

**"We are not like other people":  
The Traditions and Online Interactions of the #MutantFam**



December 8, 2021



### **The Drive-In Oath**

We are drive-in mutants.  
We are not like other people.  
We are sick. We are disgusting.  
We believe in blood, in breasts, and in beasts.  
If life had a vomit meter, we'd be off the scale.  
As long as one drive-in remains on the planet earth,  
We will party like jungle animals.  
We will boogie till we puke.  
The drive-in will never die.

Joe Bob Briggs



## Fieldnote Excerpt

9/24/21

I'm sitting in my car after spending 2 hours at Monster-Mania, a gathering of all things horror. I'm trying to get this all out before I forget anything. Taking fieldnotes is a new level of convention multitasking for me.

I'm here tonight primarily for a singular experience - meeting Joe Bob Briggs and Darcy. I watched JB a lot growing up. Since his return via Shudder in 2018, episodes of TLDI have become date-night level events for Joe and I. Those are few and far between even pre-covid so they're special nights, near sacred.

I know this line of people I'm in are most likely drive in mutants too. The conversations around me are about Shudder, *MonsterVision* and *Drive-in Theater*. Most appear under 50, about my age. The line moves very slow. JB talks engagingly with everyone and entertains their questions - What's your favorite drive in, I saw you at the Jamboree, I'm writing an ethnography of the #MutantFam.

Four volunteers help build a metal frame for a selfie backdrop. They joke with us in the line, it takes them almost an hour to figure it out. People in the line pitch it. Once it's together everyone cheers. It's decided that JB and Darcy's merch table set up isn't working and needs to be moved. They come from behind the table and work with folks in line to move the t-shirts and photos to the new config. The celeb-fan dichotomy dissolves for a moment as everyone works together. It's a fun atmosphere, people are joking and laughing.

I'm nervous though, I'm supposed to be doing fieldwork, talking to potential interviewees but right now I'm just one Mutant in this rare offline gathering of the #MutantFam. I'm not very good at talking to people and this doesn't bode well for conducting ethnographic interviews. But I'm great at observing, that's what lurkers like me do best.

When it's my turn to say hello I say something to JB about growing up watching *Drive-in Theater* and *MonsterVision*. I try to say how much it meant to me during some of those lonely years. I briefly describe my project - he said he'd like to read it. I talk too fast because I'm so nervous, and I can barely remember what else I said. I know we laughed when I told them tonight is my 16<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and my husband is at home with the kids. "He knows who he married" I say. Shit. Is this what autoethnography is?



## Acknowledgments

Dear #MutantFam,

First, thank you to everyone who promoted and participated in this project. Your retweets and encouragement resulted in more volunteers than I could handle, an embarrassment of riches. You shared your thoughts and opinions with me about what this fandom means to you. You gave constructive criticism and offered solutions to its conflicts. We exchanged photos of our kids and talked about how we came to identify as Mutants. You shared your grief, trauma, loss, and described how this community has been a salve to those wounds. Sometimes we just talked good old-fashioned horror.

This project is not an attempt to frame the #MutantFam as an ideal fandom or to articulate the purest kind of weirdo in the ranks. There is no such thing. This is simply one Mutant talking to eleven others about what this community is and what we derive from it. The insights and anecdotes of these eleven Mutants tell the story of what is unique about the #MutantFam. The Drive-In Oath states, "We believe in blood, in breasts, and in beasts" and while this may be the beacon that draws us to the #MutantFam, it is not what binds us. We are held together by a love of artists, creators, misfits, and Others; this is our chosen family.

I wrestled with and resisted my organic inclination towards autoethnography but to be a dispassionate recorder and interpreter of your thoughts about the #MutantFam when I have so many of my own is an impossible task. This study appeals to my academic curiosity as well as my personal love of horror and TLDI but my position as both an academic researcher and a fan makes me a mutant of another sort, an "acafan"<sup>1</sup>. But because you have given so openly of yourselves in this process, please allow me to return that gesture with my own "horror story".

