



# **The Devil's Cinema: The Untold Story Behind Mark Twitchell's Kill Room**

*Steve Lillebuen*

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Reality and fantasy collide with shocking results in this riveting account of the notorious case of Mark Twitchell - and the police investigation into one of the most bizarre murders in recent memory.

In October 2008, Johnny Altinger, a 38-year-old Edmonton man, was on his way to a tryst with a woman he had met on an online dating website when he emailed the directions to their rendezvous to a concerned friend. He was never seen again. Two weeks before Altinger's disappearance, independent filmmaker Mark Twitchell began shooting a low-budget horror film about a serial killer who impersonates a woman on an online dating website to lure his victims to their gruesome deaths. But these are just the starting points of the stranger-than-fiction case of Mark Twitchell, a man with a startling plan to turn his life-long love of fantasy and desire for fame into reality:

- Did Twitchell, in a horrific example of life imitating art, act out the grisly premise of his own script?
- Obsessed with *Dexter*, the popular TV show and book series about a fictional vigilante serial killer, Twitchell assumed Dexter Morgan's profile on Facebook. But how far did he intend to take his fascination with *Dexter*?
- Is the shocking document "S.K. Confessions" a graphic work of fiction that, as Twitchell claims, he wrote to promote his film? Or is it a diary he kept of his transformation into a killer, and proof that the police stopped a prolific serial killer at the very beginning?

Veteran journalist Steve Lillebuen provides a gripping investigative account of the nesting doll intricacies of the case, plunging us into the world of pop culture fanaticism and into the mind of a self-professed psychopath. Drawing on extensive interviews, Lillebuen illuminates what can happen when some of our culture's darkest obsessions are pushed to extremes.

## **The Devil's Cinema: The Untold Story Behind Mark Twitchell's Kill Room Details**

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Author : Steve Lillebuen

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# **From Reader Review The Devil's Cinema: The Untold Story Behind Mark Twitchell's Kill Room for online ebook**

## **Alexis says**

Fascinating and well researched. I did follow this case when it was in the media, since so many of my friends were reporting on it, and I know a guy who went to school with Mark Twitchell.

I learned a lot about the case and the investigation, but felt that the organization of the book was TERRIBLE. There was also a lot of really bad writing in this book too.

Interesting, but poor execution.

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## **Natashya KitchenPuppies says**

Without giving too much away, I have to say that Steve Lillebuen did a fantastic job researching and writing The Devil's Cinema. He was there at the beginning as a reporter, and then dedicated several years of his life putting this book together, with unique access to all the people involved in the story and investigation. He writes the story expertly, saving some surprises along the way so that the reader enjoys an almost novel-like experience as they read this incredible account.

See my full review here - <http://livinginthekitchenwithpuppies....>

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## **Scott Harris says**

Steve Lillebuen recently took home the 2013 Arthur Ellis Crime Non-Fiction Award for this book, documenting his research and coverage in the fascinatingly strange story of Mark Twitchell. Having grown up in Edmonton, I found some of the scenery familiar as he described the events and locations. I was however startled by some of the city's more modern folklore - having dubbed itself "Deadmonton", which certainly played well into the book's central theme, but was not the case twenty years ago. I also noted that he mentioned only the Oilers when casting the long defunct "City of Champions" reference, overlooking the Eskimos who were equally impressive in those days. Whether football or hockey though, his point is not lost. As a former Edmontonian, the reference to Calgary as the "big sister city" was also enough to trigger old rivalries. These however are all minor distractions in this tale of one man's descent into embracing an apparent psychopathy, triggered/supported by pop culture and a cadre of people reinforcing the normalcy of his dark fantasies. The outcome is tragic from beginning to end but it is evident that the police prevented a much larger murderous spree through a combination of good work and the trail left by Twitchell's delusional sense of grandeur. A good read for those who enjoy this genre.

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## **Sunaina says**

I couldn't put the book down. I loved that the chapters were short, it's a Canadian book, and the author was

extremely well researched. I've read another true crime book "Captive" where the author was not as well researched and you could tell. This book right until the end kept me turning the page. Very little bias (that I detected).

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### **John Bartlett says**

There's a good mix in this book of journalistic observation, court and police proceedings which makes for a horrific story. The only query I had was with the chronology of the story. There seemed to be an amount of to-ing and fro-ing which I found annoying.

