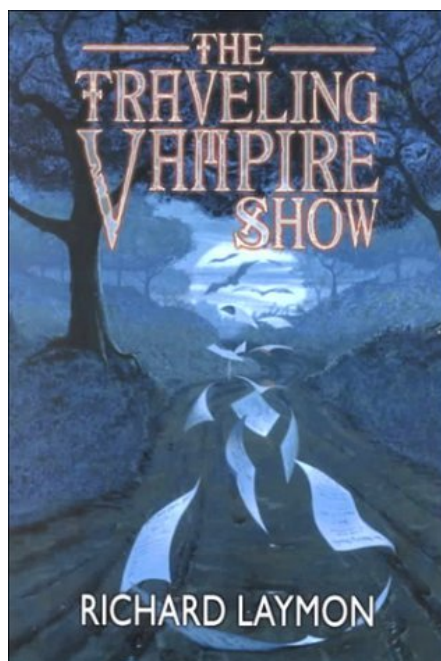




The Traveling Vampire Show

Richard Laymon

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Though gloomy with clouds, it is a hot, August morning in the summer of 1963. All over the rural town of Grandville, tacked to power poles and trees, taped to store windows, blowing along the sidewalks, fliers have appeared announcing the mysterious one-night-only performance of The Traveling Vampire Show.

The show will feature Valeria, the only known vampire in captivity. According to the fliers, she is a gorgeous, stunning beauty. In the course of the performance, she will stalk volunteers from the audience, sink her teeth into their necks and drink their blood!

For three local teenagers who see the fliers, this is a show they don't want to miss. But they may have to. Though they can probably scrape up the price of admission, other obstacles stand in the way. One problem, nobody under 18 years of age is allowed into the show. Dwight, Rusty, and Slim are only 16. Another problem, the show begins at midnight and the three teens always have to be home by then. If that weren't bad enough, the show is to take place at Janks Field -- a desolate patch of ground with a nasty history -- that has been declared off limits by their parents. The situation appears hopeless.

Though Dwight and his friends fear they won't be able to attend the actual performance of the Traveling Vampire Show, they do have the entire day to themselves. Why not hike out to Janks Field and take a look around? With any luck, they might be able to watch the crew make preparations for tonight's performance. If they're *really* lucky, maybe they'll get a peek at Valeria, the gorgeous vampire. And so the three friends set off on foot for Janks Field...

Dwight is a solid, honest kid, long on common sense and loyalty to his friends. He always tries to do what's right.

Rusty is a husky guy who relishes trouble.

Slim, their long-time pal, is the brains of the outfit, a voracious reader of novels, an aspiring writer, and a girl. Also, she is sometimes too brave for her own good.

The Traveling Vampire Show is the tale, told in Dwight's own words, of what happened to him, Rusty and Slim on that hot summer day they hiked to Janks Field. It's the story of their friendship and love, their temptations, their betrayals, and their courage as they went where they shouldn't go, did what they shouldn't do...and ran into big trouble.

The Traveling Vampire Show Details

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From Reader Review The Traveling Vampire Show for online ebook

Audrey says

I was totally disappointed in this book. I was expecting a chiller, and instead got a book about teenagers killing time. Halfway through the book we watched the protagonists do laundry, LAUNDRY! We don't even get to the Vampire Show until after page 400, and then the whole plot goes inexplicably bonkers. There were all sorts of loose ends left throughout the book that I was waiting to be resolved, but just left me with a bitter 'wtf' flavor in my mouth.

Edward Lorn says

Normally I would delete my old review and write another one, but my previous review is so epically bad that I want to show myself how far I've come not only as a writer but as a critic as well. (Wow... that sounded pompous as fuck. I mean, I know I'm awesome, but that shit's uncalled for.) Anyfuck, if you want a good laugh, read on after the final judgment for my original review... *cringes*

The Traveling Vampire Show has long been on my Top 20 Reads of All Time. Going into this reread, I was scared that would change. I've grown quite a bit, must've put on at least forty pounds since my last first read of this one. All jokes aside, the last time I visited Laymon's Vampire Show, I was not a father. Shit, I hadn't even met the woman who would become my wife. I had a pretty significant drug addiction, but, oddly enough, I remember almost everything that happens within these pages. I didn't expect that to be the case.