When I think about my love of horror it is thoroughly enmeshed with two distinct eras of my childhood. Starting around four or five years old, I would leave my room at night when I heard my grandfather get home from work long after the rest of the house was asleep. I would climb the stairs with my stuffed dog and yellow blanket, spread out on the living room floor and watch TV with him. This drove my mother wild. Sometimes he and I didn't speak as if neither could be held responsible if we didn't acknowledge each other. I was expected to return to my bed before anyone woke up. A silent contract I often broke because we both fell asleep in the wee hours. It was during these late nights I saw *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Halloween*, *The Shining*, *Hellraiser*, *The Fog*, and a good share of westerns too. I don't remember ever feeling truly afraid, probably because we were together, and I knew I was safe. I continued my love of horror as I grew, even after we moved, and I lived in a place that was decidedly *unsafe*. From about eleven on my horror habits were solitary. I spent a lot of time trying to fit in our new community, I spent a lot of time alone.

On weekends I would go to my Dad's house and we had a tradition. On Friday night we stopped at the video store, and he was pretty much resigned to letting me pick anything that wasn't rated R which during the 80s was quite a bit. Not that it mattered too much because he also had a descrambler, so each visit was an unsupervised, unedited cable bonanza. There was a

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<sup>1</sup> Kustritz, Anna, et al. "Acafandom and beyond: Week One, Part One (Anne Kustritz, Louisa Stein, and Sam Ford)." Edited by Henry Jenkins, *Henry Jenkins*, Henry Jenkins, 13 June 2011, [http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2011/06/acafandom\\_and\\_beyond\\_week\\_one.html](http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2011/06/acafandom_and_beyond_week_one.html).



TV at the foot of my bed, and it was there I discovered *Joe Bob's Drive-In Theater*, *Elvira, USA Up All Night*, *Tales from the Darkside*, *Ray Bradbury Theater*, *Tales from the Crypt*, *MST3K*, and *MonsterVision*. I was drawn to the shows with hosts, I liked the jokes and learning about the films. I felt like I was part of something, and I felt less alone.

I didn't talk about horror with too many people, I knew they didn't get it and they certainly didn't get me. Liking scary movies and gore made me "weird". But by the time I reached adolescence I was intimately familiar with being scared. Adults would often compliment my maturity and manners; my family took pride in how "grown up" I was. I wish I could go back and answer one of those compliments now, "Thank you for noticing that I'm 12 but act like I'm 40, it's probably all the adult level trauma I'm absorbing". But when I was watching John Carpenter or reading Stephen King, I was somewhere else far away.

At that age I knew monsters were real in a way I couldn't have conceived at age five, and maybe you knew that too. You weren't afraid Freddy would kill you in your dreams because you had seen the evil that exists in our waking world, at school or church or maybe right down the hall. Maybe someone made *you* feel like the monster.

But now we're all grown up and can seek out our own kind online, but being older doesn't always make it feel easier, does it? We can still feel alone. The Mutants I interviewed all describe themselves as active community participants, but I know there are many silent Mutants lurking out there because I've been one. Engaging with you all on Twitter has been a personal test, I've spent a lot of my life trying to avoid being seen. Baby steps though, putting yourself out there is a difficult thing. Right now, I'm fighting the urge to press Ctrl+A DELETE, make this all disappear and write a strictly academic summary. I won't though, that would be equivalent of running up the stairs instead of out the front door with the boogeyman hot on my heels.

One of my daughter's favorite stories when she was small is from the book *Days with Frog and Toad* by Arnold Lobel, it's a short story called "The Shivers". In it, Frog asks his friend Toad, "don't you like to be scared? Don't you like to feel the shivers?" and then proceeds to tell a scary story. During the harrowing tale Toad repeatedly seeks reassurance from Frog, "are you making this up?", "did this really happen?" and receives only "maybe it did and maybe it didn't" from his friend. At the conclusion of the story, the veracity of Frog's account still unresolved Lobel writes, "Frog and Toad sat close by the fire. They were scared. The teacups shook in their hands. They were having the shivers. It was a good warm feeling". That is what The Last Drive-In and the #MutantFam has done for me. When we're watching together, I'm back in that safe place from childhood watching scary movies with my eyes wide open. Whether we talk or not it's enough for me to know you're all out there in the dark with the shivers just like me. That's why the drive-in will never die, and that *is* a good warm feeling. If you know what I mean and I think you do.

