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THE PLAGUE

WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT



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The following article is from the fall 2007 issue of MovieMaker Magazine

"The Best-Selling Indie Film Mag in the World"



Hal Masonberg has written screenplays for the studios, earned a living casting both features and commercials, won several festival awards for his short film, *Mrs. Greer*, and recently directed his first feature, *The Plague*, from a script he co-wrote



with writing partner Teal Minton. Sadly, the film was taken away from Masonberg and Minton during post-production and completely re-edited by the producers. For his first MM article,

Masonberg shares the story of how he spent eight years fighting to get *The Plague* made, how he then lost it and how he—along with several cast and crew members—is now taking a rather unconventional approach to get his original vision of the film released (p. 84).

HORROR STORY!

THE PLAGUE ON BOTH THEIR HOUSES

Not every Hollywood story has a happy ending **BY HAL MASONBERG**

W

HEN I WAS FIRST ASKED to write about my experiences making *The Plague*, I was thrilled to get a chance to tell my story. At the same time, I was gripped with self-doubt: Who's gonna care about my story?

It's the same old cast of characters from so many other Hollywood tales. What makes this version worth telling? Perhaps it's the fact that, for me, the story's not yet over...

ACT 1: My writing partner, Teal Minton, and I decide we want to make a horror film. Having grown up with the genre, we realize we haven't seen a truly horrifying one in years or, for that matter, a contemporary one made for adults. In our opinion, most of the great horror films had been done years ago and almost all of them dealt with fears that existed in society: The Communist scare that feeds the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; a woman's sacrificial role in society in *Rosemary's Baby*; a parent's inability to help or understand what is happening to her adolescent child in *The Exorcist*. These films terrified us and left us thinking, asking questions and looking inward.

So we write *The Plague*—a story about kids and violence in society. We tell it through the guise of a horror film about how people react when faced with a world where all children become catatonic, then wake up and strike out.

We shop the script around for five years looking for people who don't want to turn it into a teenage slasher pic. Meanwhile, the script's themes become more and more relevant with the massacre at Columbine, 9/11, etc. For a while, this scares people away. "We love it, but we can't do it. It's too timely, too sensitive." Even our agents suggest we shelve it and move on to something more commercial.

We end up at Seraphim Films, Clive Barker's production company. They love the script and want to make it. There is only one stumbling block: *The Plague* is nothing

like a Clive Barker film, nor is it meant to be. The producers assure us that the reason they want to make it is precisely *because* it isn't. "Clive Barker makes Clive Barker films," we're told. They tell us they want to create an avenue for smart horror films of all shapes and sizes, and use *Gods and Monsters* as an example—more a character piece than a horror movie. This is exactly what we've been looking for: People who understand the film and want to make it. *The Plague* has found a home.

ACT 2: The next three years of development reflect all our desires. The script gets even better; we're all on the same page and excited about the film we're making. We join forces with Armada Pictures, a production company that puts together the money. It's agreed by all that, once completed, we will take the film out to festivals to find its audience and a domestic distributor. We know this film is more character-driven and psychological than today's mainstream horror films, so it's not geared toward your typical horror fan.

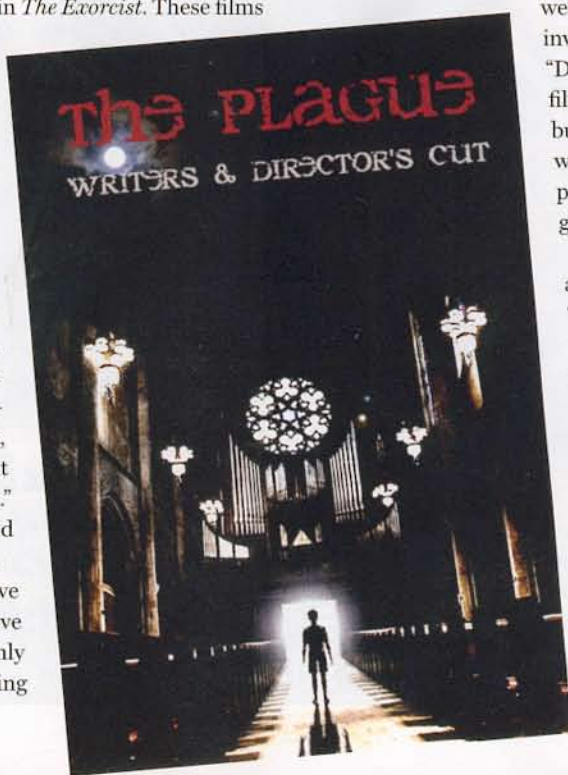
With our cast in place and the script in great shape, we head to Winnipeg, Canada to begin shooting. We're barely off the plane when we hear that Armada has sold the film to Screen Gems for domestic distribution. Normally this would be cause for celebration, but the sale is done in such a mysterious way, in defiance of everything

we've discussed and so completely without our involvement that we find ourselves asking: "Does Screen Gems want to make the same film we do?" We never get a straight answer, but there's no time to argue; we're a couple of weeks from shooting and knee-deep in pre-production. We tell ourselves it will turn out great... and move forward.

It's a grueling, wonderful, 20-day shoot and by the end, the producers are thrilled. "This is better than *anyone* expected!" I'm told repeatedly. We head back to Los Angeles for post-production.

Once in post, everything changes. I am in the editing room with six weeks to put the film together, when I notice some of the producers are acting cold and distant. Finally, one of them confides that "Someone at the top wants this to be a different film."

I rush to my agent's office with the news. "You shouldn't be worrying about this kind of stuff," he says. "You should





Hal Masonberg takes matters into his own hands with *The Plague: Writers and Director's Cut*.

be enjoying the editing of your film. It'll all work out."

But it doesn't. People I'd worked beside for years suddenly seem indignant. Others, who I had grown to consider friends, grow quiet and step into the shadows so as to not jeopardize their positions.

The day my contract ends, I walk into the editing room and one of the producers I've worked beside the whole time tells me, with frighteningly matter-of-fact casualness, "We're cutting down the characters and turning this into a killer kid film." Everything stops. "Why would we do that?" I ask. "We've worked so hard to *not* have it be that." He looks at me, condescendingly, "Because this is a *horror*

film called *The Plague*, not *The Tom Russell Story*." (Tom Russell is the main character.)

My stomach turns. The thing I'd most feared—the thing I'd fought eight years to prevent—was happening. I argue that this is not the time to abandon ship; that the characters are the film's emotional core; that if the audience doesn't care, they won't be scared. But it's too late. A decision had been made long ago and my time in the editing room had merely been contractual.

So I fight to save the film. I phone the producers, but my calls go unreturned. I offer to help the producers with *their* cut of the film in the hope that I might salvage something—one moment, one sequence, one tidbit of the film we'd made—but the producers are very clear: "This is our film now and we see no reason for the writers and director to be involved."

The door is shut. The betrayal I feel at the loss of the film is agonizing. I fall into a dark, devastating depression.

Now this is that place in the second act where the protagonist looks like he may not achieve his goal. But what is the goal at this point? That depends on my definition of "success." If my definition is to keep working and make money, then I should probably do what my agent and lawyer recommend: "Let it go. Move on." But if my definition of success is telling stories, growing as both an artist and a human being, reaching people on some deeper level... If the thing

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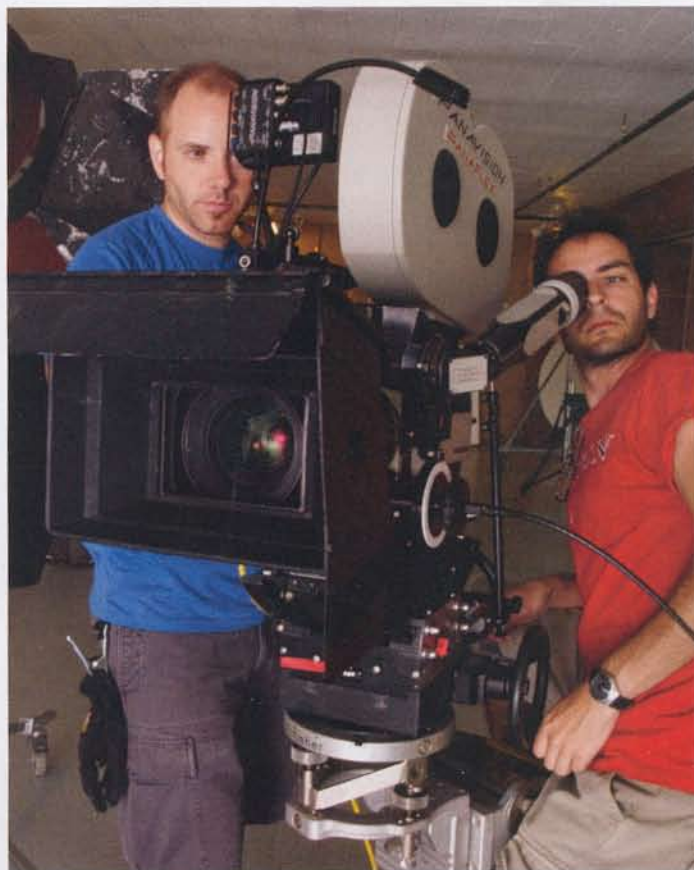
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that is most important to me about making this film is *this* film... Well, shit, how inconvenient would that be?

So, I decide: I'm going to finish my film.

My reps look back stone-faced, clearly not amused. When they realize I'm not joking, they spin into a tizzy, telling me it will be a career-killer. "I can't imagine *anyone* who would want to see your cut!" Maybe so, but my gut tells me otherwise; to fight this hard, to invest so much of myself psychologically, creatively and physically only to then have the film taken away and turned into the very thing I was making it in reaction to...

I fight the overwhelming desire to pack my bags and leave L.A., and instead take the digital dailies I have on DVD (the film was originally shot in Super 35 by the extraordinary Bill Butler, who shot *The Conversation* for Francis Ford Coppola and *Jaws* for Steven Spielberg) and transfer them into Final Cut Pro and start editing the film from scratch.

I spend the next six months in self-imposed exile. I teach myself effects and sound design; I create a temp score. This time, unlike the six weeks I'd spent in the editing room previously, I *really* get to study the dailies. I know every frame, every actor's nuance, every angle, every breath. I start to see not only the film we'd written but, more importantly, the film we'd *shot*. I discover that this part of the moviemaking process is one of my favorites and a part I never want to live without again. This is why I wanted to make films in the first place.

I finish the film and show it to the people closest to me. The response is overwhelming. People who never watch horror films are asking to see it again. Lovers of classic horror films are asking if they can have copies to show their friends. My friend Carrie jokes, "The reason they took your film away is because you made a horror film for 35-year-old

women with master's degrees and the producers didn't know what the hell to do with it!"

I show the film to some of the cast and crew and they are ecstatic. They agree that this is the film we set out to make. *This* is the film they want seen! I send a copy of my cut to Screen Gems. I have no idea if they ever look at it.

The producers' cut is released straight to DVD in September 2006 under the title *Clive Barker's The Plague*. The film has been completely restructured, stock footage added, new dialogue recorded, different takes used. Even Butler hasn't been invited to color-time his own work. My name is still attached as director, Teal and I as the writers. It feels like a wound reopened; the film in no way reflects our vision, work or intent.

ACT 3: Legally, I cannot show my cut of *The Plague* at the local multiplex or release it on video, so I make a documentary called *Spreading the Plague* in which cast, crew and film experts speak out about what I now call *The Plague: Writers and Director's Cut*. I create a Website, SpreadingThePlague.com, and post the doc for all to see. I include articles, trailers and interviews. Thousands of people log on. Other sites start writing about what has happened. I start a petition and link it to the site in the hope that Screen Gems will agree there is an audience for this cut and release it as it was meant to be seen. People immediately start to sign (and people are still signing).

The Plague: Writers and Director's Cut is about fear and how we react to it. That seems to be its story both on- and off-screen. It was fear that caused many of the producers to panic just as we were about to cross the finish line.

The story behind *The Plague* isn't finished yet. But I am certain that whatever happens next, it will have the perfect Hollywood ending. **MM**

Ai Miami International University of Art & DesignSM

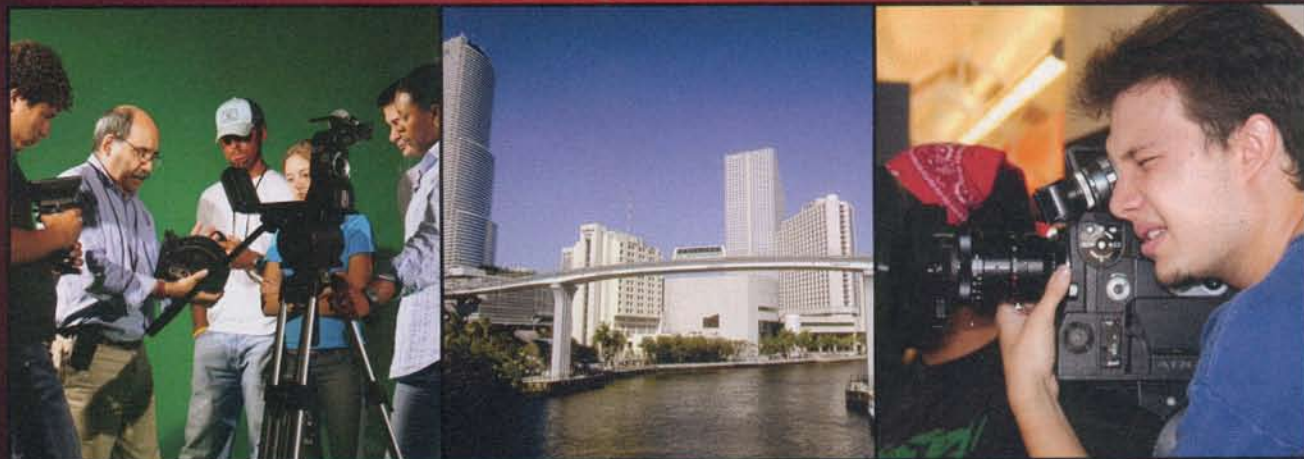
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Fan Rant: How Sony Sank 'The Plague'

by **Scott Weinberg** Dec 10th 2008 // 6:03PM

Filed under: Horror, Distribution, Home Entertainment



So a few years back I reviewed a horror flick for DVD Talk called *The Plague*. Not great, not awful, but kind of a choppy time-waster that starts out with a cool premise before devolving into some sort of forgettable zombie affair. A few months later I got an email from *The Plague* director Hal Masonberg, thanking me for the review, but also intent on setting the record straight: That a film he directed, co-wrote, and had big plans for ... was basically yanked out of his hands by Sony (Screen Gems Division), re-cut (badly), and dumped onto the video market with Clive Barker's name in front of the title. (Barker's production company made the film, but it is not based on anything he has ever written, so it seems really obnoxious to call it Clive Barker's *The Plague*. Of course I mean no disrespect to Clive Barker, who is a true lord among horror writers, but I'm just a little confused.)

I'm certainly not the first horror geek to cover this tale, but I figure it's worth mentioning again -- simply because I like people who try to make good horror films, and I say Hal Masonberg got screwed bad. Now the guy is risking some burnt bridges because he simply **WILL NOT STOP** trying to get his "Writer's & Director's Cut" released by Sony. The man is in a tough spot because it's really hard to support a Special Edition DVD when the first DVD went mostly unnoticed -- but Sony seems to think Hal has the better part of a million bucks, because that's what they're asking in return for the rights to the property.

And I think it's a little ironic that, about a year later, Mr. Barker himself was dealing with all sorts of miseries because a distributor (Lionsgate) was screwing one of HIS movies (*Midnight Meat Train*). Not re-cutting it and sucking its soul out, but messing with its theatrical release, which is also annoying, I

suppose. Anyway, long story short: Masonberg's preferred version is about fifteen times better than the one you (maybe) saw on DVD. Not brilliant, not a masterpiece, but a fine little horror tale that wanted to trade in a little character, depth and ambiguity -- and then got absolutely screwed for it.

For a whole lot more on this annoying story, check out Hal's Spreading the Plague website. I'd recommend you start with this article first and then pick through the home page. (There's also an hour-long documentary that covers the whole story, as well as a petition so you can help out a little.) And y'know, it's not just because it's a horror flick that this irks me so much ... it's that someone's passion project was taken away, transformed, trashed, and basically forgotten about. For lots of young filmmakers, that might be OK, perhaps even a necessary step on the painful trip up the Hollywood ladder -- but think about it: What if it was your movie?

Tags: [clive barker](#), [CliveBarker](#), [hal masonberg](#), [HalMasonberg](#), [the plague](#), [ThePlague](#)

Photo: © Sony Pictures



Help spread THE PLAGUE as its director intended

Fango recently heard from director Hal Masonberg, whose debut chiller THE PLAGUE was released to DVD last year as a Clive Barker film, even though the celebrated author/filmmaker wasn't directly involved in its production. And according to Masonberg, he himself had little to do with the version of the movie that wound up on disc either. "In fall 2005, THE PLAGUE was taken away from me and co-writer Teal Minton during postproduction," Masonberg says. "After an eight-year struggle to get the film made, the footage was recut from scratch by the producers without our involvement. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded and the film completely restructured, and it was released under the title CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE even though it was not based on any of Barker's work, and he personally had very little to do with the making of the film. That version of the movie in no way reflects our years of hard work, creativity or artistic intent. It is solely and completely a producers' cut.

"However, after having been removed from the film, I took it upon myself to finish it with the materials available to me -the dailies on DVD and a Macintosh computer turned postproduction facility," he continues. "The response to this Writers and Director's Cut from those who have seen it has been through the roof. However, without further support, this version may never see the light of day, as the film's current distributor, Screen Gems, has no plans to release this cut. I ask that you take a look at this site, where you will find an hour-long documentary containing interviews with myself and many others including Dee Wallace and other cast members, film authors and journalists. There is also a link to a petition and much more info on what happened to THE PLAGUE. We hope to convince Screen Gems that there is an audience for this cut of the movie and, perhaps, other films that have met a similar fate."

The site does indeed contain a wealth of information about the unfortunate circumstances surrounding THE PLAGUE which are, sadly, all too common to filmmaking today in general. Check it out! -Michael Gingold



(aka "The Plague: Writers & Director's Cut")

directed by Hal Masonberg

USA 2006

One day in the mid-1990's, David Russell (Arne MacPhearson, **POPULATION 436**) wakes up to find his son in a comatose condition. Rushing him to the hospital, he discovers that all of the town's children are similarly non-responsive. Waiting for someone to attend to his son, he sees a news report that confirms that every child in the world under nine years of age have simultaneously fallen into this catatonic state. Ten years later, they are still unresponsive. David's younger brother Tom (James Van Der Beek, **THE RULES OF ATTRACTION**) is released from prison and comes to stay with him. While most of the town's children are cared for in the high school gym-turned-medical ward, David has been caring for his now grown but still catatonic son Eric (Chad Panting). Tom also hopes to reconcile with his ex Jean (Ivana Milicevic, **CASINO ROYALE**) but she wants nothing to do with him. The same night of Tom's return, all of the comatose children simultaneously wake up and attack the adults in a vicious massacre. Tom escapes with Jean's brother Sam (Brad Hunt, **BLOW**) and they head to the high school to find Jean. They barricade themselves in a supply closet with eight surviving members of the medical staff and Tom climbs into the air ducts where he finds Jean. Meanwhile, Sam helps the others down a laundry chute and inadvertently right into danger. The survivors run into the sheriff (John P. Connolly), his wife Nora (Dee Wallace, **THE HOWLING**), his deputy Nate (Bradley Sawatzky), and teens Kip (Joshua Close, **DIARY OF THE DEAD**) and Claire (Brittany Scobie) who escaped the plague by a year and seem to relate more to the catatonics than the adults. Sam is injured and the group hold up in the church when they discover that the children now have guns and know how to use them.

The feature debut of Hal Masonberg, **THE PLAGUE** seems from its synopsis like any other "killer kids" movie (and that was what it was pitched as by the producers) but Masonberg's cut is thoughtful and suggestive (the catatonic-yet-receptive state is also a wonderful

metaphor for the way in which we shield children from more overt adult things while believing that children are deaf to things they should not be able to comprehend). Van Der Beek and Milicevic may actually be physically old enough to play their characters but neither of them look it. Neither are particularly compelling leads but they make the pivotal climactic scene work. The supporting cast is mostly fine (with nods to MacPhearsen and Wallace who jumps right back into terrorized victim territory without even the luxury of an introductory scene (even in the director's cut). While Masonberg largely resists MTV editing in favor of artful transitions, sometimes he does let some shots linger a trifle too long (the long pullback from the meaningful deaths of two characters shifts from anguish to "get on with it" in a few extra frames) but the measured pace is largely effective and refreshing. The cinematography of veteran DP Bill Butler (ROCKY) features consistently provocative compositions and naturalistic lighting (although some of this is dulled by the DVD dailies resolution and lack of more sophisticated color correction tools). The orchestral temp music is fitting although sometimes the levels dampen some of the sound effects.

THE PLAGUE was taken out of his hands by distributor Screen Gems who re-edited the film without his input. Several character bits are lost (and contained in the deleted scenes as they appear in the director's cut - looking slightly better here but still in 4:3 widescreen). While the director's cut had all of its credits at the end, the producer's cut adds a cheap-looking 34 second opening title sequence on black followed by about 40 seconds of second unit footage. Several other bits of second unit establishing shots take the place of Masonberg's more artful transitions in the producer's cut. Not all of the deleted scenes were completely removed. Some were trimmed to clip the long, tense pauses (like David and Tom's reunion) while others feature alternate takes with some different dialogue. The producer's cut seems to want to render the plague in a more visual and ambiguous manner while rushing the character bits. For instance, a scene of Tom watching a talk-show interview in which a woman talks about the plague (as seen in the director's cut) is replaced on the TV screen with some stock news footage of world chaos while Tom's reunion with his brother-in-law Sam features some extra dialogue in the producer's cut emphasizing all that Tom had to lose when he got in a bar fight that resulted in manslaughter and a prison sentence. The Father Jim character completely loses his introductory scene (it is featured in the deleted scenes) which was one of the film's many references to John Ford's adaptation of THE GRAPES OF WRATH. The suspenseful scene of the teens beginning to rouse from their catatonic states is differently edited here and lacks the setup seen in the director's cut. Overall, the differences were to pick up the pace, erase any subtle rendering of character and mood, as well as removing one bit the producer's thought too strong (featured in the director's cut and in the deleted scenes on the Sony release of the producer's cut).