This book reminds me so much of my childhood: from vicious neighborhood dogs, to a foul-mouthed, constantly-horny best friend, and a gal pal that would become a first girlfriend. The book captures perfectly how fucking annoying it is to be sixteen and in possession of a penis. Things pop up at the most inopportune times and inject themselves into the situation. Ladies, imagine your vagina prolapsing anytime it feels like it. You're just walking down the street, wearing a skirt, it's laundry day and you don't have your favorite neon-yellow Simpson's thong on, when all of a sudden, you're dragging your baby-maker behind you. That would be awkward right?

(I'm laughing so hard right now. My apologies.)

Okay, so getting a boner in public isn't anything like that, but it is annoying. Some of us guys realize early that a woman's body is her own and **not** our entitled-ass' free-rein playground. We can be invited to play, but it's not our property. I think this book touches on that subject. I appreciate that Laymon, who was known for writing consistently about rape, wrote something that touched upon male sexuality in a positive light. Yes, some of us are rapey as fuck. Some of us are douche-tastic semen balloons just waiting to explode on the next pair of tits that walks by. Most certainly, if a man rapes a woman, it is **ALWAYS** the man's fault. Yet some of us respect women. Some of us understand that you're a person first and a gender second. And, although we love looking when you dress up, we understand that that doesn't mean we are entitled to see what's underneath. All that is what sets this book apart from most of Laymon's work. Sure, Rusty is a deviant little shit. But Dwight is constantly worried about what his dick is doing at any given moment, and his respect for Lee and Slim is real, even if he does like to look and fantasize. Dwight is a teenage boy. A damn well-written teenage boy. Rusty is not the norm, but there are plenty of Rustys in the world. That's liable to offend some. But at least it's honest.

All that is what I feel *The Traveling Vampire Show* is truly about – the uncontrollable aspect of our sexuality and the beast within. That perception is not always reality, is something else Laymon tackles. The title suggests this is a book about vampires, but it doesn't have anything to do with vampires. It has to do with being a teenage boy. Know that going in, and you should be fine.

Finally, the ending is one of my favorite endings of all time. I would say it's easily in my top five, but would hazard a guess that it's actually in my top three. It comes out of nowhere, like a brick to the face. Damn powerful.

In summation: *The Traveling Vampire Show* is still one of my favorite novels. Having grown up, I appreciate it even more. I remember being a teenage boy, and it's nothing to be romanticized. We're all idiots until about thirty, but even then, some of us never grow out of the boner-in-public stage.

Final Judgment: That ending tho.

Previous Review

This is, by far, Laymon's best work. I have read EVERYTHING the man ever wrote before he died in 2001. Next to Stephen King, no one has played a bigger role in molding me into the writer I have become. Laymon is not for everyone. He's a minimalist, never verbose, and can drum up a shock a minute while still developing characters. He has a penchant for borderline porn. If you're a prude, do not pick Laymon up. If blood and gore aren't your thing, STAY AWAY!

What I love about *The Traveling Vampire Show*, has nothing to do with vampires. Because, in fact, the book doesn't have any vampires in it until the last couple pages. Not being a fan of vampires, but a fanatic of Laymons, I decided to read this anyway.

This book is about the kids Laymon draws so well. Period. Their youthful adventures rival that of any youngsters King has EVER written about. I will forever be a fan of Richard Laymon because of this book. Even when he's bad, he's still rather good.

***** 5 Stars

E.

Mary says

This is the first Richard Laymon book that I read and the last he wrote before he died. It is an amazing book and won him posthumously the Stoker award of 2001. Though Laymon is not for everyone, his writing is filled with graphic nudity and often quite disturbing violence and images, many of his stories have a coming of age aura to them, and every book of his that I have read I was literally unable to put down until I finished it. He has definitely become one of my favorites. And I cannot recommend this book enough, especially to those unfamiliar with his work.

Dan Schwent says

Teenagers Dwight, Rusty, and Slim are an inseparable trio. When they see that the Traveling Vampire Show is coming to town, seeing the only vampire in captivity becomes the most important thing in the world.

The Traveling Vampire Show is a coming of age tale akin to Stephen King's *The Boy* or Robert McCammon's *A Boy's Life*, taking place in a single day in 1963. As the title indicates, the story revolves around the three teenagers' quest to attend the Traveling Vampire Show. Straight-laced Dwight, tomboy Slim, and asshole Rusty all seemed a lot like people I knew at 16.

Much like *A Boy's Life*, there's a lot of meandering. A lot of the book is the trio running from threats, real or imagined, and Dwight trying not to get hard around Slim or his sister in law. The addition of Bitsy, Rusty's sister, to the group showed the ugliness lurking beneath the surface of a couple characters.