With much love and appreciation,

NikkiRockyHorror  
@ourethnography



## Introduction

When the opportunity presented to craft an ethnographic research project around a topic of my choosing I knew it would be something in the realm of the horror community. As the project came together the specific focus on the #MutantFam felt natural because this is the fandom in which I am most at home. The purpose of this study is twofold; to define and document the culture of the #MutantFam as it has been articulated by participants and identify any patterns in the emotional processes at work among community members. Traditional ethnography conjures images of white anthropologists hacking their way through the jungle to observe and interact with remote tribes of “exotic” people. While the general #MutantFam culture is familiar to me, selecting Twitter as my fieldsite felt as foreign and exotic as any remote location. Notebook at the ready, I re-downloaded the Twitter app, reset my forgotten password, and entered the field.



## Background

For the non-Mutants, despite its name, the #MutantFam did not congeal and emerge one by one from a rusted drum of neon ooze emblazoned with biohazard symbols. Nor did it spring from a cracked and steaming meteorite in a cornfield. The #MutantFam fandom primarily presents in online communities today, but its origin story spans decades and crosses mediums.



The foundational element of the #MutantFam is Joe Bob Briggs, the cowboy persona of film critic, author, and actor John Bloom. Using humor and an encyclopedic knowledge of film facts, Joe Bob offers commentary on B-movies often ignored by mainstream theaters and traditionally relegated to drive-in audiences. The idea of the shared experience is central to Joe Bob's concept of the "drive-in". The drive-in is a cultural equalizer, we attend together and in the dark we are all the same. Drive-in Mutants have recited Joe Bob's Oath for decades. Prior to the fandom's most recent incarnation fans first discovered Joe Bob's reviews in a newspaper column which evolved into a stage show and in 1986, *Joe Bob's Drive-in Theater* premiered on The Movie Channel. In 1996 Joe Bob moved to TNT and hosted *MonsterVision* until its abrupt end in 2000. In 2018 as a result of the lobbying efforts of drive-in mutant and superfan Diana Prince, aka Darcy the Mail Girl, Joe Bob hosted a thirteen-film marathon on the Shudder streaming service. Intended to be a one-time, farewell event, fan response overwhelmed the live stream and crashed Shudder's servers. For fans old enough to remember Joe Bob's television era, Darcy had brought back something from our past we all thought was dead and gone; this is a resurrection story frequently preached among the #MutantFam and incorporated into its mythos. The term #MutantFam was first used by Darcy, now a crucial element of the program as well as the fandom. Her role as "Mail Girl" acts as a bridge between *The Last Drive-in with Joe Bob Briggs (TLDI)* and online fan communities during live streams and in between episodes. *TLDI* has since produced several holiday specials, recently completed its third season, and announced a fourth. Fan groups proliferate on Twitter, Facebook, Discord, and elsewhere.

Darcy, obviously is the queen, but she is definitely the heart of the show, the one who brings everyone together. She is so inclusive with how she interacts with people ... and that's what makes us feel like we fit in.  
-Clarice S.



## Research Design

This project examines the #MutantFam culture as it exists on Twitter. As a solo researcher with only two weeks available to spend in the field, research activities were confined to this single fieldsite. Further study would be necessary to identify commonality or divergences among the community on other platforms. Participation in this study was restricted to Twitter users over the age of eighteen who self-identified as members of the #MutantFam. No demographic or identifying information was collected or retained and pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee. Participants were recruited through posts on Twitter using the #MutantFam hashtag. Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted via Twitter direct message with each lasting between forty-five and ninety minutes. See Appendix A for interview prompt examples.

## Analysis

Each interview was converted into a transcript and uploaded into NVivo for qualitative coding using a grounded theory approach. The initial process resulted in sixty-seven codes which were ultimately organized under four primary umbrella codes, defining the #MutantFam, social media use and identity, emotions associated with #MutantFam membership, and emotional needs met by #MutantFam membership. The richest descriptions and themes emerged in conversations relating to defining the #MutantFam as well as affect which will be the focus of this narrative.