Fortunately, Masonberg was able to secure his own in-progress cut in the form of DVD dailies along with other footage. In the days when Dimension Films was a relatively interesting genre company, a handful of their more ambitious projects were similarly tampered with and have not seen wide (or any) exposure in their intended forms (Guillermo

del Toro's MIMIC and Kevin Yagher's HELLRAISER: BLOODLINE come to mind). The Clive Barker presentational credit had already lost some of its cache by this film's release in 2006 (Barker's fans expect his name to be attached to unusual projects - and the occasional tired HELLRAISER sequel - but his own LORD OF ILLUSIONS was perhaps the last really worthy film to bear his name and it has been reported that he actually had very little involvement behind the scenes on this one) and it did not seem to get the film much notoriety when it finally hit DVD in compromised form. These days, home video editing can render professional results and Masonberg was not only able to assemble something close to his original concept but also to render visual effects and prepare a double disc special edition (although it is not for sale) and a project once dumped directly-to-DVD can find new exposure on the internet (Masonberg's website features links to several articles about the film, interviews with the cast and crew, and detailed comparisons of the director's cut and producer's cut with flash video excerpts). Is Masonberg's director's cut superior to the theatrical version? Certainly. Vastly. Is it an unheralded masterpiece? No, but it is an assured feature debut with an ambitious treatment of a familiar story (which recalls THE CRAZIES and CHILDREN OF THE CORN as much as it does Narcisco Ibanez Serrador's incredibly disturbing WHO CAN KILL A CHILD?) that respects its audience's intellect and their willingness to get to know characters gradually and take in details of the setting without being hit on the head with them (as the producer's cut is wont to do).

Eric Cotenias



DVD Review: Off Leash Films (Writer & Director's Cut) - Region 0 - NTSC

Distribution: Off Leash Films

Region: 0 - NTSC

Runtime: 1:46:32

Video: 2.35:1 Original Aspect Ratio

Average Bitrate: 5.26 mb/s

NTSC 720x480 29.97 f/s

Audio: English Dolby Digital 2.0 stereo

Subtitles: none

Features: Release Information:

Studio: Off Leash Films

Aspect Ratio: Widescreen letterboxed - 2.35:1

Edition Details:

• DISC ONE:

• Audio commentary with director Hal Masonberg

• Director's Cut Trailer (4:3; 1:56)

• About the Transfer (text screens)

• DISC TWO:

• Spreading the Plague: featurette (4:3; 71:21)

• Storyboard to Film Comparison (4 sequences)

• Early Animated Storyboard (4:3; 7:43)

• Deleted Scene (4:3; 1:04 - with optional director commentary)

• Director's Production Bible (text screens)

• Behind the Scenes Photo Album (27:59)

• Director's Statement (text screens)

DVD Release Date:

Amaray

Chapters 31

Comments:

This DVD is NOT available to the public. The set was prepared by the director as a proposal to distributor Screen Gems to fully restore the feature (the director's cut is compiled from an offline edit and workprint dailies and, as such, is presented in 4:3 widescreen). His website www.spreadingtheplague.com features an online petition to Screen Gems to convince them of interest in restoring the film's original cut. The extras include a commentary by director Masonberg in which he explains the intent of every turn of the plot and every choice of shot (and the producer's reaction to his deliberate pacing). Disc 1 also features a director's cut trailer and a text screen statement about the transfer. Disc 2 features "Spreading the Plague" a 71 minute documentary (indexed and encode with 17 chapters) featuring input from several of the cast and crew members. It not only features behind-the-scenes info but also covers the post-production struggles in more detail. The Storyboard-to-Film featurette shows 4 sequences in splitscreen with the film scenes and the computer-drawn storyboard versions (all with optional commentary). This is followed by an animated storyboard version of one of the major sequences. A deleted scene with optional commentary depicts Jean saying goodbye to a wounded Sam when she, Tom, and Kip sneak into town to look for a working automobile (this scene is featured in the producer's cut). The production bible section features the director's notes on nearly every scene discussing visual

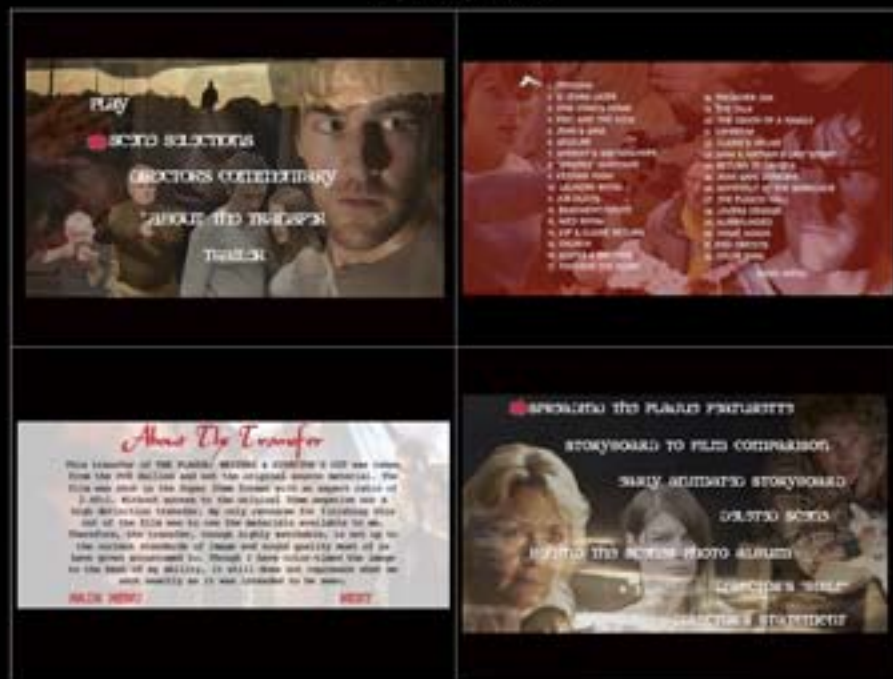
inspirations, themes, etc. The director's statement is a piece that Screen Gems asked to write for potential investors about his intents with the film (it seems in line with what his cut reflects in contrast to the producer's cut).

Sony's DVD of the producer's cut features 5.1 audio, a jokey, intermittently informative audio commentary featuring the editor and actors Brad Hunt and Joshua Close (from which the director is noticeably absent) and 18 minutes of deleted scenes. Obviously, this transfer looks better (it is single-layer as the DVD9 accommodates both 4:3 and 16:9 versions of the Super 35mm feature) having been derived from an HD master - albeit one that was color corrected without the input of experienced DP Bill Butler - but the 18 minute difference in running times is not explained by the 8 deleted scenes (the director's cut set also has its own deleted scenes with optional commentary) as there are major structural differences. Although the director has said that this version does not reflect his vision, it might be worth checking out to give you an indication of how good the film is meant to look transfer-wise and to see some alternate versions of scenes in the director's cut (sort of like watching both GANJA AND HESS and the re-edit BLOOD COUPLE). Although the film was shot in Super 35mm for 2.35:1 matting, neither version exposes the entire periphery. The Sony transfer shows more info on the left while cropping the right side while the director's cut transfer shows more on the right side of the frame while cropping the left.

While the director's cut is not for sale, several of the extras are available in whole or part on the director's website including the hour+ "Spreading the Plague" featurette with cast/crew interviews.

- Eric Cotenas

DVD Menu



SU'READING THE PLAGUE
WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT

▶ PLAY ALL

1. A GOOD HORROR FILM
2. WHAT IS THE PLAGUE?
3. SOCIAL RELEVANCE
4. DEE WALLACE & DONLA
5. JOHN P. CONNOLLY & CAL
6. THE BED SCENE
7. ISLAD SAKATONY & NATHAN
8. SHIKING WITH HAL
9. CASTING
10. BILL TUTLER

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Screen Captures



Horror's Not Dead

Sony Screen Gems Owes Hal Masonberg an Apology.

Editorials

Posted by Peter Hall - January 26th 2009 @ 10:38 am

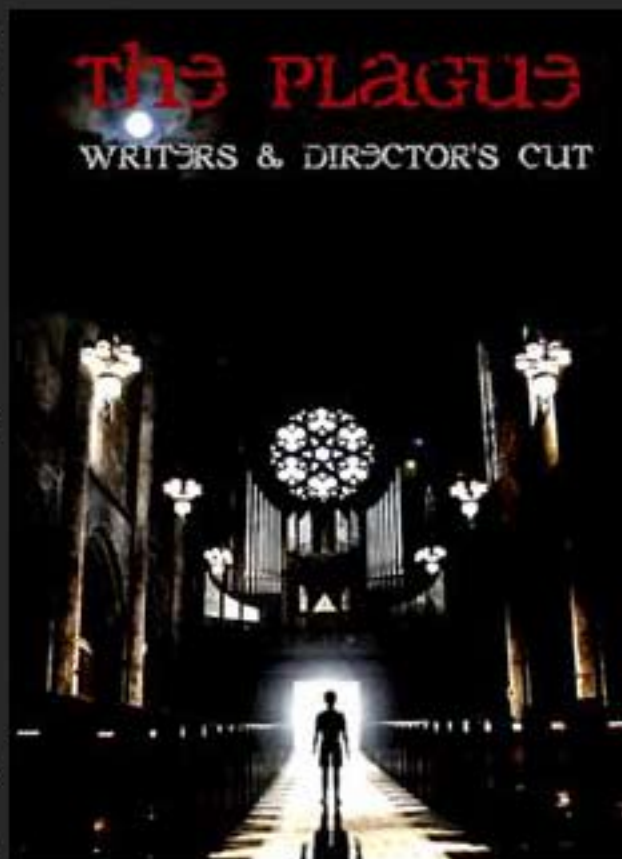
It is providence that two pieces of media would find their way to me in relative proximity to one another. The first was the Writer's/Director's cut of THE PLAGUE. The second was David Mamet's sapient book on the Hollywood system, BAMBI VS. GODZILLA.

The first is the still unreleased product of an uphill-on-ice-skates battle between a director, Hal Masonberg, and a bullheaded studio cog, Sony's Screen Gems. The other is, well, from the brilliant title one should be able to discern how it applies to the long gestating plight of Masonberg.

A quick refresher. THE PLAGUE was released in 2006 as "CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE", starring James Van Der Beek and Ivana Milicevic. It was a not-quite-there blend of science fiction and horror concerning an alternate world in which adolescents every where suddenly went into a coma that lasted a decade. Upon awakening, the brood/hive/collective/almost-undead rise against their caretakers, all on the eve of Van Der Beek's return to free society. What started off promising never rose above Movie of the Week status.

Almost immediately upon writing a review of the film I learned that what ended up on store shelves was far removed from the intentions of director Masonberg. In fact, Screen Gems literally removed Masonberg from the project, re-edited it from its first to final and released it with the eye catching CLIVE BARKER moniker. You can read all about that at SpreadingThePlague.com. I hadn't suspected that such shenanigans had gone on behind the scenes, yet was hardly surprised by the knowledge.

Flash forward to a few weeks ago when the director's cut fell in my lap. I figured I'd better watch the studio's cut again so I Netflixed it a few nights prior. Then I watched Masonberg's cut. I was hesitant to do a write up on the matter as I couldn't quite correlate all of my impressions. Then on a fourteen hour flight I read BAMBI VS. GODZILLA. Ever since I've been unable to shake a paragraph from the playwright/screenwriter/philosopher/genius's chapter on "The Development Process", a paragraph that may as well have been written about THE PLAGUE. Much to my disillusionment, however, it is a paragraph that applies to an unquantifiable number of films.



In a scant few sentences, Mamet has summed the warring sides of artists and producers; the ones who spend years refining the precise methodology of their craft and the dreaded ones with the check books who think any problem can be solved by, "going in a room":

"For this desire to "go in a room" is, to the artist, heresy. It is the reductio ad absurdum of "reality" programming: having determined that it's not necessary to pay either actors or writers, the deluded additionally discover that it is not necessary even to fee the gods - that insight, idiosyncrasy, inspiration, patience, and effort are the concerns of the weak and misguided craftsman and artist.

No, the exhortation to "go in a room" is not mere crime but blasphemy. It is not sufficient to shake one's head; one must lower the eyes."

Having seen the intended cut of the film I lower my eyes at you, Screen Gems and Midnight Picture Show. I do not think that the director's cut of THE PLAGUE is an unreleased masterpiece, but it is a hell of a lot better than the "in a room" cut released by the same monkey's on typewriters that pushed the afterbirth that is the PROM NIGHT remake into the world.

I understand that the artist and the bean counter are always at odds. As someone who has a profound respect for capitalism, I even respect that, but there is a difference between casting an inferior but bankable lead and giving all of the creative talent involved with a film's creation the boot, bringing in an AVID bot and turning a cohesive vision into the film equivalent of scrapple.

For example, I'd seen the commercial version of THE PLAGUE twice and it wasn't until seeing the real cut that I realized James Van Der Beek was not returning to his father's house after being released from prison but his brother's. That's no small detail in the scope of the story. It explains his relationship with his brother as well as his lack of attachment to his comatose nephew, neither of which made any sense in the released cut. Now, for all I know the studio's job may actually feature that little distinction, but even if it did the fact that I didn't pick up on it twice is indicative of how uninvolved that version is. If my attention has been divided within 10 minutes, something is rotten in a California board room.

Masonberg's cut is a nicer, slower draw. The only enjoyment from the studio end are the eye opening scenes of dozens upon dozens of children having simultaneous seizures - and that is only because they quicken up their molasses editing. In the real film, there is a build to those sequences, discussions on the repercussions of a world with globally comatose children, lingering shots of a world incapable of moving on, musings of mankind withering on the vine. Almost all of these poignant moments have been excised like a child pushing all his brussel sprouts to one side of the plate.

I could understand if Masonberg's version was the inferior of the two. I could understand if all of this was planned before filming. I cannot understand why they would abandon important footage without a single gain. There is not one benefit to booting the entire creative team from the project in post production. I mean, hell, Masonberg's cut is exponentially better than the studio's and he edited without ADR, without proper sound editing, without color timing and sourced entirely from the dailies. That is just embarrassing, Screen Gems.

Actually, I lied. I understand why they did it. I understand why in the same way I understand people who wear popped collars. They're delusional. They have a warped ideal that they know better, that their shit is the shit and those dorky, conniving writers and directors and cinematographers and composers are all thieves, that if the suits just go in a room long enough they can deliver the same thing. Clearly they cannot.

Look, Masonberg's assemblage of the matter is not a godsend. Much of the action later on in the film is still wracked by the lifeless stench of budget constraints, but at least the story has meaning. It's not a great movie, but even in its improved/still unfinished state it's a far cry from awful. I have a damn hard time believing that his version of the film would have been any less commercially viable than the tripe peddled. Either way this was not destined for the fiscal history books. It was a small time passion project. As it stands it is just small time and passionless. I wouldn't even call it a project. Hal Masonberg's *THE PLAGUE* was a project. CLIVE BARKER'S *THE PLAGUE* is a deliverable.

Yet here we stand. There is a piece of crap on store shelves and, if I recall, a million dollar plus price tag on the rights for Hal Masonberg to put that crap behind him and finish the movie as he wanted to. Real dick move, Sony. Real dick move. Just let the man finish his passion project. There is free publicity in doing the right thing. Horror blogs across the net may actually talk about your company without invoking the bile demon that is *PROM NIGHT 2008*. I'm not saying fans will forgive you for unleashing that kick in the teeth, but they'll certainly soften if you stop insisting an unheard of director pay you an unheard of sum to complete a movie you already made unpopular and probably unprofitable.

It's win, win. Man up, Screen Gems.

Tags: [Hal Masonberg](#), [Sony Screen Gems](#), [The Plague](#)

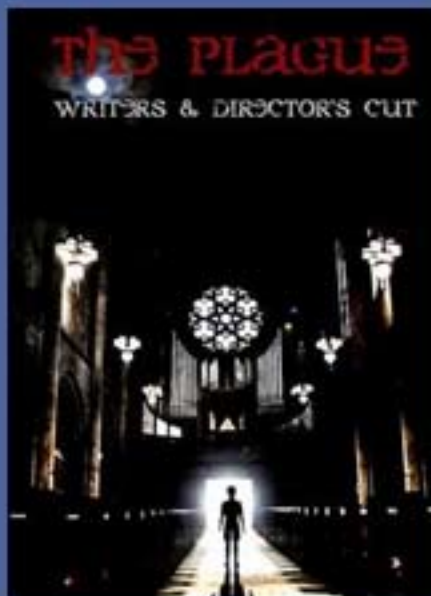
Horror's Not Dead

TIM LUCAS

Video WatchBlog

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

Building a Better Plague



The Sony Pictures DVD is called CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, though the film was neither directed, written by, or based on a story by Clive Barker. THE PLAGUE was actually directed by Hal Masonberg, who co-authored the script with Teal Minton; Barker was one of the film's producers. When producers take a possessory credit, it's almost always a bad sign -- a front-and-center billboard of territorial conflict -- but, in this case, Masonberg and Minton can take a measure of relief in letting Barker stand in the spotlight: the version of the movie bearing his name has received such virulent critical and public reaction that "it wasn't that bad" is the best comment I could find about it online.

From my mailbox:

As an avid reader and fan of your site, I wanted to direct your attention to a site dedicated to getting the Writers & Director's Cut of THE PLAGUE released to DVD.

In the fall of 2005, the film was taken away from its writers and director during post. After an 8 year struggle to get the film made, the footage was re-cut from scratch by the producers without the involvement of the film's creators. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded, and the film completely restructured. It was released to dvd in September of 2006 at a running time of 88 minutes under the title CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, though it was not based on any of Barker's work (it was an original screenplay by director Hal Masonberg and co-writer Teal Minton) and Barker, personally, had very little to do with the making of the film. That version of the film in no way reflects the years of hard work, creativity, or artistic intent of the writers and director of the film. It is solely and completely a "producers' cut".

However, after having been removed from the film, director Hal Masonberg took it upon himself to finish the film with the materials available to him (the film's dailies on dvd and a Macintosh computer-turned post-production facility) The film was originally shot in Super 35 by veteran cinematographer, Bill Butler (JAWS, THE CONVERSATION, FRAILTY), who was also not invited to partake in the film's post-production process.

The response to the Writers & Director's Cut by those who have seen it has been through the roof. However, without further support, this film may never see the light of day as the film's current distributor, Screen Gems, has no plans to release this cut.

I ask that you take a look at this site. On it you will find an hour-long documentary containing interviews with not only director, Hal Masonberg, but many others including Dee Wallace and other cast members, film authors/ journalists. There is also a link to a petition and much more info on what happened to this film.

It is people like you and sites like yours that can make a world of difference to a film like this. All the difference, in fact. By making your readers aware of the existence of this site, we may be able to convince Screen Gems that there is an audience for this cut of the film and, perhaps, other films that have met a similar fate.

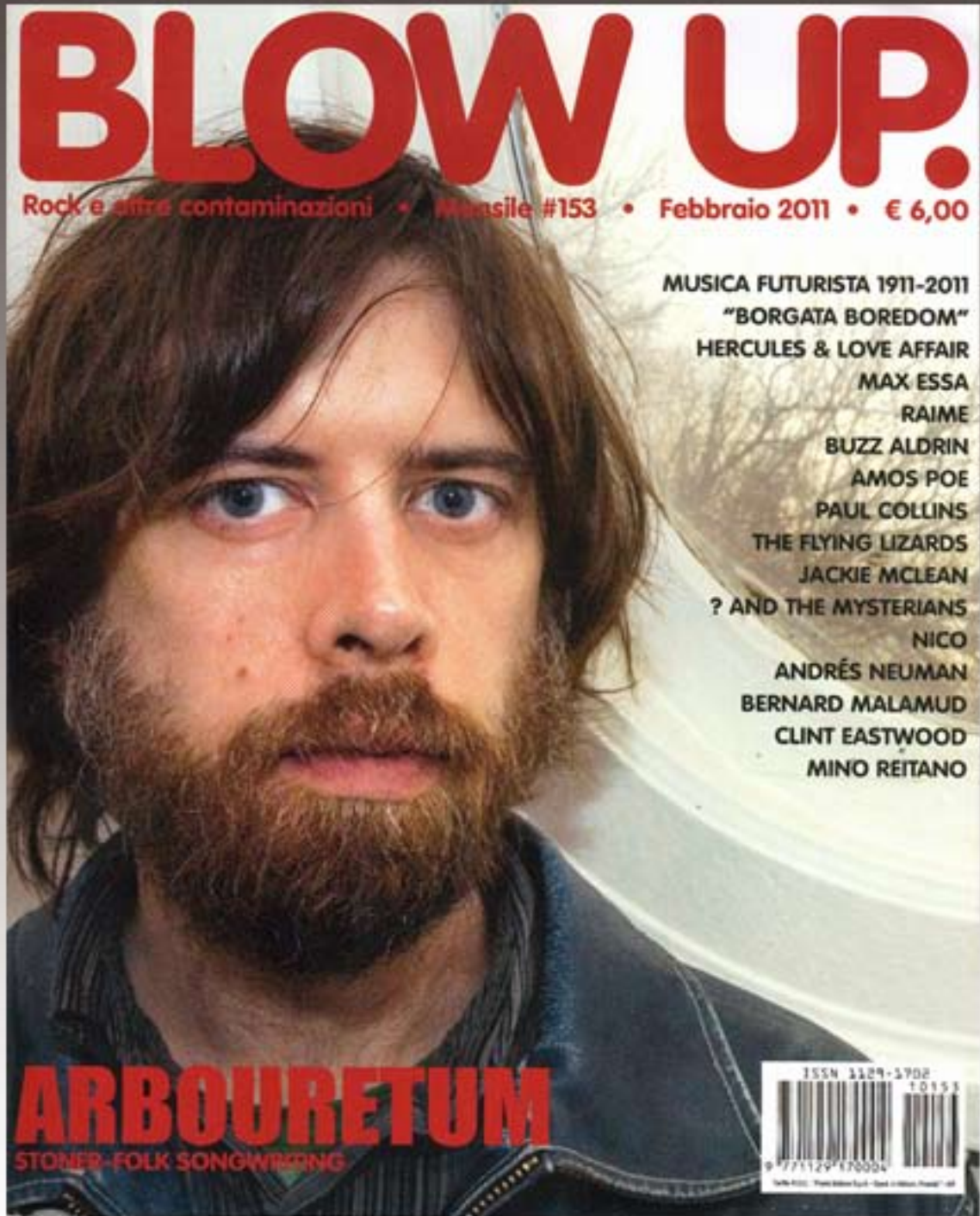
Thanks in advance for your interest and we hope you enjoy.

