

VIDEO VERITE

CARL PANZRAM: THE SPIRIT OF HATRED AND VENGEANCE (2011)

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D: John Borowski. John DiMaggio, Tom Lodewyck, Brett Jetmund, David Salmonson, David Weiss. 80 mins. (Waterfront Productions) 2/13

This is the kind of gripping documentary I've come to expect from John Borowski, late of 2004's **H.H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer** and 2007's **Albert Fish: In Sin He Found Salvation**. Using excerpts from Panzram's diary (read by DiMaggio), re-creations, and interviews with actual witnesses, authors and prison guards, Borowski introduces us to a serial killer with no conscience and a taste for vengeance. Arrested for a minor crime, he proudly confesses to police that he'd killed dozens of people. Abused in childhood and possibly brain-damaged after a home operation performed on a mastoiditis tumor behind his left ear, Panzram (Salmonson) finds himself in and out of reform schools after stealing a handgun from a neighbor's house with plans to escape to the West. He became a hobo at age 14, when he was gang-raped while riding the rails. "After that...I learned to look with suspicion and hatred on everybody...they made me what I am today." So he became a killer and rapist of men and boys. He lies about his age and joins the army during the First World War. "I was only in the army a month or two when I got three years in the military prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas...the harder they worked me, the stronger I got. I was the spirit of meanness personified." This documentary is chilling and informative. There are descriptions of prison torture that put one in mind of the kind of "enhanced interrogation techniques" used in Gitmo today and will stay with you long after the DVD has finished. My one gripe is the ridiculous mention on the DVD cover that DiMaggio is "Bender of **Futurama**." It just cheapens the whole production and is really unnecessary. He sounds nothing like Bender and at first you're tempted to try and make out the robot's voice in DiMaggio's performance. To his credit, there is not a trace of "kiss my shiny metal ass" in his portrayal. "For all the miseries and tortures I have went through, I have made other men go through many times over, only worse." DiMaggio's voice is filled with hatred and snarling, quiet fury. Highly recommended.

—Dwight Kemper