I think it would have worked better as a story if it was told in a chronologically straight line.

A good book to skim through quickly, especially because of some of the horrific details.

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### **Dallas says**

What a dive down the rabbit hole along the dark road of a real life murderer! The book is based upon the court transcripts and public records of Mark Twitchell's descent into committing a murder and trying to lie to everyone that he is not at fault for such egregious behavior. The narrative writing style is a docudrama that toggles back and forth from an omnipotent viewpoint and the internal struggle of the story's lead character.

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### **Carolyn says**

This is one of the better written, researched and interesting recent true crime stories. Some may recall a bizarre, and gruesome murder case in Edmonton, Canada in 2008. It involved the case of 38 year old Johnny Altinger, who disappeared after being lured to a rendezvous with what he thought was a beautiful woman he had met online. He was to follow directions to the meeting place he was e-mailed just before leaving to go there. He e-mailed a copy of these directions to a friend just before exiting his apartment and then vanished. Mark Twitchell had turned his obsession with Star Wars into making a fan film. He was now obsessed with the TV show Dexter. Two weeks before Altinger's disappearance he shot a low budget horror film about a man using an online dating service to lure victims to their deaths. He proved himself highly disorganized and erratic during the filming. He chronicled on his computer his plans to make a high budget film on the same subject, promising investors that he had some well known Hollywood actors interested in the project. At the same time he was communicating with men on the internet, taking on the persona of an alluring woman and using a photo of beautiful woman he had found online. He quit his day job and to deceive his wife, pretended to go to work, spending all the investors money on monthly bills and other items unrelated to film making. Twitchell visited normal social websites under assumed names, he also called himself "Dexter" on darker sites where people went to talk about fantasies of torture and murder, often hinting at or revealing his future plans.

Among other internet activities he called "S.K. Confessions" (S.K. standing for serial killer) he wrote about plans to carry out murders based on killings by TV character Dexter, with innocent men as victims. He even designed a room in a garage, complete with metal dissecting table, large plastic sheets to line walls and floor, electric prod to stun victim and lots of duct tape.

After Altinger vanished, his friends began receiving e-mails and seeing on Face Book that he had met a

gorgeous, wealthy woman and had gone to her summer home in Costa Rica for a romantic holiday. At first the Edmonton police felt this was not a missing person case, but with the growing alarm and suspicion of his friends, they began to investigate. It is thankful to the diligence of the Edmonton police force that a self-described psychopath and future serial killer was stopped before he killed again. There was also much stupidity on the part of Twitchell, describing all his murderous obsessions and plans. We also learn that he attempted a prior murder before killing Altinger in the same manner. He also described this online. The victim escaped as the electric prod didn't work as planned, so he decided to substitute heavy metal rods to stun his next victim. The injured victim got away, but was too embarrassed and traumatized to come forward earlier. Part of Twittinger's defense was that his writing were fiction aimed at publicity for his planned high budget movie.

The author was granted interviews by the killer's acquaintances who had worked on his amateur films, friends of the victim and also interviews with the killer himself. 4.5 starshh

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## **Aubrey says**

This was another case hitting close to home. Surprisingly, I hadn't even heard of it, yet the media attention was outstanding when you look back at media archives. I was quite surprised to find out that my hometown news paper was even there for some piece of the coverage.

What I found most fascinating is the complete break from reality that Twitchell clearly experiences. This obsession with creation and promoting projects is one I am familiar with. There is a fine line between fact and fiction, and one with a creative mind, such as Twitchell, sometimes has a very hard time distinguishing the two. Especially when your own dark desires are mirrored back at you.

That said, I want to make it very clear that his obsession with the TV and book series Dexter in no way influenced his actions - this is a position I firmly believe. Having studied psychopathy, sociopathy, and anti-social personality disorder to an extent, it is highly likely he harboured these desires prior to seeing them reflected to him through the media representation of Dexter Morgan. It is where he may have been inspired, but they did not, in any manner, give him the ideas to commit his crimes in the first place.

Twitchell further expresses his disinterest in reality by creating his own concept of his inability to express empathy. In this way, he is free to absolve himself of guilt by, for lack of a better term, pretending his is not responsible for his own actions. He takes none of the blame.