My response to such an e-mail is complicated. I'm cynical enough about the Internet to initially suspect that this whole thing may be (at best) a clever ruse to draw me and other bloggers into the middle of an ego contest, or (at worst) to give a badly received film a second chance with a re-edit. On the other hand, I know there are talented filmmakers out there, even established names, who have their work taken away from them by money people who end up ruining good work with their needless, ego-driven interference. (I'm not talking about Clive Barker here specifically, as Masonberg's interview on the website makes clear that Barker himself was only involved remotely, as the figurehead of his production company.)

In short, the painful story laid out on the Spreading the Plague website -- which includes Masonberg being fired from the picture during its editing phase -- sounds pretty convincing to me. Whether or not a true creator's cut would yield a stronger PLAGUE or not, I can't say, but I do know that, in the history of such production interference, director's cuts usually prevail. However, in this case, such vindication is by no means assured. A director's cut exists only through Masonberg's independent, guerilla-like reconstruction of his and his co-author's original intentions, made at home from digital dailies after being barred from the editing room. It would seem that his cut therefore made use of materials that were not his legal property, and now Masonberg finds himself in the awkward position of trying to interest Screen Gems in releasing a product that was made in spite of Clive Barker's company, and in spite of them.

I know it's hard to work up any interest for a movie that badly disappointed you on the first pass, but if you're passionate about creator's rights, you may find the revelations of the Spreading the Plague website to your interest. You can find it [here](#).

The following article is from the February 2011 printed issue of the Italian film magazine BLOW UP.



BLOW UP.

Rock e altre contaminazioni • Missile #153 • Febbraio 2011 • € 6,00

MUSICA FUTURISTA 1911-2011

“BORGATA BOREDOM”

HERCULES & LOVE AFFAIR

MAX ESSA

RAIME

BUZZ ALDRIN

AMOS POE

PAUL COLLINS

THE FLYING LIZARDS

JACKIE MCLEAN

? AND THE MYSTERIANS

NICO

ANDRÉS NEUMAN

BERNARD MALAMUD

CLINT EASTWOOD

MINO REITANO

ARBOURETUM
STONER-FOLK SONGWRITING



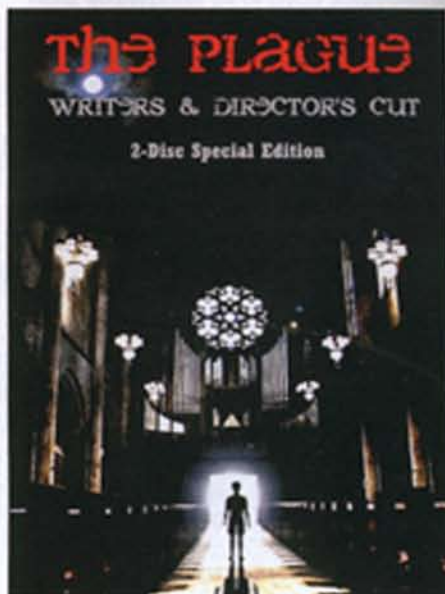
MESSAGGIO PROMOZIONALE

Questo pensiero stupendo è un messaggio promozionale. O almeno una specie. Non nascosto, non subliminale, ma diretto e inequivocabile, proprio come una vecchia bottiglia di J&B in un film italiano degli anni '70. Con un'unica differenza: che non ho percentuali, che non sono stato pagato per farlo.

C'è un horror americano del 2006 dal titolo *The Plague*. Ad oggi, è il primo e unico film di un regista che si chiama Hal Masonberg. È inedito in Italia. Tra i produttori figura anche il nome di Clive Barker, ma il suo effettivo coinvolgimento è dubbio. Il protagonista è James Van Der Beek. In post-produzione, la Sony/Screen Gems, che distribuisce il film, lo ha sottratto alle mani di Masonberg e ne ha fatto un suo *cut*. Editato in dvd negli Stati Uniti. A colpi di montaggio e di forbici, questo cosiddetto *producer's cut* stravolge la versione originale del regista. Che non si era montato la testa, non voleva girare il capolavoro horror del decennio, non aveva pretese autoriali: cercava soltanto di praticare il genere con un minimo di originalità, di controllare i cliché con più arguzia della media. Un po' troppo, evidentemente, per il mercato. Da allora, Masonberg non si dà pace. Tanto che ha approntato un *writers & director's cut* inedito e indisponibile all'acquisto ma contenuto in un doppio dvd per la stampa. Nella speranza che la Sony se ne accorga e si decida a farne un prodotto ufficiale per la vendita. Tutto ciò, e molto di più, è spiegato nel dettaglio qui: www.spreadingtheplague.com. C'è perfino il link per una petizione.

Vediamo di intenderci. *The Plague*, nella sua versione integrale e primigenia (non ho visto quella rimaneggiata), è ben lontano dall'essere un prodotto irrinunciabile. L'horror che i fan non devono farsi scappare. Però è il tentativo di

un *filmmaker* che ama il genere (e si capisce) di allontanarsi soltanto un pochino dalla convenzione, cercando un minimo di serietà laddove è sempre più difficile trovarne. E soprattutto, quando possibile, senza scendere a compromessi facili: quindi, nello specifico, rinunciando al *gore* esplicito, allo spavento meccanico, all'*happy ending*. È la vicenda di un gruppo di persone inseguito e decimato da numerosi diciannovesimi dalle intenzioni non esattamente amichevoli, risvegliatisi improvvisamente dopo un coma misterioso durato dieci anni. Ognuno può ricordare il ricordabile, trarre i rimandi che preferisce, farsi tornare alla memoria ogni film horror del passato che vuole. Ma non è questo il nocciolo della questione. Il nocciolo della questione è che la produzione si è spaventata dell'andamento troppo rallentato, del montaggio a volte sorprendente e inaspettato, della *suspense* qua e là abbastanza raffinata. Questo "ipotetico" doppio disco riporta ogni cosa a come sarebbe dovuta essere. La qualità, ovviamente, è quella che è: dovendo fare tutto da solo, senza l'aiuto di studi e apparecchiature *ad hoc*, Masonberg ha faticato su una *work-print* (quindi non in alta definizione) che non ha potuto avere la correzione-colore (la fotografia è di Bill Butler, mica l'ultimo arrivato), mentre anche gli effetti visivi (vedi il *green screen*) e il messaggio del suono ne hanno risentito. Insomma, il risultato non è da Blu-ray, sebbene si tratti di una copia-lavoro di gran lunga più guardabile e "rifinita" delle copie-lavoro che mi è capitato di vedere. L'impegno da parte di Masonberg a fare un prodotto il più possibile decoroso con strumenti non professionali merita rispetto: nei due dvd c'è tutto ciò a cui siamo ormai abituati, dal commento audio alle scene tagliate, dallo *storyboard* alle tradizionali *featurette*.

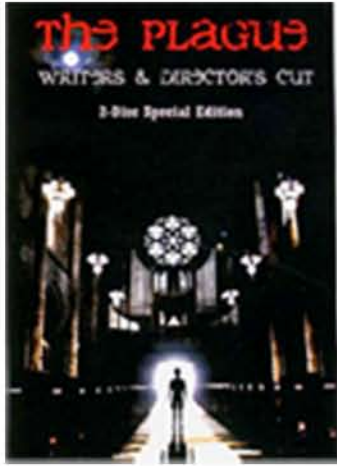


Però al di là dell'aneddotica filologica, dei pregi e dei difetti (che ci sono, a scampo di equivoci) del *writers & director's cut* di *The Plague*, perché mi prendo la briga di questa promozione? Perché investo su un *affaire* del genere? Perché Hal Masonberg è il discendente - tutt'altro che ultimo, ne sono sicuro - di una generazione che "fa film" che le interferenze del sistema hanno bocciato, bloccato, manomesso. Da una parte all'altra dell'oceano. Che si tratti dell'horror qualunque di un signor nessuno o di un kolossal di un autore celebrato non fa differenza: a finire sotto la ghigliottina della censura e dei *diktat* del potere è sempre e comunque l'intraprendenza, la voglia di provare e di sperimentare, il desiderio - umile, utopistico, suicida - di parlare fuori dal coro. Se Hollywood se l'è presa con un esordiente alle prese con un prodotto senza grandi aspettative e per giunta di genere, significa ancora una volta che il pugnale dalla parte del manico ce l'hanno loro. Storia vecchia. Qualcuno aveva cambiato idea e pensava diversamente? Forse nessuno ha più voglia di battersi per queste cose, perlomeno non come in passato, quando il principio doveva spuntarla sulla realtà dei fatti, eppure dopo così tanto penare, dopo così tanta acqua passata sotto i ponti, dopo cinefile e purismi vari, chimere inseguite e talvolta miracolosamente raggiunte, dopo tutte le filologie alte e basse sbandierate con orgoglio superomistico e di cui non mi pentirò mai, mi ritrovo di nuovo a parteggiare per ogni espressione di libertà. Finanche la più insignificante. Roba da matti.



THIS STUPENDOUS THOUGHT

by Pier Maria Bocchi (translated from the originally published Italian in the February 2011 issue of BLOW UP magazine)



This Stupendous Thought is a type of promotional ad. Or at least one type of ad. Nothing hidden, nothing subliminal, just unequivocally direct and as appropriate as an aged bottle of J&B in a 70's Italian film. With one difference. I don't get a percentage. I was not paid to write this.

This is an American horror film from 2006 called The Plague. As of today, this is the first and only film by a director named Hal Masonberg. It is unreleased in Italy. Among the producers you'll find Clive Barker's name, but his involvement is dubious. The protagonist is played by James Van der Beek. In Post Production, Sony Screen Gems, who distributed the film, took it from the hands of Hal Masonberg and did not use his cut. It was released on DVD in the US. Shockingly cut and pasted together, this so called "producer's cut" disrupts the director's original version. It wasn't meant to make you think nor make a horror masterpiece of the decade, and it claimed no ownership as it navigated the horror genre with minimal originality. A little too obviously, according to the market.

As of today, Masonberg is not at peace. So much so that he has prepared a writers & director's cut unpublished and unavailable for purchase but ready for printing in a double DVD. In the hopes that Sony will notice and decide to make it an official product for sale. All this and much more is explained in detail here: www.spreadingtheplague.com. There is even a link to a petition.

Let's be clear. The Plague, in its original and integral version (I have not seen the reworked version) is far from being a production that horror fans MUST see. However, it is the attempt by a filmmaker who loves the genre (and understands it) enough to depart a little from convention, looking for a little bit of seriousness where it is increasingly difficult to find. And above all, when possible, without easily compromising, avoiding explicit gore, contrived scares, and a happy ending. It is the story of a group of people chased and decimated by a number of teenagers, with not exactly friendly intentions, who suddenly awaken after a mysterious coma that has lasted ten years. Anyone can remember the memorable, take the references they prefer, get back to the memory of every past horror movie he wants. But this is not the crux of the matter. The bottom line is that the production is terrifying because of the slowed performances, the sometimes surprising and unexpected editing, and of the refined suspense here and there.

This "hypothetical" double disc reports how each element should have been. The quality, of course, is what it is: having to do everything himself without the help of the studio or ad hoc equipment, Masonberg has struggled over a work-print (not in HD) that has not been color-corrected (the cinematography is by Bill Butler, his latest addition), but also the visual effects (see the green screen) and sound mixing were adversely effected.



In short, the result is not Blu-ray, although it is by far the most watchable and "finished" work-print I have ever seen. The commitment by Masonberg to make as much of a decent product as possible with non professional tools deserves respect: the DVD has everything to which we are accustomed to, from commentary to deleted scenes, to the traditional storyboards and featurette.

However beyond philological analysis of the merits and defects (which there are, without a doubt) of the writers and director's cut of The Plague, why am I taking the trouble of this promotion? Why do I invest in an affair of this kind? Because Hal Masonberg is the descendant - far from the last, I'm sure - of a generation that "makes a film" that has been interfered with, blocked by or tampered with by the system. On either side of the ocean.

Whether it's regarding the horror film or a Mr. Nobody or the blockbuster of a celebrated auteur, it makes no difference: at the end, under the guillotine of censorship and the dictates of power, there is always, however intrepid, the desire to try and experiment; the desire - humble, visionary, suicidal - to speak out from the pack. If Hollywood is taken upon by a rookie fighting for a product of few expectations, not to mention its genre, it means that once again the dagger is on the side of the handle and we have to support him. Old story.

Has anyone changed their mind and thought differently after such efforts? Perhaps no one has any desire to fight for these things anymore, at least not as they did in the past, when principle triumphed over figures, but after so much toil, after so much water under the bridge, after so many cinephiles and purists pursued delusions, and sometimes miraculously reached them, after all the philology, high and low, heralded with super mystic pride, of which I never regret, I find myself once again siding with any expression of freedom. Even the most insignificant. Crazy stuff.



christiandivine.com



The Plague: Writers & Director Cut

This is a cautionary tale. Not just the film, but the story of what happens after the film is made. Hal Masonberg and Teal Minton sold their horror script THE PLAGUE to Armada Pictures (although Screen Gems came on as financier/distributor without their knowledge) in 2002, and thanks to Masonberg's vivid animatic storyboards along with the fact that the pair would not sell the screenplay without him as director, the film was greenlit. Not bad for a 3.5 million dollar Clive Barker production, although this film is far removed from the typical Barker film and ultimately became part of the post-production woe. And THE PLAGUE is a cautionary horror tale, the story of what happens when the children of the world fall into a seemingly non-stop comatose slumber. Tom Russel (James Van Der Beek) returns to his town after serving time for a bar fight murder and tries to retrace his steps back into humanity. His first stop is his estranged widowed brother, whose own son has fallen into forever sleep. Along with that, Tom's wife Jean (CASINO ROYALE's Ivana Milicevic) struggles to forgive him as does her brother, the wily Sam (Brad Hunt). But soon after Tom returns, more pressing matters arise as the children wake up en masse... and they are not happy.

Suffice to say, violence and bloodshed ensues as Tom finds himself in charge of a disparate group, including his wife, her brother, the kindly sheriff Cal (John P. Connolly) and his wife Nora (Dee Wallace-Stone). Add to this mix the only teens in the town not effected by the plague, Kip and Claire, and lead them across a minor battlefield of the hospital and eventually the church, and you have the makings of a unique, thoughtful and sometimes powerful meditation on the nature of children and the world's violence.

The problem for the filmmakers is that after they finished the exact script that was approved to be made into an under 4 million dollar film for Clive Barker's company in an attempt to expand their horror genre, the producers ended up forgetting what they had paid for in the first place. Masonberg's blanket support eroded in post-production as one of the producer's straight-up told him he only wanted a "killer kid" movie. Which is the farthest thing from the subtle and allegorical story that Masonberg put together for his first cut.

Sadly this is where the story becomes archetypal as the director was barred from the editing room as the producers sought to make a more expedient version. Whole scenes were altered through obvious editing rather than the connective visual strands of Masonberg's cut. Worse, even Dee Wallace-Stone's part was practically truncated to shots of her in peril screaming. You don't pull on Superman's cape, you don't mess around with Jim and you don't cut E.T.'s mom out of a movie. There is more chainsaw editing. Character beats are gone, tiny moments make the horror more effective, since you feel more emotionally involved with the people. Effective or evocative shots have been removed at random, and perhaps the most powerful scene in the film, involving one of the only unaffected teens and her deadly sister has been rendered impotent.

Since the cinematographer is the legendary Bill Butler (JAWS and THE CONVERSATION among others) this is particularly unfair as the clumsy editing has altered the film's entire visual design along with Masonberg's directorial subtlety.

THE PLAGUE was never intended to be THE CHILDREN (1980) or DEVIL TIMES FIVE (1974), both terrific exploitation films in their own sick right, but it's more in the realm of THE INNOCENTS (1964). The ending doesn't leave you with typical Hollywood explanations, but the clues are there, particularly in the director's cut. This should not be marketed as Clive Barker Hard-Gore Horror, but as a more engaged, suspenseful apocalyptic cautionary.

Masonberg has been very pro-active trying to get his version released and is building up quite a network of support from those who have seen his version of THE PLAGUE. You can sign a petition here and find a wealth of further information, including articles, plus a revealing documentary on the film featuring interviews with Dee Wallace-Stone, other cast members, and noted genre experts. It's worth a look and worthy to get the word out to preserve the writer/director's unique, unsettling vision.



LA ELEMENTAL

FILIA Y FOBIA

DEL DUENDE CALLEJERO

SOLO POR EL GUSTO (DE VERTE SUFRIR)

MARTES 5 DE AGOSTO DE 2008

¿La Otra Cara De La Moneda?

Para muchos, una buena historia de horror y terror, por más que su trama se precie de ser descabellada, jamás debe alejarse de la realidad en la que vive, come, duerme y se alimenta su público. Ahí está la clave, dicen; esa es la única forma en la que tu película o cuento o novela o lo que sea, jamás será de las del montón.

¿Será?



*Al menos eso es lo que cree Hal Masonberg. Su carrera cinematográfica comienza por 1992, cuando es el asistente de producción de dos películas clase B: *Demonic Toys*, y ese extraño remake-no-oficial a *Invasión of the Body Snatchers*, que es *Seedpeople* (ambas de Peter Manoogian y disponibles en cualquier botadero de su preferencia). Luego, en 1993, le toca ser parte del departamento de casting de la película de Lasse Hallström: *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. Después, en 1994, aparece detrás de la cámara para dirigir su propio guión en un corto llamado *Mrs. Greer...* Una historia que, por cierto, no tiene nada que ver con el horror y el terror. Y bueno, luego sigue alternando entre departamentos de producción, casting y demás. Lo cierto es que, por esos años, según cuenta, en conjunto con Teal Minton, un asistente de edición de varios video-homes y video-clips, desarrollan una idea para un guión que tardaría ocho largos y tortuosos años gestándose; ocho años luchando, según eso, contra la adversidad y contra todos, sólo para ser fieles a su idea principal de que una buena película de horror y terror no debe ser sólo tripas, sangre y chamacas semi-encueradas corriendo con pasitos cortos, con las manos en la cabeza, y el grito a flor de piel; perseguidas por el monstruo o psicópata en turno. No, una buena película de horror y terror debe ser real, más interesada por los personajes, con la menor truculencia posible.*

*Su defensa: tres revisiones personales a tres películas por todos conocidas. La primera, obvio, *Invasión of the Body Snatchers* (1956, de Don Siegel), que en realidad trata sobre el peligro que significaba el comunismo ruso para *The American Way Of Life*. La segunda, *Rosemary's Baby* (1968, de Roman Polanski), que verdaderamente trataba sobre el nuevo papel que desempeña la mujer en las sociedades modernas: a la par con los hombres, escalando posiciones sociales debido a la apertura laboral, pero nunca ajenas a su labor de ser los pilares sobre los que se sostiene la más grande institución social, la familia. Y, además, ser las únicas responsables reales de lo que sucede con cada uno de los integrantes de las tales familias.*



La tercera, también obviamente, fue *The Exorcist* (1973, de William Friedkin). Una película cuya trama principal es la incapacidad de una madre norteamericana moderna (madre soltera, autosuficiente, de carácter fuerte y decidido), para conectar con su hija adolescente, abriendo una brecha generacional dura, que hasta borda la locura para ambas.

Masonberg plantea que su guión recogía esa forma de ver al cine de horror y terror, sólo que alimentándose de la propia realidad que a él le tocaba sufrir: 9/11, la Guerra de Irak, las balaceras dentro de las High Schools... Todo con una sola pregunta posible ¿Qué futuro les depara a las nuevas generaciones? ¿Qué harán ellos con este mundo que le estamos legando?

La respuesta, *The Plague*. Un guión que, durante esos ocho años, anduvo entrando y saliendo de oficinas de producción, además de mutando. Según su autor, durante esos ocho años, todos le dijeron más o menos lo mismo: *We love it, but we can't make it here. It's too timely, too sensitive. But let us know if you get it made cause we'd like to see it!*



Y bueno, su propia tenacidad y el creer en su trabajo, hizo que ambos guionistas no se dieran por vencidos. Sigieron mostrando su guión, acompañado por unos muy completos storyboards-animados. Y entonces, llegaron a Seraphin Films (ahora Midnight Picture Show), compañía productora de Clive Barker, donde la moneda por fin dio la cara. Su guión fue leído y aceptado casi de inmediato. De entrada, los productores dieron carta abierta al director, arguyendo que Clive estaba encantado por la historia. Para eso, Masonberg

cuenta que sólo charló una vez con Barker, y que lo encontró demasiado ocupado en sus propios proyectos como para hacerle caso en lo que decía. Su trato fue sólo con los productores, que fueron calmándolo cuando él les increpaba si estaban seguros que su película gustaría a Barker, el jefe, a pesar de que no era una película típica de Barker, lo que sea que eso signifique. Aquellos le dijeron que se despreocupara, y además le hicieron ver *Gods and Monsters* (1998, de Bill Condon), para que viera que no todo lo producido por Barker es... supongo... cadenas, viseras, cajitas demoníacas, terroríficos habitantes del submundo, magos locuaces y carne deshebrada. Y listo, comenzó la pre-producción. Entonces se fijó el presupuesto para 3.5 millones de dólares, de la bolsa de Barker, más una asociación con Armand Pictures, que comenzaría a buscarse a un estudio para su posterior distribución aún antes de que la claqueta hiciera su primer ¡clack!

Así, la producción tuvo que ajustar al presupuesto. Y aunque, desde etapas tempranas se fijó que el posible destino de la película sería la televisión (un telefilm vendido a Sony Pictures y distribuido al resto del mundo por Screen Gems), a Masonberg no pareció molestarle en lo absoluto. Las groserías y demás fueron removidas del guión en etapas tempranas, junto a la sanguinolencia excesiva. Se trasladó con todo su equipo a Winnipeg, Canadá; aceptó como protagonista a James Van Der Beek (famoso por su papel de Dawson Leery en la serie de televisión *Dawson's Creek*; y para nada una buena opción para un protagonista en una película de horror y terror que quiera salir del montón), y gritó su primer ¡Action!...



20 días después, la producción de *The Plague* había terminado sin ningún incidente. De regreso a Los Angeles con las latas para iniciar la post-producción, es cuando inicia su propia película de terror. Y esta, como le gusta, era una historia demasiado real.



La edición de la película estaba programada para seis semanas. Masonberg invitó a los productores de Seraphin para que lo acompañaran; sólo uno aceptó. Y dice el director, lo ayudó mucho. El resto se mostraron distantes, agrios. A la segunda o tercer semana, se confirmaron sus sospechas: la versión que estaba quedando, no le satisfacía a los altos mandos del estudio. Ellos querían, demandaban, una versión más rápida, más visceral. Masonberg dice que terminó una edición rápida para mostrarla a los productores. Y la respuesta fue sencilla: los productores esperaron a que terminara su contrato, lo escoltaron a la puerta, le dijeron gracias, de aquí en adelante nos encargamos nosotros... Y listo... La película fue re-editada (y hasta se dice que volvieron a re-grabar ciertas escenas), pasó modestamente a los cines para después aparecer en los estantes de video bajo el nombre de Clive Barker's The Plague (2006).