I didn't mind that the Traveling Vampire Show doesn't make an appearance until the end. I did think it was unrealistic that they actually went given all that transpired early in the day. I also had some difficulty buying the others being friends with Rusty given what a selfish asshole he was.

The ending was actually pretty bad ass. I knew someone had to die before the story was over and there was death aplenty. I also liked that there were a lot of unanswered questions. Do any of the characters make appearances in subsequent Laymon books?

The Travelling Vampire Show is an entertaining coming of age tale but I wouldn't put it on the same tier as *The Body* or *A Boy's Life*. 3.5 out of 5 stars.

Michael Fierce says

So you know, I've been a Richard Laymon fan for 30 + yrs now, having gotten into him while searching for a list of books recommended by Stephen King while visiting **The Dark Carnival, in Berkeley, CA**, my favorite bookstore.

The handful of books I have by Mr. Laymon, I've read several times and thought they were good, some frighteningly good ~ with the exception of *The Stake* which I have tried to read a few times and it just never bit me hard enough to keep me craving for more.

So far, my favorite by him was *Resurrection Dreams* and if you like your horror with humor, you might just love it. Besides, it's about zombies...the best trendy thing since Halloween became a holiday.

Funland was eerie, scary, and demented.

Midnight's Lair was creepy and memorable.

His characters are always entertaining, in a head-shaking sort of way, and fun to watch what materializes for them on the road ahead.

...and to see what's just around that next corner.

His dialogue is fitting for the time & place, either steeped with dark humor or hellbent on making you laugh while you silently scream "**NO!**", and I believe no book of his could reach its end without a character or few being as naïve as feeder fish in a shark pool.

His stories are ripe with violence, blood red gore, full of sexual perversions, and horror galore.

Perfect if you axe me.

...and why he's been lauded by such notable authors as Stephen King, Brian Keene, Joe R. Lansdale, Jack Ketchup, Dean Koontz, Tim Lebbon, Edward Lee, Bentley Little, Simon Clark, and a slew of others, as one of their fave authors.

The Traveling Vampire Show is Laymon's stab at Something Wicked This Way Comes, as if written by a zero conscience Stephen King.

Recommended!!!!

*If you like this sorta thing check out my bookshelf: dark-carnival-night-circus.

If you are a book connoisseur like me, track down the 1st print of the paperback with embossed lettering. It's a great book to add to your **Dark Carnival/Night Circus Horror collection.

J.K. Grice says

I actually read this book twice. The first time I didn't care for it all that much. Maybe it was because I had just read Dan Simmon's classic SUMMER OF NIGHT, and THE TRAVELING VAMPIRE SHOW was the follow-up. Was I subconsciously comparing the two? Could be...

Years later I got to wondering if maybe I missed something in Laymon's writing. I love coming-of-age stories and vampires, so I decided to give the book another shot. I'm so glad I did! This story is sad, funny, scary, and just a plain good time as the reader follows the summer adventures of this group of kids. Great fun!!!

Quentin Wallace says

This was the second Laymon book I've read, and much like the first, I find myself torn about it. On one hand, it was very interesting and kept my attention throughout. On the other, I think about half the book could have been cut and you'd have had a stronger novel.

It's part horror and part coming-of-age young adult. Basically you follow a group of friends on a day back in 1963. A "Traveling Vampire Show" is coming to town, supposedly with a real vampire on display. The problem I had is things just seemed random and haphazard. It's written from the view of a teenage boy, and you never forget that due to his constant state of arousal. And really, so much of the book just seemed unnecessary.

The whole vampire aspect is confusing, even at the end of the book. The group of teens focused on come

across as warped and twisted by the end. There's plenty of gory death at the climax, but you have a lot of tedious reading to get through before it really picks up.

But as I said, with both this novel and with Funland, Laymon has a talent for holding your attention. Even if they're just hanging out grilling hamburgers, you are compelled to find out what happens next.

Overall I thought the characters were, I hate to say unrealistic, but something along those lines. There are some weird "side trips" the story takes that are strange as well. (view spoiler)

So, in closing, if you're a Laymon fan you'll probably enjoy this. If you like weird novels starring teenagers you'll probably like it too. Otherwise, this one probably won't be your cup of tea.

Chandra says

This. Book. Sucked.

Okay, first the plus side: Slim is awesome.

And that's about it for the plus side.

On the minus side: We have to see the awesome character Slim through the eyes of this annoying teenage boy who spends nearly ever scene she's in describing her butt.

Also on the minus side: Pretty much all the other characters were downright annoying. I was very disappointed they didn't ALL (except Slim) die horrible deaths at the end.