Reading through the case in this manner was fantastic. All information and dialogue are taken from court documents, police records, and interviews conducted by the author himself. It's this type of case I love reading. Facts - sheer facts, with little speculation. No fancy attention-getting scenarios. Just straight facts.

Another thing I found fantastic about this book was the connection the author tried to make between reader and victim. Johnny wasn't just another name on a list. He was a gentle, kind person. We connected with him, we got to know him, his friends, his family, his life. I haven't read very many true crime novels that express, to this extent, a want for a connection to the victim. It was refreshing.

The media may have sensationalized the crime to extremes - for it was quite the extreme crime. As extreme and sensational as it was, it is clear that Twitchell will never fully come to terms with his actions. I highly doubt that he will ever take full responsibility. He will also hide behind some semblance of his imagination, some lie, some fabrication. It's where his mind is most at ease.

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## **Lisa says**

This book included chilling details of how a man came to his conclusion that he was not only a psychopath, but wanted to be a serial killer. Well written and researched, everything comes together to give you as much of a satisfying answer as you can get to the question of how something like this could happen.

The really beautiful thing about the book though, is how it spends effort in making the victim a real focus so we would remember his name too. His life and his friends are made a real presence in the narrative, giving a glimpse into the harsh truth of what kind of person was ripped from the earth because someone felt a thrill in his death. Johnny Atlinger did not deserve to die, and this book does an excellent job of reminding the world that the victim is the name and face we should be thinking of when we are forced to look at what happened here.

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## **Lee says**

Good book.

Well-written, fairly unbiased, fairly non-sensational.

I appreciate that most of the information was gathered from sources besides Twitchell himself, though, it was glaringly obvious when stories were coming from the horse's mouth- very narcissistic.

Recommend to people who wish to hear the ins-and-outs of the Twitchell case- from the original occurrence, to how he was convicted and sentenced.

A warning to some: near the middle of the book, pieces of Twitchell's own account of the murder is quoted in gory detail- not over the top, but certainly stomach-turning.

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## **Laura says**

I could not put this book down!! Steve Lillebuen did a fantastic job researching and investigating a factual, non-fiction version of this case and presenting it as a fascinating look at a twisted killer. As an Edmontonian, I was already familiar with the Mark Twitchell case through the media coverage here, but this book did a great job of covering the story in depth utilizing not only the trial proceedings and facts of the case, but also interviews with family, friends and Mark Twitchell himself. I learned a lot about the case that I didn't already know. I also really appreciated that he did a wonderful job paying tribute to and respecting the memory of Johnny Atlinger.

Highly recommended.

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## Rachel says

I really enjoyed this book. A lot. It is a fascinating story and is incredibly engrossing. The effort made to convey details, mannerisms, and personalities allows us to "get to know" the people involved, so they become more than "characters" in a story. There is no sensationalism, which is greatly appreciated, especially in the true crime genre. It is so easy to make these stories into hyperbolic drama, and Lillebuen does a fantastic job of steering clear of that and presenting the story as it is: a tragic horror story that reminds us that we may not know everyone as well as we think we do, that everyone we meet online may not be who they say they are, and that, under some "good men's" squeaky-clean exteriors, slumber monsters. This case truly disturbed me, and I consider myself seasoned in true crime. It is hard to faze me, yet this case did just that.

Everything in the book is meticulously researched, allowing for even tiny mannerisms to be detailed. This book is all about those little details, and I think it is these details that upset me so much. After all, it is in the details that we discover the human side of the people involved. Including these details, and weaving them into the narrative overall, really showed *who* those involved were. Twitchell and Altinger also kept pretty prominent internet personas, and the public nature of Facebook and internet forums has made whatever they posted on the internet accessible. The inclusion of snippets of these documents just compounded the disturbing nature of the case.

In terms of more technical aspects: often this book read as a novel. In my opinion, this really helped to exacerbate the horrific nature of the case and made the book hard to put down. Several times I had to remind myself that this book is not a work of fiction: it is the true story of an innocent man who wandered into a predator's lair. Lillebuen's writing style is clear and vivid; it enables the reader to get a picture of what was happening and the progress of the investigation. The way he organizes the book may seem very disjointed, but I found it satisfactory as it progresses the narrative and switches between perspectives, so we see Altinger's final days and Twitchell's descent into homicide. The juxtaposition between these perspectives just exacerbates the disturbing nature of the story.