Masonberg intentó contactar con los productores, ir a la sala de edición; nadie le devolvió la llamada y no le abrieron la puerta. Intentó contactar a Barker, pero no lo dejaron (supongo que no fue al Comic-Con o a los festivales de Rue Morgue, pero bueno). Por alguna razón no demandó a la compañía. Nada. Sólo se fue a Canadá a descansar. Allá recordó que tenía los rushes diarios grabados en video en varios DVDs, regresó a Los Angeles, vió cómo se estrenaba The Plague ante una parvada de malos comentarios, y se encerró durante siete meses a editar su versión de la película en una Macbook con el Final Cut. Al terminar su versión, editada, musicalizada y con efectos especiales hechos por él mismo, comenzó a mostrarla a conocidos y gente del medio, pero que, por contrato, no puede comercializar (la compañía de Barker, junto a Sony, siguen teniendo los derechos totales sobre la película).

THE PLAGUE
WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT



Editó, además, un documental llamado: *Spreading the Plague*, acompañado de su propio webpage, en el que insta al que quiera ayudarlo, firme una petición para sacar a la luz lo que él llama como: *The Plague, Writers & Director's Cut*. Luego, al ver para qué le sirvieron los representantes y productores asociados, funda su propia compañía: *Off Leash Films*, abre un blog y anda animado, otra vez junto a Minton, en levantar un nuevo proyecto ahora alejado del horror y terror: *Clean*.

¿Entonces... Lo que le pasa a Barker con su *Midnight Meat Train* es castigo divino?

***The Plague*, conocida en México como *Batalla en el Infierno*, se presentó en DVD por parte de Sony Pictures. La edición en México contiene, además, comentario del elenco y del editor (Ed Marx), más algunas escenas eliminadas.**

¿Y cómo está?

Próximamente...

Atentamente, el Duende Callejero...

PUBLICADO POR EL DUENDE CALLEJERO EN 8:16



**EL DUENDE CALLEJERO
LOS MOCHIS, SINALOA, MEXICO**

Cinematic Pleasures: *Clive Barker's The Plague*

by j.d. lafrance

There's an old saying about the road paved with the best of intentions. Writer/director Hal Masonberg and his screenwriting partner Teal Minton tried to cross this road only to be run over both ways. You would assume that they were screwed over by a big Hollywood studio, and that does happen, but they're first screwed over by a fellow filmmaker. All Masonberg and Minton wanted to do was make a horror film for adults with rich characters and that did not focus on quick scares. Instead, their film *The Plague* (2006) was taken away from them and tampered with by would-be filmmakers. The result is a sobering cautionary tale that is still awaiting a satisfying conclusion.



All children under the age of nine around the world have unexpectedly lapsed into an eerie comatose state. Ten years later and there is still no change and no answers as to what caused it or a solution. To make matters worse, every child that is born is also in a coma. Fresh out of prison, Tom Russell (James Van Der Beek) returns home to a small town in New Hampshire to reconnect with his brother Dave (Arne MacPherson) and his ex-wife Jean (Ivana Milocevic).

The children are housed in the local high school. There is an effective, unsettling shot of a school gymnasium filled with hospital beds of comatose teenagers. If that wasn't creepy enough, at two specific times a day, they all experience brief violent seizures. One night, all the children wake up and become violent killers – a sort of *Children of the Damned* (1963) if the kids had hit puberty.

Tom teams up with Sam (Brad Hunt), Jean's brother and they fight to stay alive while trying to figure out how to deal with these homicidal teenagers. The producer's cut of *The Plague* proceeds to play out in predictable run-and-fight fashion aping, at times, George Romero's first two zombie films while reducing genre veteran Dee Wallace into a screaming, ineffectual damsel in distress. Notably absent are any attempts at character development and instead we have a clumsily edited horror film with an emphasis on violence and gore.

The Plague originated from Masonberg and Minton's decision to channel their love of horror films from their youth because they were dissatisfied with the direction the genre had taken in the last 15 to 20 years. They admired horror films that, according to Masonberg, "dealt with existing social fears." With their screenplay, they wanted to examine the theme of children and violence in society. According to Minton, their intention was to take "a genre B-movie concept and finding the human story in it, giving it some depth and meaning, while still making something that is scary and exciting." The two men also wanted to



subvert expectations and pose questions that the audience would be left to answer. They were not interested in making a predictable slasher film but instead have most of the physical violence happen off-screen. Masonberg and Minton wrote a story about children and fear in society and how we react to it via the horror genre.

Masonberg and Minton spent five years shopping their script around to various studios but after the Columbine massacre and 9/11 happened, the material became too relevant for studio executives who liked it but wanted to play it safe. Finally, Clive Barker's production company not only liked the script but wanted to make it into a film. Masonberg and Minton decided to go with Barker's company because they were told that the company wanted to make smart, adult horror films, like the critically acclaimed *Gods and Monsters* (1998). Masonberg spent three years developing his film with Barker's company, fine-tuning the script. According to the director, he was upfront and honest with them from the get-go about the kind of film he wanted to make.

Barker's company hooked up with another production company called Armada Pictures who put together the financing to get it made. Despite being called *Clive Barker's The Plague*, the film is not actually based on any of the man's work and he never showed up on the set. Masonberg did meet with him before principal photography and found him always friendly and engaging but they never talked about the script. He got the sense that Barker didn't know what was going on outside of his own personal projects. Masonberg was only given 20 days to shoot his film, ten days less than he was told was needed. He went to Winnipeg, Manitoba in Canada to shoot the film and found out that it had been pre-sold to Sony Screen Gems for domestic distribution. No one told him, however, if the studio wanted to make the same film that he wanted to but at that point there was a few scant weeks from shooting and he was in the middle of pre-production.

Before Masonberg started editing his film, one of the producer's confided in him that a high-level executive in the production company wanted a very different film than the one that was shot. From what the director has since put together, the production company's producers told him one thing and told Sony something else entirely. According to Masonberg, Barker's producers told him that they weren't going after a domestic distributor until after putting *The Plague* through the film festival circuit. He was also told that the film's financing had come from foreign pre-sales which was not true. Sony had financed it from the beginning.

Masonberg was given six weeks to assemble a rough cut of his film, which was a very short period of time. He chose to have one of Barker's producers with him in order to preserve the artist's interests in the project. Masonberg actually started editing a week early and put together what he felt was the best cut he could with the time available. During this time he also incorporated the notes from 14 producers (!) attached to the project. It was in Masonberg's contract that after he delivered his cut, the producers would get their turn. According to Masonberg, Barker's people promised that they would all work together and that *The Plague* did not have to be completed in six weeks. Halfway through the editing process, Masonberg sensed that something wasn't right. According to the director, one of Barker's producers became cold and distant. Masonberg conveyed his concern to his agent who told him not to worry.

Masonberg heard through Barker's people that the artist did not like his cut of *The Plague* and felt that it was too slow and not gory enough. Masonberg was unable to contact Barker because his producers did their best to keep them apart. According to Masonberg, he was then kicked off his own film in the "most abusive and unprofessional way," when Barker's production company didn't like his cut of the film. They ended up editing it from scratch and he remembers them telling him,

"We're cutting down the characters and turning this into a killer-kid film." In addition, they did not want the director present at any screenings of the film. Masonberg was understandably devastated by this betrayal.



Things only got worse. Masonberg's manager talked with an executive at Sony in charge of the film and was told that the studio owned it and did not see the need to have the writer or the director involved any longer. Masonberg was shocked at this reaction considering that he had not talked to anyone at Sony since the production began and had nothing but good relations with them on previous projects.

Getting kicked off his own film, a project that Masonberg had lived with for years, made him deeply depressed, angry, bitter, and sad. Fortunately, he had kept the film's dailies on DVD and began to put together the version he originally intended before the whole post-production nightmare. He spent the winter up in Canada with his girlfriend editing *The Plague* on his Macintosh laptop using Final Cut Pro. He then came back to Los Angeles and created his own post-production facility in his living room. Masonberg spent eight more months editing the film and then taught himself sound design, visual effects, and how to create a temporary score.

Masonberg's version sets itself apart from the producer's cut right from the start with a quote from Ezekiel 5:17 that speaks of a plague that will rob people of their children. Masonberg's cut opens the film up and lets it breathe like a fine wine. We spend more time with Tom and his brother Dave early on which gives more dramatic impact to what happens to Dave because we've become invested in the story and these characters, which was missing from the producer's cut. Masonberg takes his time and lets us get to know the characters and the world they inhabit, slowly building the tension and dread.

One notices that the temporary soundtrack on the director's cut is much more understated and less shrill and annoying than the producer's cut. In a nod to George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Masonberg's version lingers on the television newscasts that appear sporadically throughout the film instead of relegating them to background noise as in the producer's cut. The director's approach gives us some perspective so that we know the plague is definitely a global phenomenon and as a result there is more at stake.

More problematic are nagging questions like why didn't our heroes just leave town when they had the chance? Another dumb move sees the protagonists leave the only functioning vehicle unattended, after finding out that the killer teens have deactivated all the others, while they go retrieve two other survivors. In the last third of the film, our heroes take total leave of their senses and make a bunch of stupid decisions that is frustrating to watch. This isn't entirely cleared up in the director's cut.

There is a haunting shot early on of a deserted playground as Tom comes back home. Masonberg's cut lingers longer on Tom's arrival and establishes much more effectively a tragic atmosphere as his hometown has been rendered a ghost town because of the plague. There are also plenty of chilling images, including one of a little boy emotionlessly breaking a clergyman's neck.

After the mainstream success of *Dawson's Creek*, James Van Der Beek has been trying to shed his squeaky clean image from that show with edgy fare like the adaptation of Bret Easton Ellis'

novel *Rules of Attraction* (2002). In *The Plague*, he plays a man wracked with guilt and looking for some kind of redemption. Tom carries around a well-thumbed copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck that the producer's cut clumsily tries to suggest that we should equate Tom with the book's troubled protagonist Tom Joad. In Masonberg's version, Tom comes across as more thoughtful than simply a stereotypical stoic man of action as he is presented in the producer's cut.

The difference between Masonberg's version and the producer's cut is like night and day. For example, Sam is no longer a one-note sidekick and source of comic relief and Dee Wallace no longer has a shrill, pointless cameo. More of Bill Butler's atmospheric cinematography is preserved and the transitions between scenes make more sense and are smoother in nature. It's amazing what a difference editing makes and how Masonberg delivered a much more thoughtful, coherent version when given the opportunity to do so.

The Plague was released straight-to-DVD in September 2006 to generally negative reviews. According to Masonberg, his film was completely restructured and stock footage and new dialogue was added. Eight months later, Masonberg started his campaign to get his version of *The Plague* released because, legally, he can't show his version of the film. He has created a website (<http://www.spreadingtheplague.com/>), made a mini-documentary called *Spreading The Plague* chronicling his ordeal, and gotten the word out on radio show, interviews with movie web sites, and pretty much to anybody who would listen.

It is rather ironic that Masonberg and Minton had no desire to make a mainstream horror film but rather something that would be more personal and character-driven and the one that was officially released was exactly the kind of film they didn't want to make. Hopefully, word will get out about what happened to *The Plague* and people who care about preserving an artist's original vision will let Sony know that Masonberg and Minton's version should be given the chance to be seen.



→ ARROW IN THE HEAD →

REVIEWS INTERVIEWS MISTRESSES HORROR TALK DVD PUB KOOL SHITE
TRAILERS SCRIPTS WALLPAPER SCREENSAVERS UPCOMING MOVIES RELEASE DATES

Spread the Plague

Jun. 25, 2007



Source: Spreadingtheplague.com

by: Omar Hussain

Anytime I hear the news of a studio taking power away from a director or writer I get pissed off. It's just an obvious sign of more commercialism being inserted into the film. Maybe some of you out there remember a film called CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE that hit shelves a couple years back, but what many don't know is that the film was basically raped by the producers.

Producers took the film away from director Hal Masonberg and re-cut portions of the film, used stock footage, and changed loads of dialogue to reconstruct the film completely. On top of all that, the film has very little to do with Clive Barker, despite what the title would suggest. Barker didn't even write the story, as the producers led people to believe.

But Masonberg didn't just sit around and get pissed off about what the producers had done, instead he used what he had and cut his own version of the film. And Masonberg's cut of the film has garnered great response, but without the backing of Screen Gems, the cut will never see the light of day.

And before this article begins to sound like a UNICEF commercial I'll tell you how you can help. There is an online petition that you can partake in and hopefully Screen Gems will pay attention. If you wanna help get this cut of the film out there, go [HERE](#).

Also, read The Arrow's review of the original cut by going [HERE](#).

THE PLAGUE star Ivana Milicevic and those lips can plague me all she wants...





The Plague, Trying to be Reborn

Posted By : Meh, Thursday Jun,28 ,Via: Source
Filed Under : Indie Horror, Supernatural & Thriller's,

Clive Barkers The Plague was one of the most painfull movies I have ever watched. I wanted to love it, I really did, but unfortunately putting Clive Barkers name on it did not salvage the fact that the film was disturbingly bad. The story concept was a good one and the acting was reasonable and even the story and filmmaking in parts was very well done. The problem was it felt slapped together. Scenes that collided and did not match up correctly and an ending that came out of no where and made me feel robbed. I finished the movie wondering how on earth Clive Barker put together such a poor film.

Now with that all said despite my negative views on the film the FilmMakers still reached out to me to share their input. It would appear based on an email from the Director that the film we saw, is not the film they intended for us to see.

According to the director, in the fall of 2005, the film was taken away from its writers and director during post production. After an 8 year struggle to get the film made, the footage was re-cut from scratch by the producers without the involvement of the film's creators. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded, and the film completely restructured. It was released to dvd in September of 2006 at a running time of 88 minutes under the title CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, though it was not based on any of Barker's work (it was an original screenplay by director Hal Masonberg and co-writer Teal Minton) and Barker, personally, had very little to do with the making of the film, according to director Hal Masonberg.

The version of the film that was released, and that I reviewed according to Hal Masonberg, in no way reflects the years of hard work, creativity, or artistic intent of the writers and director of



the film. It is solely and completely a "producers' cut".

However, after having been removed from the film, director Hal Masonberg took it upon himself to finish the film with the materials available to him (the film's dailies on dvd and a Macintosh computer-turned post-production facility) The film was originally shot in Super 35 by veteran cinematographer, Bill Butler (JAWS, THE CONVERSATION, FRAILTY), who was also not invited to partake in the film's post-production process.

The response to the Writers & Director's Cut according to Hal by those who have seen it has been through the roof. However, without further support, this film may never see the light of day as the film's current distributor, Screen Gems, has no plans to release this cut. This is where you the readers come into play.

He ask's that you take a look at this site. On it you will find an hour-long documentary containing interviews with not only director, Hal Masonberg, but many others including Dee Wallace and other cast members, film authors/ journalists.

There is also a link to a petition and much more info on what happened to this film. He is as a fan of our site calling you horror fans to arms to bring his film to life the way it was intended to be seen. Go checkout the directors site (<http://www.spreadingtheplague.com/>) and see what all the talk is about. I will wait to see the directors cut of the film and will give it a fair shake and let you know whether its any better once its available.

Thoughts or comments? We encourage our readers to react to the news, not just read it. Leave comments and be a part of the news! Got some Horror news? Send it in If you like what we are doing, please use the links below to share it!

Email this • Save to del.icio.us • Digg This! • Add This! • Blog This

*** Le fléau selon... Selon qui, au juste ?

04 déc 2010 Par Tonton BDM

Depuis les débuts du cinéma, nombreux sont les films désavoués par leurs auteurs suite à des remontages sauvages de la part de producteurs indéliçats. Quelques chefs d'œuvres bien entendu (*Les rapaces*, *La splendeur des Amberson*, *Major Dundee*, *L'idiot*, *Cléopâtre...*), mais également quelques films plus mineurs (*La vengeance aux deux visages*, *Alien 3*, *Le treizième guerrier*, *Supernova...*) ou même quelques séries B (*Hellraiser IV*)... Les exemples sont légion, si nombreux en réalité qu'on pourrait même leur consacrer un livre entier sans en faire le tour (*Ces films que l'on ne verra jamais*, Alain Weber, éditions L'Harmattan).



À l'ère de la vidéo et du tout Internet, les choses sont un peu différentes : un réalisateur mécontent d'avoir été dépossédé de « son » œuvre a de nos jours quelques moyens alternatifs pour tenter de faire vivre sa vision, moyens que n'avait naturellement pas à sa disposition Orson Welles dans les années 40. Prenons le cas d'Hal Masonberg, réalisateur en 2006 d'un petit film fantastique « à l'ancienne », intitulé en France *Le fléau* selon Clive Barker. Le cinéaste se bat depuis quatre ans pour tenter de convaincre Screen Gems et Sony Pictures Entertainment de donner une chance à sa version. Voilà comment il résumait la situation au magazine américain *Fangoria* il y a quelques années :

« En automne 2005, les financiers du *Fléau* nous retirent, au co-scénariste Teal Minton et à moi-même, la responsabilité de la post-production du film. Il faut savoir que la fabrication du métrage a été très longue, huit années de dur labeur. Et après ça, les producteurs nous enlèvent tout ce qu'on avait déjà bouclé pour recommencer le montage à zéro ! Ils ont alors rajouté des plans que l'on avait volontairement écartés du montage final, ont enregistré de nouveaux dialogues, et le film est finalement sorti sous le titre de Clive Barker's *The plague* alors qu'il est très éloigné du travail de l'écrivain et que, de toute manière, la nouvelle qui a servi de pitch était bien trop courte pour servir de support à notre narration. Dans la version définitive, rien ne reflète le résultat de notre travail artistique et professionnel. C'est uniquement un produit des producteurs.

Cependant, lorsque j'ai été éloigné du projet, j'ai emporté mon travail avec moi, car j'avais décidé de finir le film à ma manière, c'est à dire au format DVD, sur mon mac équipé de logiciels pour la post-production (montage, mixage...). pourrait très bien ne jamais voir le jour car le distributeur actuel du film, Screen Gems, refuse d'éditer ma version. »



Il paraît qu'on n'est jamais aussi bien servi que par soi-même. Sur son site www.spreadingtheplague.com, le réalisateur propose des heures de documentaires sur la production de son bébé, des entretiens avec les acteurs, des journalistes et des critiques. Tous semblent d'accord pour considérer la version de Masonberg comme meilleure que le cut disponible en DVD. Et en effet, il faut reconnaître que ce « rough cut » que nous a envoyé le réalisateur, s'il ne fait pas le poids techniquement (le film est proposé avec une image très moyenne et en 4/3 uniquement), donne d'avantage d'importance aux personnages et aux moments de calme, alors que le cut des producteurs se concentrait d'avantage sur l'aspect visuel du film.

Les deux versions diffèrent de 18 minutes, mais les différences ne se situent pas uniquement au niveau des séquences ajoutées ; la structure du film dans sa totalité est différente, et pourrait servir de cours magistral sur l'effet du montage sur le sens d'une scène. Alors, Masonberg, nouveau Eisenstein ? Pas tout à fait, mais son implication dans « sa » post-production -sur laquelle il s'attarde longuement dans le documentaire *Spreading the plague*- tend à la maniaquerie pure et simple, si ce n'est à l'obsession. De nombreux exemples des différences de montage entre les deux cuts sont disponibles à cette adresse. Plus fin, plus intelligent, le writer and director's cut se révèle cela dit incontestablement plus réussi que le montage proposé en DVD il y a quelques années, puisqu'il arrive à réellement impliquer le spectateur dans son récit, ce qui donne naturellement plus de force aux plans iconiques qu'il propose par la suite.

L'atmosphère froide du film décuple la cruauté de certaines séquences ; ce Fléau révèle rapidement sa richesse d'écriture, précise, rigoureuse, dont l'impact est multiplié par une mise en scène et en espace superbe, riche de jolis paris visuels et d'une dimension presque lyrique lors de son final. Sous son calme apparent, ce montage du Fléau en impose, malgré la déroutante absence de bruitages mixés et les temp-tracks qui lui servent de musique. Masonberg réussit son pari, et évoque, au détour de quelques plans, la maestria d'un John Carpenter (d'autant plus que la séquence de l'église fait écho à la fois la fin de *Fog* et *Prince des ténèbres*). Avec son exploration toute personnelle du thème de la famille -mise en parallèle avec l'adaptation de John Ford des Raisins de la colère dans le film- les auteurs déplacent une dimension socio-politique forte (proche d'un George A. Romero) vers une sphère beaucoup plus intime, celle de la cellule familiale brisée.



On comprend en survolant les séquences storyboardées disponibles sur le DVD le désarroi de ses auteurs quand ils se sont retrouvés dépossédés de leur bébé : on se rend compte que chaque plan, chaque cadrage, et jusque chaque articulation de plan était pensé de A à Z. Du cinéma réfléchi. Comme on n'en fait plus ?



Gorehounds Unite!

The More Blood The Better

Indie Filmmaker In Need Of Our Help!

As I'm sure any of you who have been involved in independent filmmaking in any aspect have heard of the horror stories that can happen to us all. I just came upon one of these horror stories that is continuing on right now. I'll let the filmmakers explain in their release below:

Filmmaker Fights To Spread THE PLAGUE

Writer/Director Hal Masonberg is fighting to get his film seen; a film he finished AFTER he was removed from the project. Now he's heading an international campaign to get his film released. The film in question is, *THE PLAGUE*, a thought-provoking, socially relevant horror movie dealing with the subject of kids, violence and fear. *THE PLAGUE* was taken away from both its writers and director during post production after they'd spent a total of 8 years struggling to get it made. A producers' cut version was released to DVD under the title *CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE* even though it had been an original script and concept by Masonberg/Minton and not based on any of Barker's work.

The good news is that there is a web site, growing quickly in popularity, that is devoted to getting the Writers & Director's Cut of this film released. On it one will find, not only a link to a petition with an ever-growing number of signatures, but an hour-long documentary titled *SPREADING THE PLAGUE: INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT* which contains interviews with Masonberg and cast members, including one of the film's stars, Dee Wallace (*E.T.*, *THE HOWLING*), as well as noted film authors/ journalists. All participants openly voice their desire to see this cut of the film released. There are also written interviews, radio interviews, links to forums and articles all focusing on getting this film out to the public.