Once again on the minus side: This book was painfully BORING and full of descriptive descriptions describing descriptive things that don't need to be described. Picture Twilight, but about 5 times worse.

(Yeah. Preeee-ty bad.) For example: in one of the flashbacks, they go into all this detail about how they ate milk duds at the movies. This, by the way, had nothing to do with anything. Ooh, or how about when they made burgers? Did I need to know that the characters both love cheese on their burgers, and also that they like their burgers thin so that the inside isn't raw?

No. No I did not. And it didn't build suspense, like I know it was supposed to. No it did not. It just made me want to throw the book at a rabid squirrel and watch it chew the thing to pieces, but I couldn't, because it was a library book.

And that made me very sad, and pretty much ruined the rest of my day.

It's sad that a cool character like Slim can be in a book, and it can still be pretty much the worst book I have ever read in my life.

SUSAN *Nevertheless,she persisted* says

This was my first Richard Laymon book and it won't be my last.

It was a book that was beautifully done. It was a coming of age story that had characters that I fell in love with. This book was filled with girl power, Slim and Lee were powerfully written. They were brave,true and strong.

When Slim quoted a few lines of the St.Crispin's Day speech from Shakespeare's Henry V.,I was verklempt. It was a pleasure to read a horror novel with strong female characters.

And what can I say about Dwight,a hero worthy of Slim. Strong,sweet,brave and loyal.

I loved the story but I loved the characters more.

Mr.Laymon wrote a book that was more than a horror novel.

It is novel about honor, discovery, loyalty, compassion, friendship, young love, young lust and

friendship...the vampire was the cherry atop a terrific book.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

I actually read this several weeks ago, but never got around to reviewing it because I knew I had to get prepared for the backlash first . . .

Apparently I read it wrong. But guess what????

The premise here was a good one – Dwight and his friends Slim and Rusty see flyers all over town advertising a “Traveling Vampire Show.” The hint of danger and an “18 and over” requirement are enough to lead the trio into temptation and the remainder of the story is what takes place during one day leading up to the big shebang and their chance to meet the mysterious Valeria . . .

Here’s the problem. The first 50 pages or so were flying right by. Many of you know I have a kid who is required to read, but hates to read. We’ve had some luck with contemporary fiction and I thought if things didn’t get too stabby this might be okay for him (please note I had read **ZERO** reviews/knew nothing of this book except people liked it). The three kids wandering from one side of town to another for an adventure is pretty much my kid’s bucket list of a dream Saturday. But then I got to the part where there was a bit of danger and the MC Dwight decided to go borrow a truck and I was like . . .

The story immediately stopped working. Even with the “gather around children and let me tell you a story from when I was a kid and why don’t you have some Werther’s Originals while you’re listening” narration style I just couldn’t wrap my brain around these being sixteen year old children. I was thinking they were 12-14 max.

And then there was the non-stop boner talk. I realize that teenage boys often pitch tents in their pants, but the story became so hypersexual with more focus on premature ejaculation than plot that there was no charm left to any of the characters. Especially Rusty . . .

(view spoiler)

Which all led up to a pervert’s wet dream of an ending I knew was coming and a reading experience I couldn’t wait to be over.

I know I’ve really gone against the grain here, but save your breath if you plan on telling me I’m not allowed to have a differing opinion. Also, I’m already in my bag of shame so I won’t be able to see the comments

anyway

Amy says

This book is much different from other Richard Laymon books I have read, lacks the sex and gore typical of his books, and moves at a much slower, suspense-building pace. I absolutely loved it! It is hot, the summer of 1963, and three teenagers, Dwight, Rusty, and Slim, are anxious to see the one-night-only performance of The Traveling Vampire Show, which claims to have the only living vampire in captivity, Valeria, at the legendary Janks Field. As soon as they head out to Janks Field to get a sneak peak at Valeria, bad, mysterious things begin to happen. The entire story spans one long day, with occasional mention of past events to help better understand the three main characters, and ends with a bang. I highly recommend this book. It is one of my favorite Laymon reads to date, but if you prefer typical Laymon, you may not enjoy this one as much.

Bark says

I've read a few Laymon novels with varying levels of enjoyment. Resurrection Dreams I enjoyed for its gory over-the-top fun but I just couldn't get into Flesh or Funland .