## Defining the #MutantFam

Each interview began with the same question, “How would you define a Drive-in Mutant and/or the #MutantFam to someone completely new to the group?” The responses unsurprisingly referenced horror, B-movies, and *TLDI*. Several interviewees described the #MutantFam as a safe

We like high brow, low brow, whatever we can get our hands on. We're not ashamed of liking gore, bad dialogue, nudity. We also love creators who care about fans and community.  
- Sydney P.





place to discuss films with nontraditional content. Seth B. depicted the group as “a way to celebrate horror films and societal edge films and culture with like minded individuals who don’t judge your tastes and welcome the weird”. The

“Three Bs”, blood, breasts, and beasts, factor prominently in the appeal for the Mutants I spoke

with but when describing the community with specificity beyond genre preferences, two significant defining characteristics emerged. First, there is an emphasis on supporting other Mutants, particularly in creative endeavors but also general wellbeing. Michael M. describes #MutantFam as more than a genre or media product specific fandom saying the groups’ composition is “definitely a community of artists, creatives, philosophy.” Supporting artists and

creators of all variety is a common element in the interviews. The desire to support other Mutants is most visible on the fan-run @TheMutantFam Twitter account. The account frequently promotes the art, music, literature, Kickstarters, and podcasts of #MutantFam members. But other forms of support are deeply personal, Laurie S. shared the

Mutant-care she received after the loss of a parent,

“I can’t tell you how wonderful everyone in this community has been to me. I could not have gotten through these first weeks of grieving without their kindness and generosity. So many people checking in on me, and reaching out, letting me know I can talk to them, means so much.”. Our conversations revealed similar examples of Mutants helping Mutants, but it would

We don't know names and stuff but we look out for each other and try to help and lift up whenever possible.  
- Nancy T.

I have seen more than one example of the community coming together to lift up, even defend, members facing mental health challenges, such as depression and even suicidal ideation. They have done daily check-ins with these individuals, either in public tweets, or private "how are you" messages, even giving out their personal contact information to serve as someone to talk to day our [sic] night.  
- Ellen R.



be difficult to detail here without risking confidentiality. These accounts of online and offline support were the rule, not the exception.

The second defining characteristic of the #MutantFam is an element of shared tradition and ritual not present in general horror fandoms. If the #MutantFam were a religion and some scholars note similarities in fandom rituals and participatory religious activities<sup>2</sup>, you could imagine the episodes of *TLDI* as Catholic High Mass, celebration and ceremony reserved for the holiest days, e.g. Christmas and Easter. These events draw the most viewers and inspire mass participation on Twitter. The smaller and more frequent watch parties run by subgroups using hashtags like #FrightClub or #Splatterday would be similar to weekly Low Mass. The structure of such communal activities mirrors physical gatherings in that we all arrive at a set time and place to watch films together. Mullis describes the role of performance and ritual in fandoms as “means of acting out a desired reality that is subjunctive in that it does not exist and hangs on the tensions with one that does...The subjunctive is not simply a mental construct, a set of myths or ideas, but is comprised of actions—in this case, rituals performed by people...such performances help make the subjunctive real for its practitioners”<sup>3</sup>. For the #MutantFam, the subjunctive thought of being together is achieved through virtual interactions and the

The Mutant Fam isn't about how many cult movies have you seen, or Argento vs Bava, Hennenloter vs Corman, it is about having fun sharing odd movies together as a shared experience.  
- Ellen R.

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<sup>2</sup> Mullis, Justin. “Playing Games with the Great Old Ones: Ritual, Play, and Joking within the Cthulhu Mythos Fandom.” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 26, no. 3 (94) (2015): 512–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26321173>.

<sup>3</sup> Mullis, Justin. “Playing Games with the Great Old Ones: Ritual, Play, and Joking within the Cthulhu Mythos Fandom.” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 26, no. 3 (94) (2015): 516. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26321173>.



performance of online and offline rituals. When asked about the significance of these synchronous community events, e.g. live tweeting during an episode of *TLDI*, each Mutant described these activities as important, significant, or essential to their concept of the #MutantFam. Mutants derive the most meaning from these interactions.

previous times watching ... I didn't get it. The first time I watch, tweet along and be welcomed by so many people, I was hooked. The inclusive interactivity is everything.  
- Clarice S.