Screen Gems has stated that they would consider releasing the Writers & Director's Cut if they felt there was an audience for the film. Let's show them that there is.

Check out the web site, please sign our petition, and help us spread the word. Please repost this if you can.

Here's the link to the petition: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/plague/>

Here's the link to the website: <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com>

Thanks again,

Hal Masonberg

This is a tragedy that this kind of stuff happens to our Independent filmmaking community anymore. We as filmmakers and fans are now required to have to step up to the plate and take action to help our fellow filmmakers. We are all family.....I dont care what genre your into we're all still looking to achieve one goal in all of this and that is to show that good independent cinema can thrive and that we as filmmakers and fans wont stand for these sorts of injustices anymore.

What I ask of all of you is this.....Fill out the petition and call or email Screen Gems. Have all your friends and familys do the same, have them have their friends and family do the same. Most of all lets do everything we can to right this wrong and show everyone that if you screw with one of us you screw with all of us!



Gorehounds Unite!

The More Blood The Better



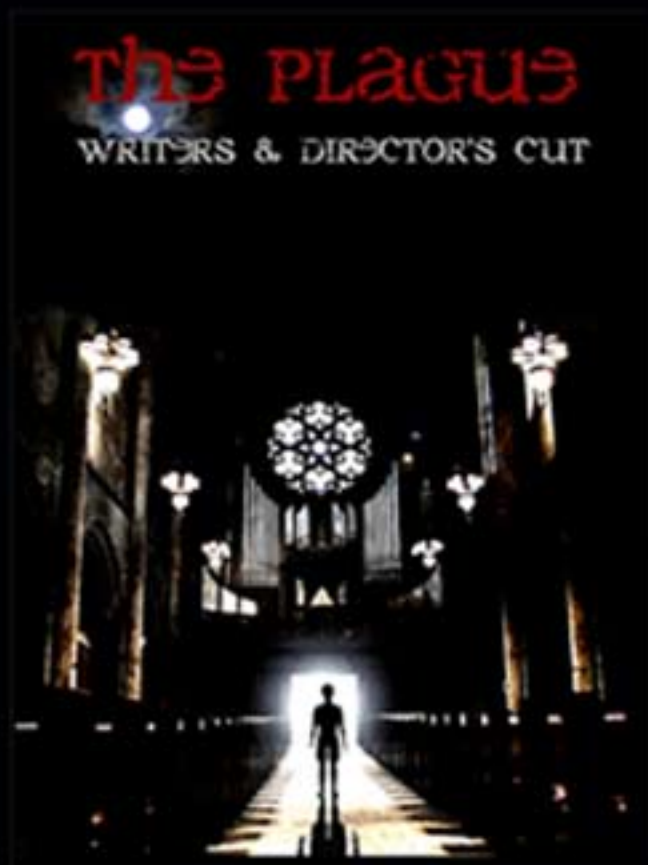
SPREADING "THE PLAGUE"?

Date: 7/02/07

I got an interesting e-mail the other day from a website dedicated to the release of the writer and director's cut of the underrated flick, CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, a film that had next to no involvement from Barker, save for the addition of his name above the title. It seems that there's another cut of the film that the writer and director are hoping to get released, and the website, spreadingtheplague.com, has posted a lengthy video featuring interviews with the aforementioned creative team, as well as members of the cast and crew, all of whom feel that the original cut of the film is clearly the version horror fans want to see.

I have to admit, my curiosity is officially piqued, as I actually enjoyed the version of the film I saw, but felt that it was clearly missing something that could very well be present in this unreleased cut.

Ooze on over to spreadingtheplague.com and have a look for yourself, and be sure to sign the petition while you're there!



10 Questions with Hal Masonberg

Hal Masonberg is a director, who directed the film "The Plague" back in 2006 which Clive Barker executive produced. He was then later thrown off the project during post-production of the film when the the production company didn't like his cut of the film and instead the company decided to re-cut the film from scratch to the point where Masonberg's vision and story for the film was destroyed as the film became one of those senseless horror films. Today, Hal Masonberg is here to talk about his petition to have his cut of the film released on DVD and the reasons behind wanted his version of the film to be seen by the general public.

1) Tell me about yourself and why you got into directing?

I'd always wanted to make films. Ever since I was a kid. Even before I knew what a "director" was, I knew I wanted to be the guy who made that thing I was watching. While most of my friends wanted to be this actor or that character, I wanted to be the guy who told the story they were in.

I was lucky enough to grow up going to films all through the late 60's and into the 70's so I was exposed to some pretty amazing storytelling techniques, styles, structure... I saw 2001 in its initial release and it changed my life. I was mesmerized, my imagination stirred, my mind reeling, my senses tingling... I couldn't wait to see it again. And I was the kid who went back over and over again to any film I liked. Oftentimes alone, sometimes with friends. And since this was before video existed, I would go to rep houses to see classic films, which were also on TV regularly so I grew up with the whole gamut of movies made since the dawn of film. I couldn't get enough!

When college rolled around, I knew that's what I wanted to study. I went to Sweden to study film and theater. I have always had a great love of foreign films, especially as American cinema became less daring and more predictable, it was films from other countries that did for me what the films of the 70's and earlier had done.

Then I moved to Seattle, worked for the Seattle International Film Festival for 3 years, and then came to L.A. to try to and break into the film biz. Of course, that was before I realized "the biz" was just that: folks more attracted and excited by the business end of things, than actual lovers of film. With some exceptions, of course.

2) Before I get to your petition and the problems that surround your film, tell my readers about your film "The Plague"?

THE PLAGUE was a script written by my writing partner at the time, Teal Minton, and myself. It was written for me to direct. The reason we chose to make a horror film was simply because both of us had loved horror when we were younger, but felt the genre had gone in a very different direction over the last 15-20 years and was no longer turning out the kinds of horror films we

wanted to see. Or, at least, very rarely. Both Teal and I admired how the horror films we grew up watching almost always dealt with existing social fears. The communist scare in *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*; a woman's sacrificial role in society in *ROSEMARY'S BABY*; a parent's horror at witnessing what their child is going through and feeling helpless to understand it, no less do anything about it in *THE EXORCIST*. These films used the genre to explore through metaphor and analogy. And the fears they tapped into were very primal. And those fears were based in character, in humanity. And this is what we wanted to explore. For us, the theme was children and violence in society. While we were shopping the script around, Columbine happened. It was horrifying and exactly what we had written about. Not directly, but thematically.

The other thing about *THE PLAGUE* was that we wanted to take the genre and not go where people expected it to go. We wanted to engage our audience as participants, not just during the film, but afterwards as well. We wanted to allow our audience to walk away with different opinions as to what the film was about and how it ended, what it meant, what they felt. We wanted to ask questions, not answer them. We wanted to leave that up to the audience. We felt they were smart enough.

We also didn't want it to be a slasher film. We insisted most of the physical violence happen off-screen where the imagination could raise it to new heights.

3) What was it like to work with James Van Der Beek and Dee Wallace?

I will confess that I had never seen James in anything before. I had never watched *Dawson's Creek*, hadn't seen *Varsity Blues*... I think James' performance in the Writers and Director's Cut of *THE PLAGUE* is really strong. I think folks who were apprehensive about "Dawson" in a horror film would be really thrilled to see him here. I think it would have been a great boost to his career had his performance been seen. However, in the producers' cut—which is the only cut currently available—I think his performance has been seriously compromised through editing choices I would not, personally, have made.

Which brings us to Dee. Dee Wallace is one of the most committed, wonderful actresses I've ever had the pleasure to work with. And the heartfelt, powerhouse performance she gave in *THE PLAGUE* is mostly on the cutting room floor. And what IS in the film is not put together in a way that I think even comes close to doing justice to the authenticity of her acting and her extraordinary ability to engage with other actors. However, in the Writers & Director's cut, I believe her performance soars! It's a whole different performance, a whole different film.

4) Why did you want to make this film an adult oriented horror film?

I think I answered a lot of that above, but I'll add to it that Teal and I simply wanted to make a horror film that we, as adults, would go see ourselves. We both felt pretty certain that we weren't the only adults out there who appreciated smart horror with rich characters and were having a hard time finding it in an age when most horror films are geared toward teens and young adults and are a bit more focused on quick scares mixed with great makeup and effects. All good things, to be sure, but not what we were looking for and certainly not what we were interested in making. The sad part of this tale, of course, is that seems to be exactly what the producers ended up trying to turn this film into! One of Clive's producers said to me as he started re-cutting the film after having me removed, "We're cutting down the characters and turning this into a killer-kid film." That's verbatim.

5) Now, tell me, what happened during post production that caused you to be thrown off of this project?

One of the producers confided in me when we got back to L.A. that someone high up wanted this to be a very different film from the one we made. This was before a single frame had been cut together. My best guess from what I've put together is that the production company was telling us what we wanted to hear as filmmakers, and telling Sony Screen Gems what they wanted to hear as the distributor. Now I never met with anyone at Sony throughout this whole process so I don't blame them at all. But the production company producers told us that we would not be going after a domestic distributor until after we did film festivals to find the proper audience and distributor. And we all agreed that was the best route. We were also told that the film's financing had come from foreign pre-sales. Well, what I was told only recently was that the film had been financed by Sony from the get-go! Which, of course, is a great thing if everyone's on the same page.

So back in L.A., I had six weeks to put together a rough cut of the film--an incredibly short time--and I chose to have one of Clive Barker's producers with me throughout so that Clive's interests would be engaged. We put together the best cut possible in that short amount of time we were given (I actually even started a week earlier than scheduled just so we could have as much time as humanly possible), and we tried to incorporate many of the notes of the 14 producers on this project as they came to us. The understanding was that we would get it to the best place possible then continue editing together after those six weeks were up to maximize our time. You see, after the director takes his shot at it, the producers then have a go at it. That's in the contract. Clive's producers promised that we would be working together on this all the way through and that the film did NOT have to be completed in those 6 weeks. Oddly, the producer who had been in the room with me claimed that he LOVED the cut we'd put together and believed Clive would be thrilled with it. Well, word was that he wasn't. I tried to talk to Clive, but that never happened. I felt his producers did everything they could to keep us separated.

Simply put, I was told in the most abusive and unprofessional way possible that my services were no longer needed by people I had put my total and complete trust and faith in. I had committed eight years of my life to getting this film made. And now it was on its way to becoming everything I had fought so long and hard to ensure it wasn't. I was beyond devastated.

My manager called the guy in charge of THE PLAGUE over at Sony Screen Gems and was told that Sony owned the film now and they saw no reason for the writers and director to be involved. I found that pretty shocking. Particularly since they'd never met or spoken with me. All the folks I'd worked with at Sony in the past on other projects had always been great, creative collaborators and really decent people. This was an entirely new attitude toward filmmakers that I'd never seen before. Not at Sony.

6) When did you realize in your own mind that you were losing control of your film?

I could sense something was wrong about halfway through editing. One of Clive's producers had become very distant, very cold and unfriendly and I knew that wasn't a good sign. And since I'd already been told that someone high up wanted this to be a different film from the one we had spent 8 years making... I knew there was trouble ahead. I expressed my concern to my agent at the time, but he felt there was nothing to worry about.

7) After you were thrown off the project, when did you decide to fight back and start a petition and the spreading the plague website to get your own cut of the film released?

I decided pretty quickly that I was going to finish the film anyway. I was falling into a deep, deep depression, had a lot of anger and bitterness and sadness... But I had the dailies on DVD (sadly, not the 35mm negative) and knew I could put together the version of the film that I had made. Which, you should know, was going to be quite different from the rough cut we had raced to put together. That was a very incomplete film, in my opinion. I went up to Canada and stayed with my girlfriend at the time and spent those many winter months transferring the footage and starting to edit. Then I came back to L.A., basically created a post-production facility in my living room with my Mac, and lived and breathed THE PLAGUE for the next 8 months or so. After finishing the edit, I learned sound design, visual effects, how to create a strong temp score, etc. And it was the most incredible experience! I mean, I was in heaven. Every performance, every nuance of the film I'd made was right there and it was really coming together. There's simply no way to know 6 weeks in an editing room what you have on your hands. Especially if you're working with an editor whose taste and style doesn't match or enhance your own. It does no justice to the film, the performers, or the audience to race through like that. It's a lose/lose scenario in my opinion. I learned that, for me, editing is an incredibly intimate experience. It's not just technical. And I knew from that point on that I never wanted to make another film without submerging myself completely in that part of the journey.

8) How much was Clive Barker actually really involved with the film and your opinion of him?

Though the producers' cut is called CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, the film is not based on any Barker work, nor was it written or directed by him. Clive was not present on set. However, it was his company and his producers that I worked closely with for 3 years and Clive and I met and talked about the film quite a few times throughout the process. He was always friendly and engaging. The sense I got from his producers was that he didn't know much about what was going on outside of his own personal projects. They would constantly tell me, "Don't talk to Clive about that. He doesn't know what's going on." To the best of my knowledge, it was Clive's producers who had me removed from the film --and they claimed to be doing it because Clive didn't like the direction the film was going. They also claimed it was Clive who didn't want me present at any screenings or presentations. Of course, this is simply what they told my manager and myself. Who knows the truth? Again, I never got to speak with Clive personally after I was removed from the film. But I always thought it odd that as a director himself and someone who has had films taken away from him (LORD OF ILLUSIONS & NIGHTBREED, if I'm not mistaken), that he would then turn around and take a film away from another director without even so much as having a conversation with that person. It always struck me as odd. And didn't seem in sync with the man I had met who came across very smart and very supportive.

9) Tell me about your petition and the documentary that can be seen on the website at <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com/>?

After completing my cut, I sent it to the guy in charge of our film over at Screen Gems. He told my manager that he "scanned through it", wasn't interested. Since Screen Gems decided to release the producers' cut, which I assumed was closer to what they had envisioned for the film, I waited a good 8 months or so after the film came out on DVD before I started my campaign. Though it was tough, I didn't want to hamper the sales of their version as I knew it would directly reflect my chances of getting my cut released later on. Once I put up the web site and "went public", as it were, I think the sales for their cut of the film actually spiked! I asked some of the actors and crew involved if they were interested in talking about the 2 cuts and they were. So I put together a mini-documentary of sorts (more talking head

interviews, really) and put it up on the site and Youtube. I started doing radio shows, being written about on the internet: chat rooms, forums, articles. MovieMaker Magazine asked me to write about my experiences on THE PLAGUE (that article was featured in their Fall 2007 issue). Things really took off. I started a petition to Screen Gems that's still going strong, recently asked folks to write to Sony Home Entertainment expressing their desire to see the WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT and apparently e-mails have been pouring in... The site's ever-growing, ever-expanding. You can visit it at <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com>. There's always something new there. It's been very satisfying, not to mention cathartic.

10) Have you had any contact with Sony since their cut of the film has been released?

Only recently, due to the email campaign, I've spoken to a couple of folks in the Home Entertainment division and they've been very responsive and friendly. I'm hoping that experience continues and we find a way to get this cut of the film out to the public together. I think if nothing else, they'll make a good chunk of money from it!

My history with Sony goes way back. I worked in the publicity department back in the early nineties, the sound guys over at Sony did the foley work on my short film, MRS. GREER, and I sold my first screenplay to Sony and worked with Chris Lee for over a year (1999-2000). Hell, the first real film set I was ever on was at Sony. Spielberg's HOOK. Amazing set. I've fulfilled several childhood dreams on that lot! And I hope to have a continued relationship with Sony Pictures. And I'd love that relationship to continue with a release of THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT on DVD and Blu-Ray, not to mention more projects in the future. They're a great company.

Bonus Questions:

11) Tell me what projects you are currently working on besides trying to get your cut of the film released?

I have a new project titled, CLEAN, which is a psychological thriller set mostly in England. I wrote the script myself based on an idea Teal and I had years ago. I'm working with a fabulous producer named Amyra Bunyard and her production company Lock & Loru Productions. We'll be maintaining creative control throughout so that what happened on THE PLAGUE doesn't happen on CLEAN.

12) What advice would you give to any director that wants to go out and make his own film?

Make the film you want to make. If the end result you want is for people to see the film you made, the story you want to tell them in the way you want to tell it, never give up creative control. To anyone. Not even your mother! I know it sounds bitter and paranoid, but there are more than enough directors--from the most famous to the entirely unknown--who will tell you the same thing. And when your lawyer or your agent tells you that no director gets final cut, know that he or she is dead wrong. You may not get final cut at a studio, but if maintaining creative control is important to you, there are other ways to get your films made. Stay true to yourself.

Frank Capra's once gave some advice to a few young, upcoming directors on the Dick Cavett show back in 1972. What he said was this:

"I think it's up to you younger fellas, right now... If Hollywood is dying it's because you haven't got control of your own films yet. And you have to find a way to get control of your films away from those who consider film as some leisure-time investment... It's gotta come back into the hands of the creative people. And until it does, you're gonna have people who don't give a damn whether Hollywood makes it or not."

Those young directors Mr. Capra shared these words with were Mel Brooks, Peter Bogdanovich and Robert Altman.

That was over 30 years ago. But I think, in many ways, Mr. Capra's words still have the ring of truth.

I want to thank you for your time and good luck getting your cut of "The Plague" released on DVD, as I'm pulling for you and on your future projects

To sign the petition and check out the documentary on Hal Masonberg's fight to have his version of "The Plague" released. I urge you to check it out at: <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com>

Please, I urge to sign this petition, Sony is watching. Help Hal Masonberg get his version released to the public.

In the next edition of Ten Questions, I will have the first part of my two-part interview with the head of Shock-O-Rama and Seduction Cinema, Michael Raso.

Until next time, my name is Anthony Thurber and that's Ten Questions.



Sang pour sang
HORREUR.COM

29/07/2008 : PESTE SOIT DU STUDIO S CUT !



C'est par hasard, au détour d'un profil Myspace que j'ai rencontré Hal Masonberg. Après avoir échangé quelques mails avec le scénariste et réalisateur, il m'a semblé intéressant de vous faire partager son histoire.

Qui est donc ce Hal ?

"Bonjour tout le monde. Je suis Hal Masonberg, le coscénariste et réalisateur d'un film titré : **THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT.**"

Peux-tu nous en dire plus sur "The Plague" ?

"**"THE PLAGUE"** est un film d'horreur en quelque sorte, cependant il lorgne plutôt vers les films d'horreur à l'ancienne. Ce n'est pas vraiment de l'horreur à l'image des films d'horreur actuels. C'est beaucoup plus basé sur les personnages, et le film vise les phobies sociales actuelles. Ce n'est ni tout à fait un film gore, ni tout à fait un film de monstre. Pour ma part, je pense que c'est un thriller surnaturel."

"C'est l'histoire d'un monde où tous les enfants ont mystérieusement sombré dans sommeil comateux. A cause de cela, notre monde court à sa perte, et la vie comme nous la connaissons commence à changer dangereusement au fil des ans. L'histoire se passe dans une petite ville du New Hampshire. Une nuit, notre héros retourne chez lui après avoir passé 11 ans en prison. Là, il n'est pas accueilli les bras ouverts, puisqu'après avoir passé 10 dans un sommeil profond, tous les enfants du monde se réveillent sans crier gare."

Jetés au milieu de cet univers dérangeant, les acteurs James Van Der Beek (Dawson de Dawson's Creek !), Ivana Milicevic et Dee Wallace-Stone (vue, entre autres, dans le "Halloween 2007" de Rob zombie). Le casting est donc loin d'être amateur...

Seul petit hic, le projet a été repris entièrement par le studio, alors même qu'il était déjà achevé.



J'ai cru comprendre que tu avais quelques difficultés à sortir "The Plague". Qu'en est-il ?

"Après une lutte de 8 années pour que le film voit enfin le jour, il a été retiré des mains de ses créateurs de la façon la plus infecte possible, et remonté de A à Z par les producteurs qui insistent pour avoir un simple film "d'enfants tueurs". Le film est sorti en DVD sous le titre trompé "Clive Barker's the plague", alors qu'il n'était absolument pas basé sur les travaux de Barker, il n'a pas non plus été écrit, réalisé ou créé par lui. La version qui a été mise sur le marché n'est AUCUNEMENT le travail des talents impliqués. Moi même, en tant que réalisateur, j'ai choisi de finir le film après avoir été évincé du projet. Les interprètes et l'équipe technique, y compris le chef opérateur vétérinaire Bill Butler ("Les Dents de la Mer", "The Conversation", "Emprise" - lui aussi a été évincé du métrage), soutiennent ce que nous appelons "the plague : Writers & Director's cut."

Après que le studio's cut (NdR : montage studio) ait été distribué, j'ai commencé une campagne à bras le corps, pour prévenir le plus de monde possible de ce qui était arrivé sur ce film, et que le public sache que le film qui leur était vendu n'était pas le film que nous avons fait. J'ai aussi demandé aux fans de me rejoindre, de signer notre pétition, et d'envoyer des mails à Sony Home Entertainment, le distributeur du film, pour lui demander de sortir le montage d'origine. Après deux ans à construire cette campagne, des milliers de gens nous ont rejoint, et nous avons enfin réussi à attirer l'attention des gens de Sony. Cependant, il n'est toujours pas question de distribuer le montage d'origine. Et nous n'arrêterons pas de nous battre tant que cela n'aura pas été fait. Il y a des tonnes d'informations sur notre site web : <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com>"



On peut déjà avoir un petit aperçu des travaux de l'équipe, grâce à la bande-annonce :



Enfin, en guise de note finale, et parce qu'on est vachement 2.0 à Horreur.com, nous vous proposons de visiter LE PROFIL MYSPACE du film, et son GROUPE FACEBOOK. Pour ceux qui souhaiteraient signer la pétition, le module vous propose de verser de l'argent après avoir validé votre signature. Vous n'avez pas besoin de le faire, votre signature est déjà enregistrée.

Vous pouvez aussi soutenir le film en envoyant un courrier de réclamation aux personnes suivantes :

David Bishop President Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
David_Bishop[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com.

Fritz Friedman SVP Worldwide Publicity Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
Fritz_Friedman[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com.

Sean Carey Sr. EVP, Digital Distribution Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
Sean_Carey[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com

Tracey Garvin SVP Marketing Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
Tracey_Garvin[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com

Peter Schlessel President, Worldwide Affairs Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
Peter_Schlessel[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com..

Lexine Wong SEVP Worldwide Marketing Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
Lexine_Wong[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com

Noam Meppen VP, Retail Promotions and Merchandising Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] :
Noam_Meppen[ARROB@SE]spe.sony.com

Marshall Forster SEVP, North America Sony Pictures Home Entertainment [us] ..
Marshall_Forster@spe.sony.com..