Despite its title this book is not about vampires. It's about three 16 year old friends and their fascination with visiting the upcoming vampire show. It has moments of gore but mainly it's a coming of age tale focusing on these young kids. The lusty thoughts which I've come to expect from a Laymon book, and which usually crack me up for their out of place silliness, fit these characters and added to the tension of the book. The book takes place in the 60's when drive-ins were much more commonplace and the whole book has the feel of a good scary drive-in movie. It begins when these three hike out to an abandoned field reputed to be the dumping ground of a serial killer hoping to get a glimpse of the vampire before the crowds arrive. Instead they have a bad run-in with a mangy, possibly rabid dog and one of the kid's witnesses something she shouldn't and then weird things begin to happen and they suspect they're being taunted by the vampire folks. It's not until the very end of the book that the all out blood bath begins (and we learn some ugly things about some of our characters) but the tension leading up to it and the nice character study held my attention throughout it's 300+ pages. To date, this has been my favorite of all of the Laymon novels I've read.

Dave says

My first Laymon book, and it is most definitely not a book for anyone that is easily offended. Even if you aren't, another hurdle presents itself, are you willing to cringe your way through a bunch of unnecessary sexual content? Sooo much, at least a metric fuck-ton worth. Still here? Well, you must be a huge fan of Vampires then. Don't let the them keep you here, because this isn't even really a vampire centric story.

The Traveling Vampire Show is actually a fun coming-of-age story set in the early '60s. It does get bogged down at times, but it still managed to be a very readable book. Maybe it's because I'm a huge fan of Horror movies, and to me, Laymons writing feels almost like a Grindhouse/Exploitation film in book form. I am

curious if the rest of his books have this sort of aesthetic, as long as a reader can gloss over, or laugh off the severe risk of cringe-factor that is likely to ensue, I think this could be a fun author explore.

I decided to finally read Laymon, after years of hearing equal amounts of praise and shit being heaped upon his books by horror fans. He has hilariously been described as writing like Stephen Kings pervy uncle, and after reading Laymons take on a coming-of-age story, I can't really argue with that. I wasn't aware until I finished the book that *The Traveling Vampire Show* won the Bram Stoker Award for Best Novel in 2000, unfortunately Laymon passed away and was posthumously awarded.

Horace Derwent says

i want somebody to tell me, answer if you can; i just want somebody to tell me, what is the soul of a man?--
Ramblin' Jack Elliott

when you look over your shoulder, can you just see america's been left behind your back? can you feel the ineffable silence which has fallen onto life? and do you feel that you're alone?

last month, when me and my friend sat beside the sidewalk while he had his break during his work of gym card sales(he gave out leaflets then), we supped beer and nibbled dry pork knuckle slices then i asked, do you believe in ghosts?

no, that's not possible, and who cares? came the reply

then i said, i'd rather choose to believe, if you don't see something exist that doesn't mean it's really non-existing

so you can prove ghosts are real? question offered

i just answered with a question, you can't prove they don't exist, right?

~~~~~

i feel something more bitter from those pages this time, i just can sense and taste it  
all i wanna do is to perceive this world with open eyes, it's not easy, really. emotions, affections, confusions and temptations, doubts and hates and desires, many many shits, you can't keep an open mind all the time

i mean, the more true things you learn, the more pain you are in

i just hope those authors' works can help me stop sinking down and get unfucked in this knowledge fermenting world, this world is not a temple, it might be just the asshole of some god of which i struggle to creep myself out thru

that's it

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## Anthony Vacca says

The Traveling Vampire Show comes at the end of *The Traveling Vampire Show* because The Traveling Vampire Show is *The Traveling Vampire Show's* metaphor for death, in particular, the death of sexual

innocence and how that death defines the kind of person you will become if you survive The Traveling Vampire Show. Got me? This later, Bram-Stoker-Award-winning novel by Laymon is what counts for a “mature work” in the oeuvre of an author who had previously published a novel titled *Flesh* and another featuring rat people with a propensity for rape. This time around, the narrative is preoccupied with the details of an endless day of summer shared between three teenage friends, and how our narrator realizes his own romantic feelings for one, and his increasing unease with the oafish sexism of the other. Laymon’s characterization is often cartoonish, his plotting contrived, and his horror sleazy; however, it mostly works here, especially since Laymon seemed hell-bent on writing some strong female characters, even if he can’t help but do so through a sexed-up lens. Metaphor aside, the finale is a grisly riot, featuring a high body count and nude wrestling with a vampire that is essentially Vampirella. Breezy but disturbing, heartfelt but libidinous, *The Travelling Vampire Show* turns memories of adolescence into a celebration of sex and death. Like if Federico Fellini had tried his hand at directing an American grindhouse film.

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