Offline traditions noted in interviews include the wearing of horror or *TLDI* themed clothing and the preparation of special food and drinks. Laurie S. uses Friday night episodes of *TLDI* as an opportunity for selfcare, "I always try to go out that week and get some special snacks to eat. And it's been my tradition on those Friday nights that the hour before, I deep-condition my hair and sort of do pampering things. Then I rinse my hair during the break between the two films!". Online preparation can begin days or even weeks in advance as members post and retweet about the upcoming episode. Joe Bob and Darcy post clues and give prizes to Mutants who correctly guess the titles of that week's films. Several respondents reported

It's that party mentality. We're all in it together, even if the movie turns out to be "Things" (in fact suffering through a bad movie together is almost even better).  
- Norman B.

sharing selfies or photos of their home prior to the start of the stream. The anticipation building, preparation making and post sharing all mirror the activities of a traditional party despite nearly all participants reporting they watch *TLDI* alone. Regardless, the party-like atmosphere is achieved through the #MutantFam's emphasis on participatory culture. Everyone is welcome.

Together, the elements of support and ritual provide both the structure and "secret sauce" that makes the #MutantFam fandom unique to its membership. I experienced this firsthand while recruiting for this project. Lacking my own Twitter following, I felt as though I was tweeting my



recruitment post into the void. If not for the retweets of my post by fellow Mutants, this study would be wholly autoethnographic. There was no litmus test, no proof of membership required. I identified as a Mutant and a researcher and was accepted and provided with help. It was the simplest entrée into a social group I have ever experienced. I am also a participant in #MutantFam rituals. In our home, *TLDI* nights are treated like an at-home date-night. We buy special snacks, possibly a bottle of wine and settle in for whatever the double feature is that night. I have recently begun interacting on Twitter during livestreams as opposed to lurking and observing which has enriched my enjoyment of the community and built bonds with other Mutants.

The #MutantFam enthusiasm for this structure is an organic extension of the popularity of the horror host format first established in the 1950s. Hutchinson describes the impact and legacy of early horror hosts like Vampira, “When the public embraced horror hosts’ transgressive humor, the programs naturally created a public cite for inverting social hierarchies, sensibilities, and value systems...they also used television’s interactive qualities as a platform for audience participation”.<sup>4</sup> Joe Bob and *TLDI* are part of the evolution of this tradition, made increasingly accessible and interactive via the Internet.

With these elements in mind, the #MutantFam could be very broadly defined as a safe place for individuals who share an affinity for horror, cult media, and *TLDI* to discuss shared interests that are not limited to film. Live tweeting during new episodes of *TLDI* serve as integral sources of unification and renewal for

Finding more weirdos is refreshing but kinda was already one.  
- Michael M.

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<sup>4</sup> Hutchison, Phillip J. 2020. “Frankenstein Meets Mikhail Bakhtin: Celebrating the Carnival of Hosted Horror Television.” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 53 (3): 582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12921>.



the group while subgroups sustain the community with smaller, more frequent events. These experiences typically involve both online and offline traditions of preparation and sharing.

### **Mutant Affect**

Mutant interviews described entering the community expressing feelings of Otherness, isolation, and a general difficulty in finding and connecting with offline mutant-minded friends. The appeal of horror to the marginalized is not surprising. Much of the horror genre is imbued with ambiguity; Frankenstein's Monster is both fearsome and pitiful, Dracula is terrifying and alluring. These representations "can allow the viewer to embrace and reject these notions of otherness and difference simultaneously, permitting the existence of ambiguity".<sup>5</sup> whether we identify with the monster explicitly or the spectacle generally, it is within this ambiguous space we can find ourselves represented.

Horror fans are always so welcoming. They've never shunned minorities, lgbtq+, or any other marginalized community. That's where you went if you felt like the weirdo, the outcast. If you liked the dark and macabre. Being a metalhead Goth in a traditional Bible thumping southern family was tough. I have a good family, it was just tough fitting in.  
- Jack T.

For these members the #MutantFam provides a sense of community and belonging. Norman B. wrote "Joe Bob left a big impression on those of us who watched him on *MonsterVision*.

Artists, soothsayers, dreamers, we also collect a lot of folks from the LGBTQIA world and those that have a history of trauma or being abused and neglected, but we overcame that and this is where we can express ourselves and feel safe and appreciated.  
- Jerry D.