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## Jennifer Rayment says

The Good Stuff

Fast paced & truly fascinating

Very detailed and obviously very well researched

Not too sensational or descriptive of the more gruesome aspects of the case (I would have liked a lot less, but I am sensitive)

Author really tries hard not to put in his own opinions -- slips a little sometimes, but it would be hard not to

Impressed with the dedication of the Edmonton police force on making sure he didn't have the opportunity to kill again

Also impressed with the fact that justice system tried to protect his wife and child and I very much hope that they have a chance to have a decent life

Learned some interesting information on the work done by the police to catch someone like Twitchell

Writing style is easy to read, story sucks you in and disturbs you, but keeps you wanting to know what happened

Could lead to some fascinating discussions



I had never even heard of this case before I got the Random House list of books for review  
You get a little glimpse into Jeff Lindsay's thoughts on what he thinks about this case  
Good index (I know I am such a nerd, but hey it helped when I forgot things while I was writing this review)

### The Not So Good Stuff

Could have done with a bit less of the gruesome descriptions (I am sensitive 'kay)  
I am concerned that Twitchell will get attention from the publications of this, which he obviously gets off on  
Concerned with the fact that the thought of him getting killed in prison wouldn't be all that bad to me& that disturbs me  
The constant mentions of the comparison between Twitchell and the fictional Dexter were almost to the point that the author was saying that if it wasn't for Dexter, Twitchell never would have killed - think that is a cop out  
Might be moving to Alberta and the crime statistics are very scary to me - definitely not moving to Deadmonton now!

### Favorite Quotes/Passages

"Edmonton is not the end of the world -it's just easier to see it from there; Once quipped Ralph Klein, a colourful and well known politician. Many have adopted a similar self-deprecating attitude, wielding such ethos like an invaluable tool while residing in the northernmost major city of North America."

"Antsey had been waiting for lab results for three days, trying to be patient, but he was frustrated. Detectives started rolling their eyes when told the lab results for the new items taken from Johnny's condo still weren't back. They would joke that lab techs from television crime shows like CSI could get DNA results in an hour. In real life, there were city cases that had been stalled on DNA analysis for weeks, sometimes months.

"The burn lasted only a few minutes and died down as the fuel disappeared. Twitchell might have been smarter to mix some oil with the gasoline to make it burn longer, but he was a city boy and some things can't be learned on the internet."

### Who Should/Shouldn't Read

Obviously fans of true crime will eat this up  
Those living in Edmonton might be a little offended by the less than stellar comments about their city  
Fabulous book for a book club or classroom discussion

4 Dewey's

I received this from Random House in exchange for an honest review

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### **Neil Mudde says**

I picked this book up yesterday around 11 am, and finished reading it around 12:30 pm, what a spell binder what a horrific story about the evil that can live amongst us. I have read many true live murder stories, however this is Steve Lillebuen's first book, which is pretty amazing.  
Steve's background is veteran Journalist and he has written for the Edmonton Journal, The National Post, the

Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, the Sydney Morning Herald, and many other publications.

This story deals with the "Dexter Killer" Mark Twitchell, and not wanting to give away the whole story, since this is a "must read" Steve takes us deep into the extra ordinary police investigation and the lives of everyone involved telling all about details which he researched, and many from contact he had with the killer. Twitchell's own account in "S.K. Confessions" found on his pc, this is a book which is really worthwhile read, written in a to my way of thinking "Ann Rule style", giving one personal insights of the characters in the story, based on facts which often take a great deal of time and patience to obtain.

Being a mystery reader, I hate being told most of the story in a review, the only thing I can say, get the book, allow yourself a day or so, to sit back and become involved in the telling of this well pretty horrific, but very real story.

I am keeping my eyes out for the next book from Steve Lillebuen.

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### **Melissa Clark says**

Absolutely loved this book! Lillebuen's journalism background is obvious. His dedication to research and accuracy comes through in the well-written non-fiction novel.

Lillebuen did a fantastic job of incorporating all of the necessary details while keeping the reader engaged in the narrative.

Really recommend this book if you enjoy reading true crime stories, learning about the mind set of a sociopath, or have an interest in the Canadian legal system.

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