

Mr. Spotless is Haunted

runner

An interview with Fathel Salha

October 23, 2024

Mr. Spotless celebrates it's fourth Halloween as Detroit's first haunted car wash. Here, Runner Magazine interviews Fathel Salha, who came up with the idea to start this spooky seasonal attraction at his family's buisness.



Runner: So you started the Haunted Car Wash at Mr. Spotless in 2020. What gave you the idea to do this?

Fathel: I was scrolling through TikTok. Oh, by the way, I'm not the first person to do this. I am the first person to do it in Michigan, but not in the world. There is a place that does it in California, and when I saw it I was like "oh this is cool".

R: And they do it for the Halloween season specifically?

F: Yes, I wanted to try to do a Christmas one, like different holidays, you know, but Halloween fits it the best. Like, I can bring one Santa, but I'm not gonna bring 15 Santas. For Halloween though, I can have 15 clowns here.

R: Right, exactly. Okay, so there are people who are dressed as clowns...Who are the actors? Are they the people who work for the car wash or do you hire people to do the scary stuff?

F: My family helps me. My family are the majority of the people behind the masks. I don't hire any professional actors or anything. Everybody that does the scarring are either my family or my employees.

R: Do they enjoy doing that?

F: They love it.

R: Okay, so it's for how many days in October?

F: Last week of October. The 25th to the 31st and it's open from 8 p.m. til midnight.

R: Do the actors who are dressed up have waterproof suits? Because they get really close to the cars from what I saw in the video...

F: Yeah they do get wet, but that's their job. A customer or random person looking at the car wash and seeing that might be like "that looks so dangerous" because they are so close to the machines and the cars, but in reality, once you work here for a couple days and you see how everything spins and everything, you'll be like okay.

R: So your family owns the car wash? What is your name by the way?



F: I'm Frank.

R: Last name?

F: Well, that's not my real name. My real name is Fathel Salha, but, it's easier for people to say Frank.

R: I see. So your family owns the car wash. How long have they owned it? Are you second generation?

F: My dad is the first generation owner, I am the second.

R: Okay, so what was their interest in running a car wash? Just because they wanted to have a small business and they know that Detroit is big on cars?

F: There was no initial interest in having a car wash business. My dad came here with his family from Lebanon with no money, and he grew up in Southwest, Detroit. He worked for people his whole life, saved up money and was able to buy this business and build it on his own from there.

R: Has anybody else done the haunted car wash thing since you started it?

F: Unfortunately, our neighbors down the street also decided to start doing it.

R: Ah, so now you have competition.

F: Yeah, it's like, I can't believe he would do that, I mean, we're down the street from each other. If he was on Michigan Avenue, I'd be like, oh cool, it's business. It's totally fine. For sure. But it's like, if you open a lemonade stand, and I open one across the street, it is just too much in one small area. It's very unfortunate that they had to do that 'cuz everyone's been coming here for years and now that's gonna be messed up a little bit.

R: That's why zoning exists, right? Haha. So what has the community said about the haunted car wash? Do they love it? Because I feel like there's not that many haunted attractions in Detroit.

F: Yeah you have to go pretty far for one, so the community does love it. The people that come to the Haunted Car Wash are also my customers on a day-to-day basis, so they give suggestions about new ideas I could try.

R: And what does your family think about it?

F: Well, they love it because it's fun, but my dad hates it because it's a lot of mess with the hay, the leaves, the fake blood. Oh, my god, he hates it. Haha.

R: Do you have different themes each year?

F: Every year I do something different. The first year I did clowns, and one day I'd like to do something with fire.



R: So what's the theme this year?

F: This year is definitely the big fuzzy animals...what are they called? Furrries? Yeah. Scary ones. I got two, three of those. I'll just add them to what I already have, so there will also be clowns.

R: Very cool. And is it more money for the haunted car wash than it would be for a regular car wash?

F: Yes, so let's say if you get a \$12 wash, it'll be eight more dollars, so pretty much \$20 for the attraction.

The Haunted Car Wash at Mr. Spotless will be open from October 25 - October 31, 2024. Check it out at 3827 Vernor Hwy, Detroit, MI 48216.

**Images courtesy of Mr. Spotless*

runner