Voilà le modèle type de lettre qui a été envoyé, et que vous-même pourrez envoyer :

"Dear _____

I am writing to ask you to release THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT to DVD and Blu-Ray. The film, written by Hal Masonberg and Teal Minton and directed by Masonberg, was dramatically re-cut by the film's producers and released as CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, though it was not based on any Clive Barker material.

The producers' cut of the film has all but run its course. But a grassroots campaign to get the Writers & Director's cut of the film released (a campaign supported by the film's cast & crew, as well as film journalists, authors, historians and fans) is well under way with a petition climbing quickly in signatures on a daily basis, a documentary titled SPREADING THE PLAGUE talking openly about what happened on this film and why the cast and crew want the director's cut released, and a wealth of information about the background and history of this film.

You can visit that site here:

<http://www.spreadingtheplague.Com/>

And view the petition here:

<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/plague/signatures.html>

Sincerely,

Ici vous mettez votre nom, et précisez "From France"

Pour ceux qui tenteraient de réfléchir avec autre chose que leur crâne, N'ENVOYEZ PAS D'INSULTES ; cela aurait l'effet contraire.

Colin VETTIER

Bela Lugosi is Dead

Cinema Literatura BD



17.7.07

"The Plague", a versão que o realizador queria fazer



Fontes: Fangoria e Spreading The Plague

É muito frequente os produtores exercerem uma grande pressão, ou mesmo um absoluto controlo sobre a versão final de um filme sem qualquer consideração pelos realizadores. Consequentemente também se tornou bastante comum serem lançadas em DVD as versões "Director's Cut". "The Plague" realizado por Hal Masonberg, foi um desses filmes. Contudo a versão do realizador poderá nunca vir a ser lançada. A Fangoria teve oportunidade de falar com o realizador e conseguiu saber mais pormenores quanto a uma possível nova versão.

No Inverno de 2005, "The Plague" foi retirado de mim e do co-argumentista Teal Minton durante a pós produção." – conta o realizador. "Depois de uma luta de oito anos para que o filme fosse feito, as sequências filmadas foram reeditadas pelos produtores sem o nosso envolvimento. Foram adicionadas filmagens que estavam de parte, gravaram-se novos diálogos, o filme foi completamente reestruturado e foi lançado com o título "Clive Barker's The Plague", apesar de não ser baseado em qualquer trabalho de Barker e ele pessoalmente, teve muito pouco a ver com a produção do filme. Esta versão do filme em nada reflecte o nosso esforço, criatividade ou intenções artísticas. É apenas e completamente uma versão "Producer's cut"."

Quanto à nova versão Hal Masonberg adianta:

“Contudo, depois de ter sido retirado do filme, eu agarrei-me a mim mesmo para o terminar com os materiais que me estavam disponíveis – os diários em DVD e um computador Macintosh tornaram a pós produção mais fácil. A resposta a esta versão “Writer’s and Director’s Cut” tem sido muito boa. No entanto sem qualquer apoio, nunca poderá vir a ver a luz do dia, pois a Screen Gems, distribuidora actual não tem planos para lançar esta versão.”

“Peço que vejam este site,” – apelou o realizador, “onde poderão encontrar um documentário de uma hora com entrevistas comigo e muitos outros incluindo Dee Wallace e outros actores, realizadores e jornalistas. Existe também um link para uma petição e muita mais informação sobre o que aconteceu com “The Plague”. Esperamos convencer a Screen Gems que existe um público para e, talvez, outros filmes que tenham tido o mesmo destino.”

O site em causa pode ser acedido em [Spreading The Plague](#).

Publicada por Rui Baptista em 1:43

Bela Lugosi is Dead

Cinema Literatura BD



BMC18-Interview Writer/Director Hal Masonberg

[Direct Download](#)[Listen with I-Tunes](#)[Podcast RSS Feed](#)

Hal Masonberg
Writer/Director

On this show I'll be interviewing Writer/Director Hal Masonberg. We're going to talk about Hal's movie *The Plague* and the website dedicated to getting the *Writers & Directors Cut* released to DVD and also the back-story on what happened to this film.

Show Notes:



AUDIO MP3

Interview with Writer/Director Hal Masonberg [36:58m]: [Play Now](#) | [Play in Popup](#) | [Download](#)

A 'PLAGUE' WORTH SPREADING

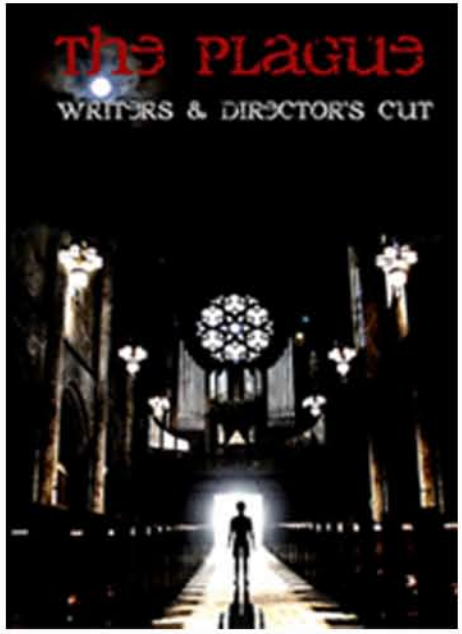
Can I Spell This Out For You?



By: Drew McAnany

Contributing Writer

The subconscious is an interesting thing and definitely the best focal point of any conversation. Believe me — I know first hand. Think of that aspect and think of a horror film. Is it really better if it's something bloody — in-your-face gore? Or something that's subdued and messes with your psyche? Personally, I go for the latter. I feel the more intelligent a horror film is, the more scary it actually is. Perfect examples are *The Exorcist* and the original *Black Christmas*. These films had moderate gore and knew their audience would appreciate using their imaginations instead of the blatant blood and guts thrown in their face.



A few weeks ago, I was lucky enough to get an assignment on a real psychological horror film, *The Plague*. No, not the one you've seen on DVD shelves advertised as *Clive Barker's The Plague*, but the originally shot version and what it was intended to be. This version has the same writer/director (Hal Masonberg) and even the same star (James Van Der Beek). However, in no way, shape or form does it resemble the version you can get on DVD...and that's unfortunate, because it is clearly a better film.



To call this film a blatant horror film would be an insult. This film is truly a dramatic film with horrific elements — not horrific because it's in your face and jumping at you, but horrific because it hits close to home. This truly is a film to make you think — a film that coincides with the problems we face today (the economy, the fear of sickness) and also something that never took the audience for granted. Never once did I feel like anything has been “dumbed down.”

I was lucky enough to chat with Hal himself and ask him a few questions. It seems that when his contract was up on the film, the production company decided they didn't need his input anymore. They took what had come out of the film through dailies and turned it into a “Killer Kid Flick.” Unfortunately, this was not the original intention of the film. Most first time directors would just lay low and let it happen. However, Hal wasn't going down without a fight. He has started a website that offers petitions to be signed and get his directors' cut released.

Imagine you're a first-time filmmaker with a story to tell — something you're really passionate about.

At the last minute, you're taken off from something you've contrived and it's thrown together into something you never envisioned. That sucks, right? Speaking with Hal personally made me admire what he is doing. Not only is he genuine and secure, but he's fighting for what's right.

Since the initial launch of the site, Hal has received 1,500 signatures on the petition from fans wanting to see the Director's Cut. A task was completed by some very enthusiastic fans which involved sending the studio e-mails, demanding they see his cut. Although the distributor has asked for \$1 million before they relinquish anything over, Hal isn't fazed. He has maintained a cool composure during this, and in the end, he's learned a lot — both good and bad.



Can I spell this out for you (well, obviously): this is a film that not only needs to be seen but deserves to be seen. What a breath of fresh air it was to watch something that really appreciated the fact that the majority of us are pretty smart people and we like to go against the norm. The film grabs you at the beginning and never lets you go. It takes you almost on a roller coaster ride that you don't want to get off. I cannot express how much I wish all of you could be as lucky as I am and actually see what this movie was intended to be. It's unfortunate, for all involved, that this film was not recognized for its true potential. My advice to all of you is to demand to see the film; prove you're not stupid and do not deserve to be treated that way. I've urged everyone I know to sign the petition and sit back and watch an entertaining film that deserves your appreciation.



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Spreading The Plague Documentary Trailer

Director Hal Masonberg and various members of the cast and crew of horror genre feature "The Plague", dealing with the subject of kids, violence and fear, look to engage the public in their quest to have the full director's cut restored to the film now owned by Screen Gems. Ranked 2.01 / 5 | 110 views |

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Sök film:

The Plague - en stulen film?

Pasi, 2007-07-03 Forumdiskussion (2)

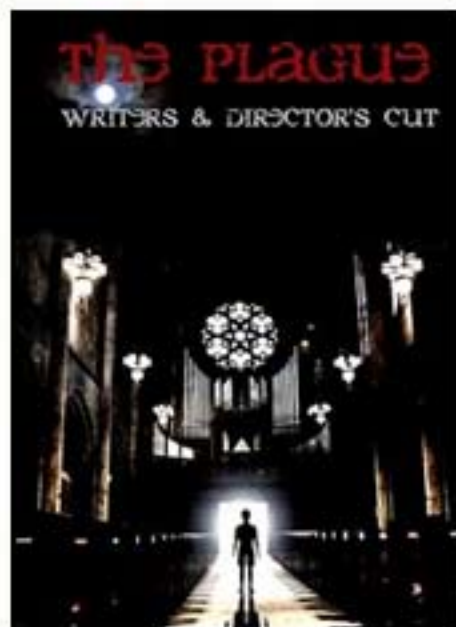
Filmen The Plague är kidnappad, enligt uppgift från manusförfattaren och regissören Hal Masonberg. Filmen, som du nu finner på DVD, och som finns inlagd här på filmtipset, fick aldrig färdigställas av regissör eller författare.

Istället skall efter åtta års arbete filmen ha tagits ifrån dem och färdigställts av andra personer med nytillskott av såväl foto, dialog som annan klippning. Nu försöker Masonberg med flera övertyga distributören Screen Gems om att utge en alternativ version, som den var tänkt från början. Intresset för detta är dock svagt.

Vill man stödja Masonberg kan man surfa in på

Spreadintheplague.com, där man hittar såväl en namnsamling som en slags dokumentär om händelsen.

Artikeln visad (812) gånger.



THE HAL BLOG

Film, Grateful Dead, Politics & Other Miscellany



The Art Of Film Editing & The Plague Of Ego by Hal Masonberg



The below video comparisons and text contain massive spoilers. Do not read or watch if you have not seen either cut of "The Plague"

As anyone who knows me or has read my blog knows, I wrote and directed a film called THE PLAGUE which was taken away from me in post-production and re-cut by the various producers involved into a film that barely resembled the film we had actually made. It was structurally, tonally, and artistically altered beyond recognition. And unlike most studio cuts of films which are merely shorter versions of the director's vision, THE PLAGUE was re-cut from first frame to

last. Not a single edit was used from my cut of the film. The producers decided they knew best and had the artistic sensibility to put the film together on their own without the participation of the writers, director or veteran cinematographer (Bill Butler of JAWS and THE CONVERSATION fame). "We own this now and see no reason for the writers and director to be involved." That's verbatim. The result was a characterless mess devoid of tone, style or meaning. It was not, in any way, shape or form, the film we had made. And yet, our names remain as the film's creators and visionaries. For good or ill.

In discussing this with folks, I discovered that it was quite challenging for some to grasp just how different two cuts of the same film could be. As a filmmaker and editor, I was used to the inner workings of post-production and understood intimately just how powerful the art of editing was to a film's success. And I'm not talking commercial success, but its success as a story, to dictate what type of an experience the filmmaker hopes to impart on his/her audience.

And in this age of fast moving films with high-tech budgets, audiences have grown accustomed to a certain pace. Gone are the slow-moving films of the past; particularly in the horror genre which has been relegated to gore effects targeted at teenagers and young adults. For example, it would be impossible for a studio to make a film like ALIEN today. They can make another sequel, sure, but it would have very little in common with the tone and pace of the original. Ridley Scott's long tracking shots of the ship, the eerie, unsettling tone of the entire opening sequence, the static shots of people searching for the creature would be all but removed and Scott would be told with misguided certainty that "Nothing is happening in this shot. Get rid of it" If I had a nickel for every time producer Jorge Saralegui said that to me, I'd have enough money to buy the rights to my film back.

Because I've been asked on numerous occasions to give folks an example of some of the differences in tone and style between my cut of the film known as THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT (openly

backed by the cast and crew) and the producers' cut known as **CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE**, I've decided to offer side-by-side comparisons of a few choice scenes. Now, while this will show you how editing can make a huge difference in storytelling, pacing, tone, tension, etc., it will not show you how proper editing can suck you in and involve you in the characters' stories and allow you to invest and care. For that, you would have to watch both films in their entireties. Something I hope to one day be able to offer you with an official release of my cut of the film.

As for the image quality of the two cuts you are about to see, the producers' cut was taken directly from the 35mm negative and has gone through the full and expensive post-production process to make it look "professional." My cut of the film is from my workprint. It was assembled from DVD dailies and not the original 35mm elements. It has not gone through ANY professional post-production processes and therefore looks like a work in progress. In other words, the image is not as sharp and clean. The music is a temporary score that mirrors my desires. The music in the producers' cut is, like the editing itself, not at all what I would have gone for or intended.

So, while the producers' cut is more "polished", I ask that you take into consideration that **THE WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT** will, when officially released, be even sharper, cleaner and richer than **CLIVE BARKER'S** cut of the film as it will not only be from the original film elements, but it will adhere to the specifications laid out by Bill Butler and myself as to quality and color-timing, which was done incorrectly in the producers' cut.

One of the main things consistently altered from the Writers & Director's Cut was cross-cutting between story lines. It was my intention, both visually and thematically, that we would cut back and forth between events and characters to connect those events and to build tension. The producers chose to show each sequence in its entirety before moving on to the next. For me, that not only dramatically reduced tension, but it avoided making necessary connections between characters and themes. The style of editing therefore also changed as the producers put these sequences together in an order they were never intended to go in. The earlier scenes in the movie move back and forth between the world of our main characters, and the world of the kids. And both worlds were meant to have unique and different styles. Much like two cars heading on a collision course, one car moving quietly and straight forward, the other swerving and careening. The two different styles were intended to create an inevitable tension and dread of what would happen when these two elements collided.

The following examples are from an early scene when the catatonic kids are strapped into their hospital beds and go into a twice-daily seizure. This was meant to be intercut with David's son, Eric, who was going through the same seizure back home. The scenes were designed to be visually and thematically intercut as you will see here in **THE WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT**:



Now take a look at the producers' version of these scenes. You will notice that in removing the inter-cutting story lines and adding digital "zooms" that were not meant to be there, both the mood and tone of this sequence is very different:



Next we have a scene of the kids turning and looking toward an unsuspecting nurse. We'll start this time with the producers cut. Notice the transitions at both the beginning and end of this sequence. They are different from what you will see later in the Writers & Director's Cut. The intended connections between earlier and later scenes have been completely removed. You will also notice the placement of shots within the scene is completely different. For example, the long push-in shot on the nurse is placed in a completely different part of the scene, thus greatly reducing the tension and altering the pacing of the scene:



Now for the Writers & Director's Cut. Notice the transition out of the previous scene between Tom and Sam. We pan away from Sam and the image seamlessly dissolves on the same movement into the nurse. It should also be stated here that the shot of Sam that starts this sequence was a pivotal one for me as it gave us a silent moment to see Sam's inner workings and vulnerability. It is one of those great shots and performance moments that many producers never see or understand. How much is told through expression and body language. And since one of the reigning themes of this film is silent communication, it is more than a little appropriate. Unfortunately, producer Jorge Saralegui's goal as he stated it to me was, "We're going to cut out the characters and turn this into a killer-kid film." And that is essentially what he and the

other producers systematically did. Remember, the kids' scenes were meant to move and feel differently from the character scenes. And this scene was intended to move directly into a scene revealing Kip and Claire and not a shot of Tom at home watching TV. While the TV news report does connect these two scenes in the producers' cut, it does not connect the characters in any way. Nor does it work toward the eerie feeling or slow build inherent in the Writers & Director's Cut. And while the producers chose to put a scene on the TV that tells you about how the world is reacting to the kids, my intention was to show a scene of familiar violence that I felt was current and an example of how we unintentionally show kids that violence is a means to an end. Even when we think they're not paying attention!

The visual transition at the end of the scene with the kids turning was meant to tie Kip and Claire directly to the kids in the school, kids whom they feel emotionally connected to, and to allow us to—at first glance—believe Kip and Claire to be just two more catatonic kids. Until someone speaks. We disappear behind the head of one kid, and come out from behind Kip's head. Here's how the entire scene was intended to play and feel. You'll notice the editing choices throughout are completely different:



Here is how the intro of Kip and Claire was presented in the producers' cut. It not only makes no attempt to connect the characters to anything else in the film, but they also changed the Sheriff's dialogue to something simpler and more "direct" for those audience members clearly incapable of thinking for themselves:



One of the most crucial moments in the film is when the kids awaken. It is the moment the entire first act has been building up to. As a result, it should work on many different levels. Here is the scene as the producers put it together. It is almost completely devoid of mood, tone or purpose:



In the Writers & Director's Cut, this scene is introduced through a montage of all the main characters engaged in very ordinary human moments, but moments that tell us about each and every individual and relationship. These wordless snippets are the calm before the storm. This montage is accompanied by David reading a passage from the Grapes Of Wrath with Tom's voice-over. What is said here is essential to not only what is happening in the film, but to Tom's attachment to the book. Many answers to many of the film's mysteries lie in this passage. It brings us closer to the characters, gives us crucial tools for the story, and builds the film to this very important moment.



The intention of the above montage was that the camera would dolly left to right across our main characters. That is a comforting direction for the camera to move. But, when we fade up on the kids in their beds, the camera is now moving right to left, a much less comforting direction and in opposition to what we've just seen. It is a contrast and it works to make us uncomfortable.

Next up is another prime example of building tension through cross-cutting. I structured the script and film to cut back and forth between Tom's journey in the air ducts and Sam's journey in the laundry chute. Unfortunately, the producers once again chose to re-edit these sequences into individual scenes that play out in their entirety before moving on to the next. For me, this greatly reduces tension and, as stated earlier, no

longer makes connections between the characters and what they are experiencing. Here is how the producers chose to cut these scenes together, greatly reducing the intended visual style of the film:



And here's how those scenes were intended to play out and still do in the Writers & Director's Cut:



If you noticed in the above scene, when the nurse looks down the laundry chute into the darkness, we expect to see a kid. But it is Tom that emerges as we seamlessly inter-cut with the next scene. For a moment, we are afraid of Tom, until we realize it's him. The line between the kids –the monsters– and Tom is blurred for a moment. They are us. We are them. This connection is absent both visually and thematically throughout the producers' cut. This is unfortunate since this is what the film is about. Without these elements, it's just a "killer-kid film".

One of the "biggest" sequences in the movie was the escape from the school. My intention here was not only to create a rousing and scary action scene, but to connect our main characters to the kids. The idea of the story is that the kids are, essentially, us. They are doing what they are doing because of us. The violence they learned is directly linked to the violence we teach and set by example. Notice in this next scene how Jean's violent action is visually linked to the kid banging on the doors. Jean's hands are bloodied and so are the kids'. As Jean punches and loses control, so do the kids. This builds to the kids eventually breaking down the doors and attacking. Connecting these elements visually is critical to both the story itself and the ultimate impact of this scene. Here is the Writers & Director's Cut version:



Notice here in the producers' cut that, instead of cutting to the kids' hands pounding on the door, the producers chose to insert out of focus shots of the bloody face of the girl Jean is punching. This was not a shot I was involved in shooting. It is a gratuitous moment and works only to make us perhaps sympathize more with the kids than with Jean, the antithesis of what I would want the audience to feel at this juncture in the story. I chose to give us a quick glimpse of that with Deputy Nathan shooting the boy in the shoulder and the boy's reaction to it, but any more actively works against the story, as you will see here. You will also notice that the producers had actor Josh Close ADR a line of unscripted dialogue as he calls, "Claire..." while watching the kids behind the doors. Another example of the producers assuming the audience is stupid. Overstating the obvious. Also notice how different the rhythm and tone of the entire sequence is from what was initially envisioned. It is sloppily put together, awkward, and not nearly as tension-filled:



Notice how the producers felt the need to add in unscripted dialogue of the characters saying at the end of the scene, "Go, go, go! They're coming!" when it is pretty obvious to anyone watching that the kids are coming! Once again, the producers don't trust the basic intelligence of the audience.

Here's another scene that was meant to be shown without a word of dialogue and was, again, an example of story and character cross-cutting. The moment between Jean and her brother Sam as she gives him the morphine was scripted and shot wordless. In the producers' cut, it contains dialogue added in post. The producers' mantra: "if they're not saying anything out loud, then nothing's being said". The most basic understanding of character and theme are lost with such a notion. If you repeat it throughout a film, then the film itself is lost.

The kids in **THE PLAGUE** communicate silently. We, as a people, communicate with one another beyond the words we use. How do the kids learn to be violent? Through us. How is that done? Did we tell them directly to be violent? No. We showed them through examples we set: hate crimes, police brutality, domestic violence, capital punishment, war... Quite often we relay this message in silence; in actions without words. And therein lies the importance of Jean and Sam communicating silently. The following scenes were designed to cross-cut back and forth between Sam/Jean/the Sheriff, and Tom/Alexis. Once again, that was not the approach taken by the producers. Here is their version:



And here is the **Writers & Director's Cut** version as it was written and shot:



Dee Wallace is an extraordinary actress who was all but completely removed from the producers' cut. Here is a scene that adds tremendous character to both Dee's Nora and the horror and anger she feels. This moment, however, not only serves her character, but Kip's character as well as he is the focal point of her anger and hatred here. It is a sample of what Kip (and Claire, for that matter) have been living with all their lives. It draws us closer to those characters; makes them human. We then see the impact this has on Tom and Jean in what is also a crucial moment in the growth of their relationship AND more silent communication through looks and glances that tell us more than words ever could:



And here is the truncated, characterless interpretation by our beloved, clueless producers:



Sometimes even the smallest alteration in cutting can have a profound effect. In this scene when Jean finds her brother Sam dead, it was important that we, as the audience, lose Jean here. By that I mean she goes to a place we cannot follow. It is through Tom that we witness Jean's actions. He must be our eyes here. So when Jean enters the room, notice that we don't cut to what she sees (or know yet if Sam's alive or dead), until Tom enters and we push in on him and THEN we see what's happened. Through HIS eyes! It's a crucial delineation and essential once again to the flow of the film and the perspective the filmmaker wants us to have. It is NOT something that can be changed effectively in post. The film would need to be designed and structured differently from that point on. We are also witnessing Jean's emotions and reactions, not through her face or words, but through the sudden rigidity in her shoulders and all around body language. Here is that scene from the Writers & Director's Cut:



Now the producers' cut. Notice how the producers cut to Sam and Nathan on the floor off of Jean's entrance and don't wait for Tom. Also notice how anti-climactic that moment is without the restraint and patience that was meant to be on display here. You may also notice that the producers added Jean whispering "Sammy" as she kneels down beside him. Once again, as if the audience didn't know who it was lying on the floor there!