Many of us didn't have a lot of friends, maybe some struggled with sexuality or mental health

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<sup>5</sup> Boyer, Sabrina. "'Thou Shalt Not Crave Thy Neighbor': 'True Blood', Abjection, and Otherness." *Studies in Popular Culture* 33, no. 2 (2011): 22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23416382>.



issues. If you've ever seen Nightbreed that's like us.

Typically misfits who stayed home and watched movies." This type of response was not uncommon

among Mutants who expressed feelings of an inherent alterity separating them from either family, friends, or both. Joe Bob and *TLDI* provide the space for us to connect. Ellen R. writes "I

think something awakens in these individuals when they do discover the group though. A feeling of found family occurs, along with a sense of belonging". Some even expressed a belief their

Mutant friendships were stronger than offline relationships because there is no need for artifice or shielding of another's sensibilities.

Four interviews mentioned an increasing reliance on the #MutantFam community during periods of isolation due to Covid. Seth B. wrote about the #MutantFam as a place to escape pressures of pandemic life, "My wife was pregnant and really sick, I'm a health care worker and

I was surrounded by death and sickness. Didn't see friends or family for fear of being any sickness home. Really made me feel like I had friends who I could escape with for a few hours once a week.

Really helped me get through". These scheduled events provide us all with much needed escapism.

This phenomenon is articulated by Mullis as "fans partake in modes of cultural production and

consumption that work to produce worlds of fantasy within which they dwell, if even for a short

None of my real life friends or family are into horror.  
- Seth B.

"I likely spend more time interacting with friends on here now than with my friends in the "real world". But I probably also have more in common with them too."  
- Norman B

I think like many people, my involvement in MutantFam really intensified during the lock down during the early months of the pandemic. So isolated in the house, it was so nice to have a group of people to turn to. There were a lot of nightly watches, and people checking in on each other, and it was so nice to have the community.  
- Laurie S.



while"<sup>6</sup>. For those few hours, we give ourselves permission to laugh and be distracted by the absurd, grotesque, and the bizarre.

Feelings of nostalgia loomed large in many of the interviews. Participants reported their fascination with horror began at early age and were often introduced to the genre by a family member. These results mirrored those of Jess

Peacock's "It Came from the Academy: An Ethnography of Horror Fandom" where they stated "family was integral in sharing a passion for the horror genre, perhaps even a source of meaning and

When I was a kid I watched a lot of TV. I saw the film Hellraiser and that was it. I was hooked on those films. They scared me sure, but as I grew I fell in love with them and they became enjoyable. Like they hyped me up instead of scaring me.  
- Jack T.

tradition"<sup>7</sup>. This reflects my own experience being introduced to the genre by my grandfather at a young age and later incorporating horror movies into biweekly traditions with my dad before making largely unsupervised film selections. Several participants fondly recall these types of weekend rituals from childhood while also articulating similar feelings of anticipation and excitement surrounding #MutantFam events. Laurie S. described a ritual much like my own, "When I was little, I remember going to the video store with him and picking up movies, and then watching them on Saturday afternoons. I was probably way too young to be watching them

😊, but we watched them together." There is a strong association between childhood genre exposure and #MutantFam membership, nearly all participants report early childhood experiences with horror or cult media. For Mutants

who describe a history of solitary film habits, the #MutantFam provides a space to be part of a

I mostly watched movies unguided in the cable movie channels when I was younger.  
- Sydney P.

<sup>6</sup> Mullis, Justin. "Playing Games with the Great Old Ones: Ritual, Play, and Joking within the Cthulhu Mythos Fandom." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 26, no. 3 (94) (2015): 525. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26321173>.

<sup>7</sup> Peacock, Jess. "It Came from the Academy: An Ethnography of Horror Fandom." *Rue Morgue*, 24 July 2018, <https://rue-morgue.com/it-came-from-the-academy-an-ethnography-of-horror-fandom/>.



community that was not available to them in their youth. Engaging in #MutantFam rituals are a way for other Mutants to feel connected to a nostalgic past, even if those we shared those memories with are gone.

