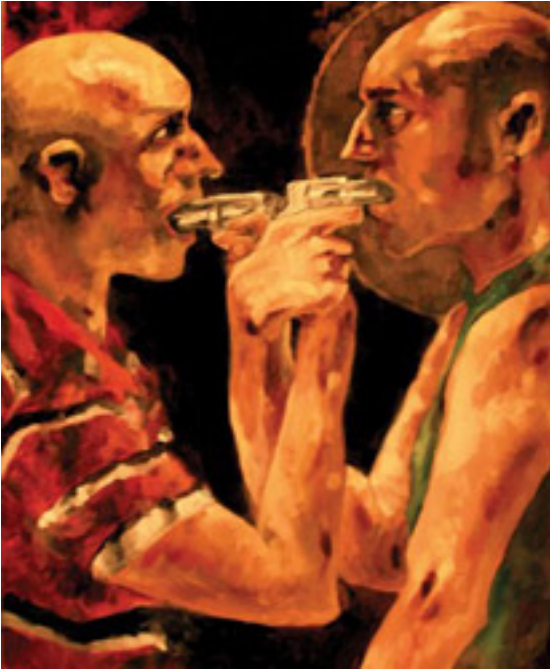


## Skinhead searches for self in surrealistic drama

Written by Kam Williams

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Back In 1996, riots broke out in St. Petersburg, FA following the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old Black driver by cops who had incorrectly suspected him of stealing a vehicle. During the disturbances which ensued, a police officer was shot and 28 fires were set by rampaging hordes of African American youths.

Chris Fuller, a white resident of the city who was 15 at the time, started writing a script about the incident, but from the controversial perspective of a skinhead. Although it took him over a decade to complete the project, the upshot of his efforts is *Loren Cass*, a surrealistic Southern drama sympathetic to the plight of young white rebels without a clue.

Using St. Petersburg's palpable black-white tensions as a bleak backdrop, *Loren Cass* focuses on the empty lives of three individuals from the Caucasian side of the tracks. But looks can be deceiving, for as the narrator inscrutably notes, "This is their story, and it's all a mother-[bleeping] lie."

There's bald from the ears up Jason (Travis Maynard), a tattooed wonder who likes to contemplate the meaning of life while waiting for a ride from Cale (Fuller), an equally-ignorant pal with a pickup truck. By day, the two have nothing more productive to do than to cruise around their lily-white enclave looking to beat the living daylight out of any African American pedestrians unlucky enough to be walking alone in the neighborhood. Evenings, they unwind in a nearby nightclub's mosh pit watching stage diving as noisy punk rock bands perform.

The third wheel to this tacky triumvirate is Jason's girlfriend, Nicole (Kayla Tabish), a slightly more complicated soul who works as a waitress in a truck stop diner. What the racist Jason doesn't know is that the object of his affection has a bad case of Jungle Fever. For at the point of departure, we find her secretly sleeping with a brother (Din Thomas) in her own bedroom and practically right under her parents noses.

But the movie is more of a meditative mood piece than a melodrama about race relations,

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because it is given to long stretches where Jason just sits on the curb holding his shaved pate in his hands staring at the piece of the street between his feet. Along the way, the daring director drops big hints that his antihero might be depressed, such as by having him hang out in a cemetery or extinguish a cigar on his own arm.

I'm not sure why it's even in the movie, but for some reason the film includes the disturbing scene featuring the unedited, graphic footage of R Bud Dwyer committing suicide by shooting himself in the head. I went into shock at that point and could think of nothing else.

So, what's the movie's message? Perhaps, that underneath the antisocial veneer, angry white males with suicidal tendencies are people, too. A sobering reminder if we all are going to have to get along in the all-inclusive, post-racial Age of Obama.

### **Very Good (3 stars)**

Unrated

Running time: 83 minutes

Studio: Kino International

To see a trailer for Loren Cass, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jX4HvrCDmPc>