And finally, the end of the film. An ending that clearly makes little sense in the producers' cut. Here is the "let's get this over with" version the producers threw together:



Now you will notice in the Writers & Director's version of this scene how important the kids' faces are. How important it is to connect the boy in the red sweater with Jean and THEN introduce the other kids and finally see them as KIDS and not monsters, which is the whole point of the film. In the producers' cut, the connection between Jean and the boy seems directionless, empty. In the Writers & Director's Cut, more time is given to connect these two in a profound and necessary way. And, once again, in utter silence. What they're feeling, how they react, is there for all to see and interpret. Nature works its way into this closing scene, a peacefulness, an understanding, an open door to things to come. And our boy in the red sweater may very well be Tom or, we feel, some part of Tom. And we feel that Jean senses this as well:



Well, there are hundreds of other examples throughout both versions of these films that are as important as the ones I've shown here. Like I said earlier, they are truly two completely different films. It's obvious which one I prefer and, hopefully, it's obvious why.

Editing can make or break a film. And poor editing and a lack of creative insight destroyed the story of **THE PLAGUE** that we worked so hard to bring to an audience. What was delivered via DVD was intended for a lowest-common denominator audience. The notion that the audience is dumb seems to be rampant in Hollywood today. And usually from folks who are none-too-bright themselves and, sadly, have little understanding of the craft of filmmaking. Were it otherwise, examples like this would not need to be made. But as it stands, the story behind **THE PLAGUE** is one of many just like it. So next time you see a film that had potential it didn't live up to, know that there may be a version out there that does. It's just being kept from you.

To learn more about **THE PLAGUE** and to help get the **WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT** released, visit our site spreadingtheplague.com, sign our [petition](#), and join our [Facebook](#) group.

To watch the actual video clips, please visit:
<http://halmasonberg.wordpress.com/2009/11/01/the-art-of-film-editing-the-plague-of-ego/>



Help Spread The Plague

Link: <http://www.horror-asylum.com/news/article.asp?item=5797>

Posted: 11 July 2007

Article Ref: 5797

Fango recently heard from director Hal Masonberg, whose debut chiller **THE PLAGUE** was released to DVD last year as a Clive Barker film, even though the celebrated author/filmmaker wasn't directly involved in its production. And according to Masonberg, he himself had little to do with the version of the movie that wound up on disc either. "In fall 2005, **THE PLAGUE** was taken away from me and co-writer Teal Minton during post-production," Masonberg says. "After an eight-year struggle to get the film made, the footage was recut from scratch by the producers without our involvement. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded and the film completely restructured, and it was released under the title **CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE** even though it was not based on any of Barker's work, and he personally had very little to do with the making of the film. That version of the movie in no way reflects our years of hard work, creativity or artistic intent. It is solely and completely a 'producers' cut.' "

"However, after having been removed from the film, I took it upon myself to finish it with the materials available to me—the dailies on DVD and a Macintosh computer turned postproduction facility," he continues. "The response to this Writers and Director's Cut from those who have seen it has been through the roof. However, without further support, this version may never see the light of day, as the film's current distributor, Screen Gems, has no plans to release this cut. I ask that you take a look at this site, where you will find an hour-long documentary containing interviews with myself and many others including Dee Wallace and other cast members, film authors and journalists. There is also a link to a petition and much more info on what happened to **THE PLAGUE**. We hope to convince Screen Gems that there is an audience for this cut of the movie and, perhaps, other films that have met a similar fate."

The site does indeed contain a wealth of information about the unfortunate circumstances surrounding **THE PLAGUE**—which are, sadly, all too common to filmmaking today in general. Check it out!

Courtesy of Fangoria



The Plague (2006)

JULY 4, 2008

GENRE: KILLER KID, ZOMBIE
SOURCE: DVD (STORE RENTAL)

My interest in seeing *The Plague* was piqued a week or so ago when an online article about *Midnight Meat Train* fans attempting to get the film a wider release caught the attention of the former film's director, one Hal Masonberg. In a comment on the article, he related a story of how his film, which was also produced by Clive Barker, had a heated post production process and was ultimately dumped on DVD in a form he didn't approve of, and thus he was mounting his own campaign to get his version of the film released. You can check out the info

Whoever's vision the released version of *The Plague's* is, it's a pretty good one for the first hour. We essentially have a sort of traditional zombie movie setup/execution, except the zombies are not actually undead. Ten years prior to the film's events, every child under the age of 9 suddenly went into a comatose state. New children were stillborn, and the kids just old enough to avoid the plague have seemingly all become delinquents. Anyway, all of a sudden they wake up, and begin killing everyone, naturally.

None of this is ever explained (the deleted scenes are no help), but the pace and tension are above average for a horror movie starring a *Dawson's Creek* cast member (the Beek himself, faring far better than in *Final Draft*). Like the best zombie movies, eventually we get all of our characters trapped in one location, and the movie truly shines here (though the slower stuff at the beginning is also pretty good – I always like the “hometown boy returns and everyone now hates him” scenario).

Unfortunately, almost the instant they leave the movie falls apart. The tension is gone, for starters – there are two people left with 20 minutes to go, so we know they'll be OK for most of that time. Worse, the ending doesn't make a goddamn lick of sense – it has something to do with Dawson being reincarnated, and his new body not only has his memories, but also his copy of *"The Grapes of Wrath"*. Huh? Plus it comes out of nowhere, and since the plague itself is never explained, this is a bit problematic. Maybe the original cut explained this more, but if so, why not have that stuff in the deleted scenes? I don't require explanations for these types of movies – none of Romero's zombie films ever had a real explanation for it all, but at least provide an explanation for the film's resolution, if nothing else.

The film was shot by Bill Butler, who also shot *Jaws*. Since I was going to see *Jaws* in a backyard screening the next day, I found this interesting. Maybe I should always string my movies together via a cast or crew member, like Quint does on his movie a day column (to sort of return the favor). Not surprisingly, it's also a much better looking film than I expected (bonus points for almost tricking me into thinking Canada was New Hampshire, where the film is set). And I don't know who is responsible for them, but there are two shots in particular that really impressed me. One is a shot of all the comatose kids (before they wake up and start killing everyone); we watch as they convulse (which they do every day at 10 am and 10 pm) while their attending nurses chat and

laugh because they are so used to this disturbing event by now. The other was an insert shot of a sugar cube – the guy puts only one corner of the cube in his coffee, and the liquid sort of sponges itself over the rest of the un-submerged cube. I dunno why, but it's fucking cool, and I'm totally doing that next time I have sugar cubes.

The aforementioned deleted scenes ARE actually worth a look, even if they don't help clarify the film's events. It's mainly extensions of existing scenes; character touches that wouldn't have hurt or slowed the film any (it's pretty short anyway – 88 minutes. Surely another 3-4 of character stuff wouldn't have been the end of the world). One of the few full blown DELETED scenes involves a priest who is the first to see Dawson when he comes back to the town, something that definitely should have been left in as his first appearance now is incredibly awkward, and also gives the priest more to do, as he is later killed without ever really being introduced. There's also a fairly entertaining commentary track by two of the actors and the film's editor, who briefly mention the film's re-editing and such, but mainly ramble about other stuff (at one point, one of the actors tries to explain how hot Ivana Milicevic is without sounding like a creepy dude. Doesn't quite pull it off.). Sadly, they don't bother explaining the ending either. Oh well.

All in all, worth a look. I am very curious to see the director's cut to see if these problems are corrected or simply made more glaring. I can definitely sense a completely solid (though not perfect) movie in there.

What say you?



Masonberg PLAGUES Sony Screen Gems

By: Jarrod Sarafin, News Editor
Source: Spreading the Plague
Date: Thursday, July 12, 2007

I got this in the email box today and I thought why not spread it out for all you horror fans. It seems that writer/director Hal Masonberg is trying to pressure Sony's Screen Gems to let him release a version of **THE PLAGUE** as he originally intended it. A few years back after he had shot most of the movie and had the cut ready to go, Screen Gems took it from under him and had a new producing crew come in, re-edit it, and slap on a **CLIVE BARKER: THE PLAGUE** title even though it's been reported that Clive Barker had nothing to do with it nor is it an adapted work from his library of fiction.

Here's the backstory of the situation as told by the original director Hal Masonberg:

In the fall of 2005, the film, THE PLAGUE, was taken away from its writers and director during post. After an 8 year struggle to make a thought-provoking, socially relevant horror film for adults, the film was re-cut from scratch by the producers without the involvement of the film's creators. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded, and the film completely restructured. The result was a version of the film that in no way reflects the years of hard work, creativity, or artistic intent of the writers and director of the film. Nor does it reflect any conversations, development ideas or intentions that were shared during the three-year collaboration process. It is solely and completely a "producers' cut". It was released to dvd in September of 2006 at a running time of 88 minutes under the title CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, though it was not based on any of Barker's work (it was an original screenplay by director Hal Masonberg and co-writer Teal Minton) and Barker, personally, had very little to do with the making of the film.

However, after having been removed from the film, director Hal Masonberg took it upon himself to finish the film anyway with the materials available to him (the film's dailies on dvd and a Macintosh computer-turned post-production facility). The film was originally shot in Super 35mm by veteran cinematographer, Bill Butler (JAWS, THE CONVERSATION, ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOOS NEST, FRAILTY), who was also not invited to partake in the film's post-production process.

The response to this Writers & Director's Cut by those who have seen it has been through the roof. However, without further support, this film may never see the light of day as the film's current distributor, Screen Gems, has no plans to release this cut.

I ask that you take a look at this site. On it you will find an hour-long documentary containing interviews with not only director, Hal Masonberg, but many others including Dee Wallace and other cast members, film authors/ journalists

There is also a link to a petition and much more info on what happened to this film.

The link is:

<http://www.spreadingtheplague.com/>

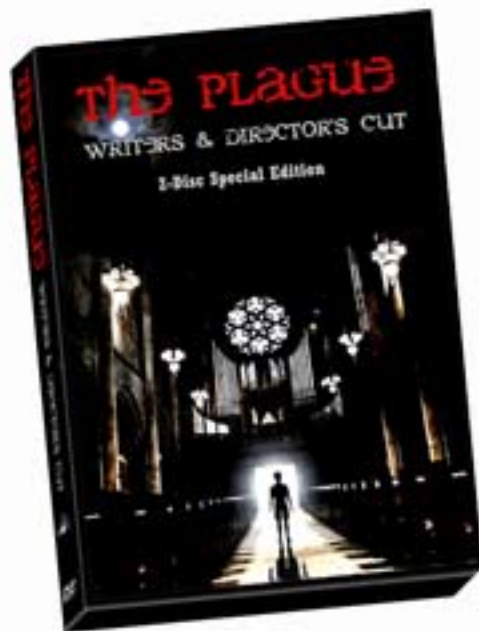
Thanks in advance for your interest.

Sincerely,

Hal Masonberg

Writer/Director *THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT*

This kind of thing seems to happen a lot inside Hollywood and sometimes, it could have been handled better for all the parties involved. I say more power to Hal for trying to get his version released.



Poster of *THE PLAGUE* by its original director Hal Masonberg.
©Spreading the Plague



Fri 6.7.07

The Plague

[DanielB](#)

Some readers will be aware of a horror film called The Plague which was released recently and was reviewed by us here. A reader has written to us letting us know that a website has been started dedicated to getting the Writer & Director's cut of the film released on DVD. Part of the site's press release reads as follows... "In the fall of 2005, the film was taken away from its writers and director during post. After an 8 year struggle to get the film made, the footage was re-cut from scratch by the producers without the involvement of the film's creators. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded, and the film completely restructured. It was released to dvd in September of 2006 at a running time of 88 minutes under the title CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE, though it was not based on any of Barker's work (it was an original screenplay by director Hal Masonberg and co-writer Teal Minton) and Barker, personally, had very little to do with the making of the film. That version of the film in no way reflects the years of hard work, creativity, or artistic intent of the writers and director of the film. It is solely and completely a "producers' cut". If this interests you why not check out their site [here](#).



Three Movie Geeks share their passion for films in an hour-long weekly series. Film reviews, news and topics are discussed in-depth. Special interviews and listener call-ins.

Date / Time: 8/1/2007 6:00 PM

BLAIR WITCH PROJECT REUNION

Directors and star of Blair Witch Project, **director of "The Plague"**, inside scoops on Comic Con w/ guest.

Date / Time: 3/9/2008 2:00:00 PM


HAL MASONBERG, DVD REVIEWS, MOVIE NEWS

Hal Masonberg returns to discuss his ongoing battle to release a director's cut of 'The Plague'...Advanced review of DVDs No Country for Old men, Sleuth, Dan in Real Life...PLUS...the latest movie news.

Date / Time: 7/13/2008 2:00:00 PM

HAL MASONBERG and TONY SENZAMICI

Filmmaker HAL MASONBERG stops by for a third visit to update us on the fight to persevere the director's cut of his film 'The Plague'....PLUS...actor TONY SENZAMICI returns for an update on his blossoming acting career.



MOVIE MOSES'S BLOG

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The Plague (Hal Masonberg) 2007

The Plague is a movie with a troubled production history. Director Masonberg wanted to make a horror movie about themes and characters kind of like how Rosemary's Baby is about a woman's sacrificial role in society. He shopped it around hoping to find someone interested in making his movie instead of a crappy gore flick. Masonberg was surprised when Clive Barker of all people expressed an interest and hired him for the movie. Shortly after production started the movie was sold off, and after shooting was completed Masonberg was kicked out of the editing room. The movie was chopped to hell and made into a generic zombie flick.

The movie is about some plague that affects all children under 9 years old (and all newborns). They are put in a catatonic state which they can't wake up from. Cut to 10 years later and the world has turned to crap. Tom Russell (James Van Der Beek) is coming home from prison at the same time the children come out of their comas. The children wake up and want to kill all the adults.

So this movie is kind of like an attempt to be Children of Men coupled with Village of the Damned. Kinda. The movie, as presented in the producers cut, blows. Most of that can be attributed to the fact the movie was chopped to its bare bones to be a killer zombies with guns movie. Because of that, most of the story is cut out and we are left with big gaping mysteries in their place. Like Van Der Beek's character has this shady past which is supposed to be a big factor for decisions he makes later in the movie, but its gone. We are never told what the plague is or why it does what it does. There are hints of the fact it is punishment from god but nothing more. The characters find a diary from a priest which explains...something about what the kids want which leads to a climax where I don't know what the f*ck happens. I'm not normally that dense, the movie is just incredibly vague due to the fact key scenes were cut out. I shouldn't be confused by a killer zombies with guns movie but I had to review the final scene several times before I could even have an inkling about what it was about. Suffice it to say this movie was raped in post production.

Now that being said, even if I saw the Director's Cut (which there is an online petition for at spreadingtheplague.com) I don't think the movie would be transformed to Children of Men level film making. With the footage I did see, there were some problems with it. For one, the theme isn't realized quite the way it should be. The theme is about how children are a reflection of our society and us. There is a disconnect and fear growing due to incidents like Columbine and whatnot. One of the characters even flat out says the kids are a reflection of the adults violent behavior. Well, that doesn't quite work when all the parents we see in the movie are some of the most loving parents ever. When the kids go into a coma, all the parental characters we see are devastated by it. They dedicated all their time to caring for kids which have no hope of waking up and spend their fortunes on trying to cure them. That doesn't exactly sound like parents who have lost touch with their kids and have an irrational hate for them now does it?

There is also a problem with the acting. Many of you may think James Van Der Beek (Dawson's Creek) would be the worst part of this movie but he actually does a good job. I daresay he is the best actor in the movie. But that just shows how crappy every other actor in this movie is. Seriously, they must have raided community theaters for miles around to find actors this hammy and broad. They have terrible line reads and their attempts to emote make Van Der Beek seem like he was giving a Matt Damon Academy Award crying scene.

If we did get the director's cut, I'm sure The Plague would be a good Direct to Video horror movie. As it is right now, it really isn't worth your time. Yeah, it is a bit entertaining seeing zombie kids with guns, but that doesn't carry the movie. It comes off more lame than funny camp. It is not horrible, but it is pretty bad.

ohmyblog

Film
culture
politics
skidoo

christiandivine.com

Cut!

Posted in [Film](#) on July 9, 2008 by christian

Because the recent discovery of a complete 1927 print of METROPOLIS has set cinephile hearts everywhere reeling with the promise of What Else Is Out There? I thought it'd be fun to compile a list of my favored lost cuts of dream films. These are in no particular order or desire, as I'd kill for any of them. Feel free to add on your own missing masterpieces:

KING KONG - If I had a time machine, I would go back immediately to 1933 and physically stop producer...

EASY RIDER - The original five hour cut of the 1969 film would have been a motorcycle epic...

THE WIZARD OF OZ - Yes, I'd love to see more of those shorn musical numbers, especially the infamous ...

CASINO ROYALE - No, not more scenes of Bond on cell phones or playing Texas Hold'em. I'm talking about the...

A NEW LEAF - Elaine May's writing/directorial debut with Walter Matthau was a hit for Paramount in 1971...

ANHEDONIA - Before it became ANNIE HALL, Woody's first cut in 1975 was over two hours and was a ...

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES - One of Walt Disney Studio's big box-office failures from 1983 was a...

THE DAY THE CLOWN CRIED - The Jerry Lewis infamous Holocaust Clown epic was filmed in 1969-70...

THE PLAGUE - This is a cautionary tale. Not just the film, but the story of what happens after the film is made. Hal Masonberg and Teal Minton sold their horror script THE PLAGUE to Armada Pictures (although Screen Gems came on as financier/distributor without their knowledge) in 2002, and thanks to Masonberg's vivid animatic storyboards along with the fact that the pair would not sell the screenplay without him as director, the film was greenlit. Not bad for a 3.5 million dollar Clive Barker production, although this film is far removed from the typical Barker film and ultimately became part of the post-production woe. And THE PLAGUE is a cautionary horror tale, the story of what happens when the children of the world fall into a comatose slumber. Sadly, this is where the story becomes archetypal as the director was barred from the editing room as the producers sought to make a more expedient version. Whole scenes were altered through obvious editing rather than the connective visual strands of Masonberg's cut. Worse, even Dee Wallace-Stone's part was truncated to shots of her in peril screaming. Since the cinematographer is the legendary Bill Butler (JAWS and THE CONVERSATION) this is particularly unfair as the chainsaw editing has altered the film's entire visual design along with the directorial subtlety. Masonberg has been very pro-active trying to get his version released and is building up a network of support from those who have seen his version of THE PLAGUE. [You can sign a petition here and find a wealth of information](#), plus a revealing documentary featuring interviews with Dee Wallace-Stone, other cast members, and noted genre experts (including this humble writer). It's worth a look and worthy to get the word out to preserve the writer/director's unique, unsettling vision.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES - By 1970, the waning days of the Road Show movie epics, studios...

SMOKEY IS THE BANDIT - Believe it or not, the third sequel to 1977's beloved SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT was...

BACK TO THE FUTURE - It's not that I love this 1985 film, as I think it's extremely likable and clever...

An Interview with Hal Masonberg - By Herbert M. Brindl

"Me at Cliffs Edge, Hal David Masonberg's The Plague vs. Sony the Goliath and Drew Barrymore"

Recently I was invited by writer, director Hal Masonberg for a private and almost "illegal" screening of the writer's and director's cut of "The Plague". On the day the screening was set, I went to "Cliff's Edge" on Sunset in Silverlake (<http://www.cliffsedgecafe.com>) for a late, relaxed Sunday brunch with Bloody Marys and settled under trees. As always I experienced a very warm welcome by PIERRE CASANOVA and his friendly, outstanding service staff. After I enjoyed Chef KURT CHULWITZ's perfectly poached eggs with bacon and young frisee salad, the later of which was marinated with a delicious mustard dressing. Deeply satisfied, I left "Pierre's Oasis of Pleasures" and decided to have a little dessert at "Good Beer" right across the street, in the form of a liquid good temperate "Honey Blond". Right after crossing the street, guess who stands in front of me? Drew Barrymore, charming as only Drew could be and blond too, but simply too sweet (I mean this in good way Drew!), especially when you are already prepared and in the mood for a nice brewed blond at "Good Beer". Instead of stalking and asking her stupid questions, I decided to grab a sunny spot at "Good's" and enjoy my "liquid dessert" while preparing for Hal Masonberg's upcoming screening. While going thru the cast credits of "The Plague" I had to laugh because I thought that's quite funny that I just saw Drew Barrymore and later on I will see her on screen mother from E.T., Dee Wallace, in Hal Masonberg's version of "The Plague"!

A couple of hours later I was at Mr. Masonberg's private screening room looking forward to seeing his cut of the "The Plague" aka "Clive Barkers the Plague". Are you confused now? You should be, because there are a lot of strange things surrounding Hal Masonberg's movie. The funny thing about it is that Clive Barker didn't write a single word of "The Plague" nor is it a in anyway a Clive Barker movie. So why didn't they put Clive Barker presents Hal Masonberg's "The Plague" on the DVD cover instead of misleading Barker fans? Anyway, I watched Mr. Masonberg's cut, and felt deeply satisfied by this much more personal and character-driven version, then the one that was officially released in September 2006 to generally negative reviews.

The Writers/Directors cut of "The Plague" is stuffed with plenty of chilling images, including one of a little boy emotionlessly breaking a clergyman's neck. And thanks to Mr. Masonberg, Dee Wallace's role is no longer reduced to a pointless cameo as in the Producers cut. His version is almost like one of the good old horror movies that deal with existing social fears rather than the blood and guts filled "killer-kid film's" that are made today!

Later on, we went for a little walk in a nearby park accompanied by his dog Gus, a beautiful Rodesian Ridgeback/German Shepherd/Basset Hound mix. After a couple of ball throws for Gus, a very sensitive and intelligent Mr. Masonberg told me everything there is to know about his single most

hurtful experience of his adult life, the campaign to get his version of "The Plague" released, because legally, he can't show this version of the film. We also talked about his working experience with director of photography and Academy Award nominee Bill Butler (Jaws, Grease). Last but not least he gave Rogue heads up about his upcoming project, "Clean" a psychological thriller dealing with personal, cultural and social identity. It is a series of complex, interconnected stories that move back and forth in time while building steadily toward its climax. "MEMENTO meets MAGNOLIA , for those in need of a more commercial description" as Hal Masonberg says.