### **Inherent Mutant-ness**

Do you too find catharsis in seeing inattentive camp counselors get theirs? Could you spend hours debating whose portrayal of Dracula is best? (Gary Oldman's 1992 performance is the only correct answer, by the way). Have you disowned family members because of their opinion of *Halloween III*? You could be an undiagnosed mutant.

I'd say it is definitely a big facet of who I am. Or more correctly, it's a part of who I have always been, but now I have a word for it and a community to go along with; it gives me a place and way to share this part of who I am.  
- Ellen R.

The concept of inherent mutant-ness presented in three interviews. When discussing the role of the #MutantFam in his identity, Michael M. wrote about delving into the drive-in genre while experiencing health issues and never looked back, "It's like being diagnosed after having symptoms. You always had them but never had a formal disease diagnosed". This was the most exciting and unexpected theme to emerge from our interviews and deserves future study.

Renaming Otherness as Mutant-ness empowers the individual because mutation can be beneficial to our survival. Whether we are born this way or environmental factors force a radical change, mutant-ness is in our DNA.

### **Conclusion**

The #MutantFam are devourers of all forms of strange media, and despite the cornerstones of Joe Bob, Darcy, and *TLDI* we are not to be pigeonholed as

Unless a huge shift happens in my life I expect to be a participating member of the Mutant Family until I die.  
-Sydney P.





consumers of any singular media product. In fact, it was surprising how very little Mutants spoke about Joe Bob and *TLDI*, instead choosing to focus our conversations on each other and the feeling of finding a place we fit in the world. Darcy was brought up many times referencing her crucial role as a community builder. Her efforts to engage with Mutants on Twitter, Discord, and elsewhere are an essential component of the connectivity fans feel to the show and each other.

Given the way drive-in mutants have evolved over the decades into what is known today as the #MutantFam, we can be assured this is an evolving fandom. Television, streaming services, and social media help disseminate the content we love (and sometimes love to hate) and facilitate fan

It's clear with Joe Bob's career and message that The Drive In will never die and that's because it's us and it's not a show or a place.  
-Sydney P.

interactions but platforms will come and go. Who knows where we will congregate in another forty years? But I know this, we will continue to find one another at conventions, art house theaters, basements, and if you are lucky enough to have one, your local drive-in. The #MutantFam is what you make of it. Casual or intense. See and be seen. Or lurk. Go ahead and turn off the lights. Settle in, grab some popcorn and enjoy the show. We're right there with you.



## Appendix A

1. How would you define a “drive-in mutant” and/or the #mutantfam to someone completely new to the group?
2. Is the #MutantFam different from other horror or b-movie fandoms?
3. How were you first introduced to the b-movie and/or horror film genre?
4. How did you discover and come to identify with the #MutantFam specifically?
5. Where you aware of Joe Bob Briggs before his debut on Shudder in 2018?
6. How would you characterize your relationships with other mutants online? Friends, family, collaborators, something else?
7. How significant (if at all) is being a member of the #mutantfam to your identity?
8. How would you define the roles of Joe Bob Briggs, Darcy, & The Last Drive-in within the #MutantFam? Would the #MutantFam carry on without their influence? (It’s fine to address them as a collective influence).
9. How would you describe your social media usage in general? Which platforms do you use to interact with the #mutantfam?
10. Tell me about how often you’re posting with the #mutantfam hashtag or engaging with other mutants online?
  - a. What platforms are you using? Twitter, FB, Discord, etc?
11. What are your TLDI traditions, if any? If there is a new episode of The Last Drive-In coming up or any other live-stream/watch-along is scheduled, do you make any preparations beforehand? (make food, purchase drinks, decorate, etc).
  - a. What kinds of posts (if any) are you making or interacting with during this time? Are you posting any photos?
12. Walk me through what you are doing during the stream.
  - a. Is anyone with you?
  - b. What kinds of posts (if any) are you making or interacting with during this time?
13. How much does it matter what movie was shown?
14. How significant (if at all) are these online communal activities to your experience as a member of the MutantFam?
15. Would you attend (or have you attended) an in person Mutant Fam event like Joe Bob’s Drive-In Jamboree?
16. Do you think there are tensions within the #MutantFam? Is there anything you would change about the group?



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