling. I always have a sad feeling after a project is finished. I just want to go back and shoot more. I'm a very passionate person and I can shoot for 20 hours a day. Even Sven said to me, „Maybe we should continue to work tomorrow. We are tired.“ :) I think it's the best feeling you can get, creating a video. Another great time is when you get to edit a video. Editing a movie and a music video are totally different. Music videos have one song to focus on and to make it work. With movies you have the sound, music, pace, etc., and it's different. But with both, you have the feeling of, „YES IT'S DONE,“ then you are proud. You feel good about yourself, but then you have to post it online and wait for the comments. I've been lucky – the fans seem to like my video, so thank you all :)

[SP] Coming back to your work with Sven Friedrich: In addition to Tomor-

rows Morning, you produced another video called White Blossoms in which Sven is the singer. Could you describe and give us more details about White Blossoms? [PP] White Blossoms is a movie I made in October. It was a small concept I had in mind about the evolution of beauty. I met two guys in Israel who had written the music, so I said we should work together because it would be a great song for my movie. Later, they did another version for fun, and that is the version used in the music video. The second version is amazing, but it was too big for my movie, so I said, „Why not do a video version with a singer?“ I had just heard Zeraphine, so I wrote to Sven, and he agreed immediately. I asked Sven to write the lyrics, told him the concept of the video, and asked him to please send me the song when he was ready. One week later, he sent it back, and it was perfect. Since I was coming to Berlin to do the Zeraphine video, we took an hour



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to record the part of Sven singing for the White Blossoms music video too. I filmed Sven in Berlin and when I returned home, I incorporated all the girls from the movie to create the video with Sven singing.

[SP] Coming to an end, when you are not creating and directing films, what is your daily life like? [PP] I watch movies, listen to music, and I'm always searching for the next great band to collaborate with. I'm always thinking creatively. It's not working, it's my passion, and I can do it every day. When you love it, it's not work. I love to travel, work for days, shoot in many places, etc.

[SP] And your biggest dream in your life/your career is? [PP] Being recognized for my work. The opportunity to go



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to Berlin and shoot the Zeraphine video was wonderful. I'm preparing a feature film now. I'm writing something very unique and edgy that has never been done before. I will continue to post all the details and news about the feature film on my website pascalpayant.com. Thank you to all the Zeraphine fans!

[SP] Thanks a lot and all the best to you, Pascal!