



# **The Secret Life of Dave Driscoll**

*by Jeff VanderMeer*

Dave Driscoll always did enjoy shooting guns, perhaps more intensely than your average gun owner. For many years he dreamed of meeting Philip K. Dick and Sam Peckinpah on the same night. Despite serving as a professor of humanities, he had long understood the impossibility of this, both parties being dead. However, starting in the summer of 2005, he began to spend no little time and effort on the most practical next best thing: building a time machine. He knew (and still knows) that in 1973 Dick and Peckinpah met in a Berkeley, California, bar for about half an hour. If he could only focus on that particular moment, he would be able to make his dream a reality.

Experimenting with several psychotropic and psychedelic drugs, varying the electrical currents passed through his extremities, carefully watching the documentary *Le Jete* more than one hundred times, and using stolen equipment from the labs of friends in harder sciences than the humanities, Driscoll finally managed to create precisely the right conditions in the right combination on October 29, 2006. Before strapping himself onto the time travel table, Driscoll—as he always did before a “PDKSP Attempt,” as he called them in his journal, to avoid discovery—strapped two holsters with handguns to his sides and held onto an old shotgun he’d picked up in a thrift shop. “You never can tell what you might meet,” he once wrote in his journal. “Old flames. Old enemies. Other people traveling into the past.”

Driscoll materialized in the bar at its farthest end—ahead of him, the bar itself, the stools, the bartender, the open door, a rectangle of light against the gloom, and framed by it: Philip K. Dick, sitting back on his stool, and Sam Peckinpah hunched over in deep monologue, both nursing whiskeys.

Peckinpah had his back to Driscoll, but Driscoll still recognized that distinctive back from the many old photographs he had examined late at night as part of his research.

Dick, meanwhile, was staring right at Driscoll, mouth wide, a look of horror on his face. Driscoll realized Dick had just seen him appear out of thin air.

“No, no, it’s fine,” Driscoll said, aiming his shotgun at the floor. “I’m not from the government. I’ve nothing to do with your wife or any ex-wives. I just—I’m just a big fan of you both.”

Dick was still making his amazed face, managing to say to Peckinpah, “He’s got a gun. He appeared out of nowhere. It’s just like I said. Just like I said.”

In slow motion—or so it seemed to Driscoll—Peckinpah turned, saw Driscoll, took in the weapons at his side, the shotgun pointed down, and drew his own gun, a Colt .45, and fired. Driscoll jumped to the side and the shot missed.

“No, no—don’t fire. I’m a friend!” Driscoll shouted as the bartender ran out the door, followed by as many customers as thought they could make it. Dick and Peckinpah stayed put.

“He’s a fucking demon or a devil or a wizard or something,” Dick ranted.

Peckinpah said nothing but fired again, right over Driscoll’s head, where he lay protected by an overturned table.

“Don’t shoot!” Driscoll cried out. “I’m from your future. I just wanted to meet you guys.”

“Shoot him, Sam.” Dick shouted. “He’s a government assassin from the future!”

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