

# The Seattle Times

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## U District bar still a haunt for Ted Bundy?

By Erik Lacitis  
Seattle Times staff reporter

When a British television company contacted Zach Peterson about videotaping at Dante's, he hesitated.

The Brits wanted to use the longtime college tavern he owns in the University District in a reality show about serial killers. This episode was about Ted Bundy, who, investigators believe, committed at least three dozen murders and possibly more than 100. Bundy began his killing spree in this area.

"Obviously, it's a little off-color. We're a college bar. I wouldn't want to cause damage to our image in any way," said Peterson 36. "I had mixed feelings about the whole thing."

In the early 1970s, Bundy used to frequent Dante's. The young woman believed to be his first victim reportedly had been seen at Dante's the night she disappeared. Lynda Ann Healy vanished from the University District in February 1974.

One part of the British TV series would feature a psychic visiting places where serial killers have been to sense whether their presence is still there — in this case, more than three decades later.

A local actor would be hired to portray Bundy sitting at the bar or standing by the pool tables, assessing the other patrons. It was a nonspeaking part.

All in all, yes, perhaps a bit off-color.

Peterson mulled it over and decided to go ahead.

"I think it's just interesting history, that's all," he said.

Peterson has owned Dante's since 1996, when he bought it from



DEAN RUTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Local actor Ryan Cooper portrays Ted Bundy in a nonspeaking role for a British television show about the life of the Puget Sound-area serial killer.



DEAN RUTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES

British production company Twofour filmed Saturday at Dante's Tavern for part of its "factual entertainment" TV show about Ted Bundy. Asked about signs of paranormal activity at Dante's, owner Zach Peterson knew of none.



his father, Larry Peterson, who had bought the tavern with a former UW fraternity brother back in 1968.

And so, on Saturday morning, a cheerful, six-person crew from Twofour, which makes "factual entertainment" programming sold in the United Kingdom and around the world ("The Beckhams Go To Hollywood," "Boob Envy," "Life Coaches From Hell"), showed up at the tavern.



COURTESY DANTE'S TAVERN  
A 1970s photo shows Dante's Restaurant and Tavern has changed little.

### Setting not much different

Dante's looks today very much as it did in the 1970s, with leather chairs, wood paneling and even some of the original pool tables.

The Ted Bundy episode, said producer Charlotte Wheeler, was one of eight for "Conversation With A Serial Killer," scheduled to air in Britain in September. For this episode, the crew is retracing Bundy's steps in the Puget Sound area and also in Tallahassee, Fla.

"We try to get inside the heads of the criminal from a psychological point of view," she said.

And the Brits' hope was that Bobby Marchesso, a psychic/medium/life coach based in Pasadena, Calif., would be able to contact Bundy, who was executed in 1989.

First, however, the crew taped Ryan Cooper, 30, a Kirkland actor who had answered a casting call for someone to portray Bundy.

For the shoot, Cooper wore the flared jeans that were in vogue in the 1970s, a turtleneck sweater and a leather jacket.

Normally, Cooper has his hair in a spiky style; for the shoot, it was straight and carefully combed.

With no speaking part, he tried to appear "as if I'm looking at lots of pretty women, thinking about approaching them."

It was, he said, "an interesting challenge."

Then it was time for Zach Peterson to be interviewed.

### Less than eerie

One of the crew asked Peterson whether he had experienced hints of paranormal activity at the tavern.

That seemed to take Peterson aback.

"No ... I wouldn't say that," he said.

Marchesso and his co-presenter for the episode, Julie MacDonald, a British freelance journalist, walked into the tavern and up to the bar, where Zach Peterson was wiping the counter.

Peterson briefly told the history of the tavern and pointed out where there once was a booth for patrons which is now a D.J. booth. That, he said, is believed to be where Bundy liked to sit and observe.

There were a couple of takes.

On the second one, Peterson added a bit more color, saying that for decades, Dante's was the district's "number-one college hangout ... probably a lot of giggly sorority girls, then and, still, now."

He had considered saying it "was a target-rich environment" but thought better of it, he said.

After that, Marchesso and MacDonald walked around the tavern holding minicams. Marchesso took digital photos.

"We felt a lot of energy," said Marchesso.

He replayed the photos in his camera and pointed out an "orb" — an 8-inch diameter, faint, whitish, spherical light — in a series of photos of a couch. It was, he said, not a reflection.

At one point where he said he felt energy, "My body started feeling flush and I started getting nauseous," the psychic said.

After the TV crew left, Peterson said one of his employees had mentioned hearing voices at the tavern.

"It's NPR. We actually hear the radio broadcast," he said. "It's because of all the speaker wires we have running through the place that picks it up."

He decided that, too, was best left untold to the Brits.

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