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 ISSUE ON STANDS MAY 24TH

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ARTS & EVENTS » ARTS AND CULTURE

January 10, 2017

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EVENTS CALENDAR

WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

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A Book and Movie Discussion Group Brings Richmond Horror Lovers Together

BY [KAREN NEWTON](#)

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Invited to the Pumphouse for her first meeting of the RVA Horror Book Club, Kitty Barnes had one major concern: "I wondered if they were luring me out there to murder me and dump me in the water," she says, laughing.

What she found was a welcoming, organized group of people who shared similar interests and met regularly — not the dismemberment she feared.

The book club has met at locations that tie in with the book each month since its first meeting at Hollywood Cemetery in April 2012 to discuss Seth Grahame-Smith's "Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter."

When "The Exorcist" was the focus, they met at a park with an appropriately long staircase. For the graphic novel series "American Vampires," set in the 1920s, members dressed in period attire and met at the speakeasy Grandstaff & Stein for discourse and refreshment.

The RVA Horror Book Club is an outgrowth of Red Vein Army, a group of local actors who stage seasonal haunted houses. It's gone through 50 books, ranging from

TEDxRVA
x=Independently organized TED event

6.23.17



SPEAKERS FOR THIS YEAR'S EVENT INCLUDE:
 former aide to President Barack Obama / virtual reality artist / hand transplant pioneer / hosts of Black Joy Mixtape podcast / visual memory artist / surgeon practicing in fetal medicine

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modern psychological thrillers to 18th-century gothic classics in pursuit of spirited discussion.

"We try to choose books people will disagree over. So we picked Carmack McCarthy's 'Blood Meridian' because supposedly it's one of those books people either love or loathe," Barnes says at Gwar Bar, where the December event was held. "But we all hated it."

An inaugural Book, Brews and Booze event at Strangeways in 2015 was repeated last year and features a panel of five to seven horror writers taking questions from club members about the writers' perspectives. Periodic cyber events using Google Hangouts allow people outside Richmond to participate in book discussions.

Every meeting closes with a discussion of what's next on the reading docket and when members will get together. Occasionally, a Facebook poll is used to gauge interest in a book choice.

"If you show up, you get more say about the book and the date," says Ryan Sligh, originator of Red Vein Army and a regular participant. "We want to make sure everyone gets a voice." Members have a month to read the book.

"It's a very diverse group and it's never who you'd expect it to be," Barnes says. "Anyone can enjoy a good scary story, but what's interesting is that what one person deems scary may not be for another." She cites a psychological thriller such as "We Need to Talk About Kevin" as terrifying to only half the group. "It just depends on what scares people."

After Rachael Patrick joined, she checked out the past reading list to see what books the group had tackled. "I started reading some of the books I'd missed," she says. "I found some incredible writers and books that way."



"We are your area misfits and we accept everyone," Sligh says. "For me, the book club is a good discipline that forces me to read. Plus, it's amazing how different everyone's opinion will be about the same book."

A more recent but natural outgrowth of the book club is RVA Horror Movie Club. It's held five events, all tied to new horror releases and held at Criterion at Movieland. The group's love of the macabre extends to a Halfway to Halloween party that last year included building an escape room and having a band perform.



"Part of the reason I joined was because I wanted more horror lovers in my life," Barnes says. "RVA Horror Book Club was the only group actually doing things." S

For books and event information, see RVA Horror Book Club's page on Facebook.

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People's Blues of Richmond will be at Brown's Island his Friday, alongside other local bands.



Event Pick: RVA Music N...

Friday, May 26, 6 p.m.

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Food Review: At its new location, Sally Bell's Kitchen loses nothing in translation.

BY KAREN NEWTON

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