So let's go on a journey and read what happened with "The Plague", and why writer Hal Masonberg ended up with exactly the kind of film he didn't want to make!



HMB: Mr. Masonberg, tell us a little bit about your background. Where did you grow up and what was the reason you decided to go into filmmaking?

HM: I grew up in New Jersey. I left when I was 16 and never looked back. I've moved around a lot since then. As for filmmaking, I've always been passionate about film. From as early on as I can remember. Even before I knew what directing was, I knew I wanted to be the guy who was telling the story up on the screen. For a lot of people, I think film works as an escape from daily life. And it certainly is that for me at times, no doubt about it, but

even when I was a kid, I loved going to films that forced me --no allowed me, to think. I was lucky enough to grow up in the 60's and 70's so the "mainstream" films at that time were pretty incredible! Especially compared to what we have now. We didn't know at the time that we were in a golden age of cinema, but it turns out we were! That period in my life still infuses my approach to storytelling today. That and classic films, which I watched incessantly growing up and continue to do so today. I guess I'm just a good old-fashioned film geek.

HMB: What are the movies you grew up with?

HM: 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY was the film that captured me and changed my life forever. I saw it in its initial release and then again in its first reissue. I couldn't stop thinking about it, talking about it... I was also a big Charlie Chaplin fan as a kid. They showed MODERN TIMES at a local movie theater for a number of weeks and I went several times each weekend. I was also an avid reader so I would buy the paperback of the latest film, and the "making-of" book if there was one. Regardless of whether or not I'd seen the movie yet, and I'd consume them all. I just loved everything about film.

HMB: I know you spent some time in Sweden. What was the reason behind your move there?

HM: Initially it was an invitation from friends. I looked into studying film there and found that I could. I jumped on the opportunity. I was already a big fan of Bergman films, but I also knew there was a ton of other fantastic filmmakers in Scandinavia that I didn't have access to. So I went there, learned Swedish and had a blast. And yeah, that experience still influences my own approach to filmmaking. I'd probably fit in much better there as a filmmaker than I do here in L.A.!

HMB: Any European filmmakers you admire and what do you see as the differences between US and European filmmakers/films for you?

HM: It's no secret to anyone who knows me that I'm not a huge fan of American films produced at the studios. For the most part, they're fairly empty, despite the big budgets and the technical expertise. I've worked in the Hollywood film industry now for over 18 years and my personal experience has been that it's almost impossible to make a film at a studio that actually reflects the vision of the writers and directors. So many people working in Hollywood are there because they love business, not film. But they have little-to-no understanding of the business they're in! If you ran a tailor shop, I'd expect you to know something about tailoring. If you owned a restaurant, I'd expect you to know something about food and appetites and ambience. It's the same with the film business. Only at the studio level, so many of the people working there don't have a love of cinema. Nor do they have a very deep understanding of the artistry behind it. There's an attitude that's rampant in Hollywood that there's only one way to do things. And any variation from that is wrong. There's also an assumption that the audience is not as savvy as the executives making the big decisions. And that's a scary thing because my experience has been that a lot of film execs are not all that savvy!

I haven't worked abroad, but I have friends who do. And it seems to me that there is a slightly different attitude toward writers and directors there. The types of films that can be successful in Europe are often more daring than what we produce here. But that said, even our worst films do business there so it's not like everyone's an intellectual looking for "art" films. I recently attended a British/American filmmaking conference as my next project is set largely in England. I asked the panel of actors whether they felt there was a difference between the final integrity of the films they made here in the States versus the films they made in England. All of them agreed that the integrity and vision of the film and the filmmakers was more respected in England. BUT... they also said that there often wasn't enough money to shoot what was needed and those films suffered as a result. Here in the States, we have more money which allows you to get the takes you need. Unless you were working on THE PLAGUE! So I think you have to find the right balance. There are pitfalls to both.

As for contemporary European directors I admire, Krystof Kieslowski was one of my favorite contemporary directors. I think THE DOUBLE LIFE OF VERONIQUE and BLEU are two of the best films I've ever seen. And THE DECALOGUE. I wish he was still with us and making films. That was a great loss. I also love Kiyoshi Kurosawa. Though not European, I think he's really pushing the edge of films that work on a primal level. They're "felt" before they're understood. I also admire Julio Medem. And Isabel Coixet. I think she's just terrific. And I love that Pedro Almodovar refuses to heed the sirens call of Hollywood. And why should he? He has everything he needs to make the films he wants right there in Spain.

HMB: Mr. Masonberg, before we get to your petition and the problems that surround "The Plague", tell us about your version of the film which you wrote and directed. What inspired you to write a story about kids and violence in society?

HM: My writing partner Teal and I missed seeing smart horror films. It was as simple as that. Our favorite horror films were all clearly reflections of fears that existed in society at the time they were made. And those social fears still managed to resonate no matter how many years later they were viewed. Somewhere in the eighties, horror in America became a genre geared toward teenagers and concentrated more on graphic violence and gore effects than on story, character or, in my opinion, anything truly horrifying or terrifying. I stopped going to horror films for what seemed like ages. So, Teal and I decided that we wanted to make a film that harkened back to those films we loved and were so effected by, and at the same time make the themes a reflection of our time and some of the fears we face today. Kids and violence in society and how we act and react out of fear seemed incredibly timely for us. And while writing and shopping the script, the massacre at Columbine happened and other

school shootings, the 9/11 attacks, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq... All the themes we were exploring were coming to a head right before our eyes. And I still think the Writers and Director's Cut of THE PLAGUE is as timely today as ever. Maybe even more so. But the producers' cut is devoid of those themes. It is, in essence, just another teenage horror flick. It's exactly what we DIDN'T want to make!

HMB: What are three Horror movies that left you thinking, asking questions and looking inward?

HM: There are many, but the ones that come to mind are DON'T LOOK NOW, THE INNOCENTS, THE EXORCIST, ROSEMARY'S BABY, Lon Chaney's THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, the original INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS... It doesn't take much to look into these films and the periods in which they were made to see what social fears they were addressing. But the best thing is that they still scare the piss out of you today. When Jorge was informing me that he was cutting down the characters and turning THE PLAGUE into a killer-kid film, he used THE EXORCIST as his reasoning. He claimed that THE EXORCIST was about a girl possessed by a demon. He proclaimed that the title of the film we were making was THE PLAGUE, not THE TOM RUSSELL STORY --Tom Russell being the main character in the film played by James Van Der Beek. But I couldn't disagree more. And this is where I get back to my earlier point about many producers working in the film business not understanding the very business they're working in. THE EXORCIST is not about a girl possessed by a demon. It's about two priests and a mother. We never spend a single solitary second alone with the little girl played by Linda Blair. Our entire experience of that girl is through the eyes of others. The first 40 minutes of that film is dedicated to Father Karras, Father Merrin and, most especially, Chris MacNeil, the girl's mother played by Ellen Burstyn. It's their story! This film is about a question of faith and a mother no longer recognizing her own daughter and feeling helpless. How many parents must suddenly find themselves thinking, "That's not my child. I didn't teach him or her how to talk like that, act like that." This girl is cursing, acting out sexually, lashing out at her family... Hello? If it was just a film about a girl possessed by a demon, it wouldn't have been any better than the dozen or so EXORCIST knockoffs that followed it! No, what happens to that little girl is frightening, but it hits home because we're witnessing it through the eyes of a mother. Now THAT'S terrifying! Take out those characters and all you have are spinning heads and pea soup. Which is pretty much what I think of the producers' cut of THE PLAGUE. Spinning heads and pea soup.

HMB: How much was the budget for "The Plague"?

HM: I was told three and a half million. Though I don't know if all of it ended up on the screen. Some questions have been raised about that.

HMB: Why did you choose Oscar nominee Bill Butler as your cinematographer?

HM: I knew Bill's work on JAWS, ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOOS NEST, FRAILTY, so many, many others, but most specifically THE CONVERSATION which is one of my all time favorite films. I knew Bill would understand that I was not looking to make a film with lots of wild camera moves and quick cutting. This film was to have a slow build and allow the actors to move within the frame. I knew he would understand my compositions and bring a world of wisdom and knowledge to the table. Bill's the best. And his lighting technique is beautiful and subtle. I'm not fond of the harsh lighting of many

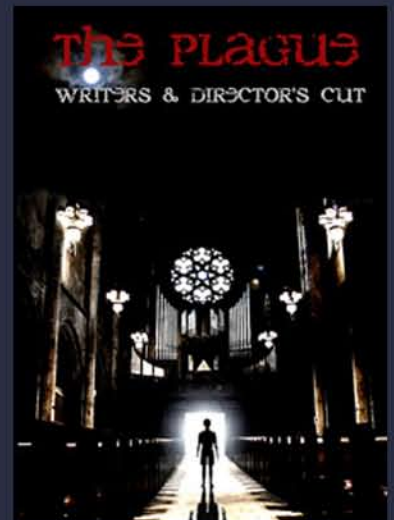
of today's films. There's a "slick" look that is just not appealing to me. Unfortunately, Bill was not allowed to color-time his work on this film so the producers' cut looks nothing like we had intended it to. The colors are all wrong, but worse, it's too damn bright! We chose to shoot the film brighter than intended for maximum detail, it's why we picked the film stock we did. So we exposed the film with the intention of then bringing it down several stops to create those rich, deep blacks. And this stock would allow for that. We were also promised a digital intermediate. That was included in the budget. It never happened. Bill was not invited to complete his work on this film. It's really a major insult to the man and his work. Last time I spoke to Bill, he still wanted to know if we would ever get the chance to color-time the film correctly. I still fully expect to pick up that phone one day soon and let him know it's time to finally make this film look the way it was shot to look! But for the moment, that decision lies in Sony's hands.

HMB: What was it like to work with Dee Wallace and John Connolly?

HM: Dee was a champion. I'd work with Dee again in a heartbeat. In fact, I'm counting on it. The producers seemed to have absolutely no appreciation for what she gave to this film and that is witnessed by the fact that most of her astonishing performance was left on the cutting room floor in the producers' cut. Dee is not only a team player, she's an incredible human being and an amazing actress. Most of the other actors were a joy to work with as well. John Connolly as the Sheriff. Here's an actor who I think is just fantastic and very underused. I was honored to have him in THE PLAGUE. Bradley Sawatzky, a local Winnipeg hire who played Deputy Nathan Burgandy... An amazing actor and the sweetest human being you'll ever meet. Brad Hunt who honored the film, myself, and the role of Sam from before we started shooting till the moment we wrapped... Josh Close, Brittany Scobie... There were so many incredible people on this film, both in front of and behind the camera. I was truly blessed in more ways than not. I only wish the film itself reflected their commitment and passion. That's one of the reasons it's so important to me to get the proper cut released. No one who worked on this film got what they wanted at the end of the day except the people who only cared about putting a paycheck in their pockets. And I know a few people on this production who are still fighting to get all of that!

HMB: What happened during post production that caused you to be thrown off of this project? When did you sense that you were losing control of your film?

HM: Well, I addressed some of this above, but I'll add a little more here. One of Clive Barker's producers, Anthony DiBlasi, confided in me that if Scott Shooman, the VP of acquisitions at Sony, got what he wanted, then the film would never resemble what we set out to make. This was once we got back to L.A. to start post and Anthony and some of the other producers had their first meeting with Shooman. Anthony wasn't happy. In fact, he seemed pretty scared and distraught. About a week later, I put in a call to Clive to let him know how the cutting was going. It was my understanding that Clive had final say over the cut since his name was gonna be above the title, although at that time we all thought it was going to be Clive Barker Presents THE PLAGUE, not CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE. I think that one may have even taken Clive by surprise! Anyhow, I told Clive that I had cut the first 40 minutes together and was really



happy. He wanted to see what I had done and I was eager to hear his thoughts. He asked if I thought I would need to do any reshoots and I told him I was hoping not to as I had been discovering some truly great workarounds to the footage we didn't get (our shooting schedule had been reduced from a supposed 28 days to a mere 20 at the last minute). We had a great chat and we hung up and I returned to the editing room. Next thing I know, my manager calls telling me he just got off the phone with Jorge Saralegui who was screaming that I had "gone behind his back" by calling Clive. All I could think about was how often these guys kept saying that Clive didn't know what was happening with THE PLAGUE; that it was a waste of time talking to him. What I didn't see coming was that they would actually become frantic at the mere thought of me calling him. What were they worried I would say? Clive never managed to come to set while we were shooting THE PLAGUE and so I hadn't talked to him for several months. So far as I was concerned, it was about time I checked in. But something else was going on here. Something beyond my understanding of the relationship between Clive and his producers. I called Jorge. He admitted that he might have overreacted, but he was already in full defensive mode and remained cold and distant.

Next thing I knew, Anthony called me to tell me Clive no longer wanted to see what I had been working on, but would instead wait till I was finished editing. So I asked Anthony to be in the editing room with me from that point on to represent Clive's interests. It was important to me that they were happy with the film as well. Anthony was very supportive and loved the cut that we had put together. It was still rough, but Anthony had told me repeatedly that I shouldn't try and complete the cut in the six weeks allotted. After the six weeks, then the producers get to step in and make any changes they want. But the plan was to continue working together. As it should be. When we finished the first rough cut, Anthony was thrilled. He really felt like the movie was coming together. I asked him if he thought Clive would like it and his response was "I don't know what I'd do if he didn't!" Turns out Clive didn't. And now I know exactly what Anthony would do in that situation. I was told Clive wanted me off the project. I tried to contact him, but my calls went unanswered. It was like walking head-first into the Twilight Zone. Friends disappeared into the shadows, everyone became cold and distant. Suddenly, all the collaboration, shared vision and hard work was tossed headlong out the window. Jorge claimed they were turning the film into a Killer Kid flick, which is what they claimed Sony wanted it to be, and my participation in the process came to a screeching halt. I knew there was more to the story than I was being told, but what that was I still couldn't say. It's my suspicion that there were people putting words in Clive's mouth that may never have actually come from there. But I don't know.

One of the major themes in THE PLAGUE was how we react out of fear and the damage it can cause both internally and externally. It seemed ironic and, perhaps, grotesquely fitting that fear appeared to be a major driving force behind-the-scenes as well.

HMB: After that, were you in contact with other directors that had the same experience as you, meaning no final cut and being excluded from the editing process?

HM: Yeah, other directors poured out of the woodwork once I went public. You hear about this happening all the time, directors having films taken away from them. But I think it's more rare when it's a low-budget film. Though I could be wrong. Sadly, many of the directors I came in contact with chose to stay quiet about it. I think that's the norm. Lord knows my lawyer and agent at the time both strongly advised that I just "walk away". So I did. But not from the film. I walked away from them. They didn't seem to get that it was the film itself that was most important to me. Not my career or how this film was gonna "help me." It's funny, you know, after I was removed I had a ton of people say to me repeatedly, "Yeah, but at least you got to make a film!" And I'd say, "No. I didn't." They didn't seem to

get that having my name on a film, any film, was not what was important to me. So far as I'm concerned, I'll never be done making this film until it's out there as it was meant to be seen. Now that doesn't mean I don't move forward and keep making other films, I'm already in the process of putting together the next one, but THE PLAGUE is also something I'll keep working on until it's finished and available to the public. And by that I don't mean to suggest that the experience of making THE PLAGUE wasn't successful, because personally I have gotten so much out of the experience. What happened on THE PLAGUE defines how I will approach any film I make from this day forward, my attitudes toward artistic expression and the things that are most important to me. Including listening more closely to and trusting my gut. But the film itself, as a film, isn't finished. Not until people can see it as we made it.

HMB: How did you handle this disappointing experience emotionally, and how did you overcome it?

HM: I had several friends hold me down and keep me from tossing myself out a window! Truthfully, it was the most painful experience of my adult life. Which I realize is really hard for some people to understand. To lose something I had invested so much into... To be betrayed by people I had put my trust in... Filmmakers talk about their films being like their babies. And it's true. I know for some people it's hard to imagine a film being that important. But I had fought on and off for eight years to get this film made. I had been dreaming and struggling to do this from as early on as I could remember. And this was a story that was important for me to tell. And to know my name was going to be on a film that in no way reflected who I was and, in fact, was adding to the deluge of horrible, mindless horror films flooding the shelves of every corner video store... It took a long time for me to even start to recover. But part of the recovery process was not allowing myself to be a victim. I gathered the dailies that I'd kept on DVD and started putting the film together as it was intended to be. It was a fantastic experience in every way. Liberating and creative, exciting... It reminded me of exactly why I wanted to make films in the first place. Something that's easy to forget working in this town. I remember reading about Paul Thomas Anderson's first film SYDNEY, which was taken away from him, re-cut and re-titled HARD EIGHT. I believe in the article I read that Anderson climbed into bed and didn't get out for six months. Exaggeration or not, I understood the feeling. Same with Stephen Gaghan who claimed in an article that his experience with his first directorial feature ABANDON was more painful than the death of his father! A pretty extreme sentence. But again, I got it. Here was the Academy Award winning writer of TRAFFIC, and he was ready to pack his bags and leave Hollywood forever. Instead, he made SYRIANA which broke all of the "rules" he had been taught by the studios on how you write and make a good film. He threw formula right out the window and made a truly extraordinary film. One he might not have made if his experience on ABANDON had gone differently. You never know where that silver lining is until much later. And that's my attitude with THE PLAGUE. I'm only now just starting to see all the great things that have come and are yet to come out of this extremely painful experience.

HMB: Is it true that you are still owed \$70,000 in director's fees?

HM: I deferred \$70,000 of my salary. Sony now claims CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE lost upwards of a million dollars and therefore no money is owed to me. So I'm back at the old day job earning some survival money while I put the next film together. But it does strike me as odd that the folks at Sony put together a cut of THE PLAGUE, marketed it to Clive Barker fans, released it straight to video, and then lost money. I mean, my understanding was that Sony owned the film now and knew what to do with it. It seems to me someone tried to sell a film to Clive Barker fans that was never intended to be for Clive Barker fans, though they certainly tried to pass it off as such by re-cutting the

living hell out of it, adding stock footage and recording tons of new dialogue. The irony here is that never seems to work and no one ever seems to learn. And the very people that the film was originally intended for would NEVER have rented or gone out to see a film with Clive Barker's name above the title. That's a very small, particular audience. And I'm not saying anything derogatory about that audience. It just wasn't the target audience for THE PLAGUE. And I'm talking either cut! But it seems the studio had a marketing plan that was more important than whether or not the film we had made fit into that particular strategy. So some brilliant person made the same mistake made by a thousand people before him and tried to change the film to fit the mold. But you know, when someone keeps trying to wedge the square peg into the triangle hole... You either pump 'em full of medication or you simply take the peg away from them and give it to someone who knows where the square hole is.

HMB: The producers cut is called "CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE", how much was Clive Barker actually involved in the film?

HM: I met Clive maybe 5 times. And three of those times were no more than 30 seconds apiece. The story wasn't based on any of his work, he wasn't involved with the writing or development, he never visited the set and I never saw him in post. The script existed for 5 years before anyone at Clive's company even read it. Yet the film's titled CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE. Does anyone else find that a tad misleading? Clive gave me two pieces of advice: The first was that there should be a big scare every seven minutes. Every seven minutes! This was the day before I left to head up to Canada to shoot the film. First, one has to wonder if Clive had read the script cause there certainly weren't scares written in every seven pages! What was he suggesting here? Second, is anyone else sick and tired of these ludicrous "rules" on how to make a film? It's like taking one of those silly connect-the-dots children's puzzles and using it as a sample of great sketch artistry.

The second piece of advice was that I should pick one or two scenes that were most important to me and put all my creative energy into those. The rest of the film I should shoot like a TV movie. Now I'm sure that was probably the best advice he could give on how to shoot a film like this in 20 days, but it sadly had nothing to do with how I want to make films and why I was making this one. It was more or less the antithesis of my approach to anything I care about. But I think if you watch the films Clive's directed, you may realize that, if nothing else, he at least takes his own advice.

HMB: Mr. Masonberg don't you think it was ironic that later on, Mr. Barker himself had to deal with a miseries of his own with his movie "Midnight Meat Train".

HM: I did find that ironic, yes. Especially as he was asking fans to gather together and write Lionsgate in protest. I wrote a blog titled CLIVE BARKER'S KARMA? That said, I do hate to see anyone have their film messed with. Anyone. I know that film was important to Clive. But from what Jorge Saralegui had told me while we were shooting THE PLAGUE, he already felt like they had lost control of that film and had been pushed out by Lionsgate even back then. It was a bit of a sore subject already and they hadn't even started shooting yet.

HMB: Mr. Masonberg what happened as you delivered "The Plague" to the editing room?

HM: Well, there were Clive's producers Jorge Saralegui, Anthony DiBlasi and Joe Daly. Anthony and Joe sat quietly with their heads down while Jorge, beet red and screaming at the top of his lungs, called me a fucking piece of shit, threw my editing notes on the floor and claimed THE PLAGUE was no longer my film but his. When I confronted him with the fact that he had done the same thing to John Woo on BROKEN ARROW and to Jean Pierre Jeunet on ALIEN 4, his response was, "That's right, I did! And now I'm doing it to you!" What I was referring to was a set of stories that Jorge would tell ad nauseum on set claiming that John Woo didn't know how to direct an action scene and was "shaking in his boots the whole time," and how Jean Pierre Jeunet didn't have a clue where to put a camera, etc., etc. Jorge seemed to be not only putting these filmmakers down for the very talents they were most renowned for, but seemed to also be suggesting that he had saved those films by taking them away from those directors in post. There were other directors he'd worked with that he didn't speak highly of, but these were the two I chose to reference in that moment. Specifically as he was so fond of repeating those stories with what seemed to me like rather misplaced pride.

HMB: Your next move in the "Plague" story reminds me of a biblical fight, "David vs. Goliath". You started a petition and the Spreading the Plague website to get your own cut of the film released. When did you decide to fight back? And where you concerned that you could get "Blacklisted"?

HM: Ahhh, the age-old Hollywood blacklist... I think it was what my lawyer and agent feared. But I was never really concerned about that. My attitude was and still is that I have no interest in working with anyone who would "blacklist" me for fighting to get the proper cut of my film released. Like I said before, my career is not as important to me as the film I'm making. Which isn't to say I don't want the film to be successful. I do. And in fact I believe my cut of the film would have been very profitable were it released as intended and marketed properly. And it's my intention to prove that, even with the bad taste the other cut has left in the mouths of most of the folks who have seen it, if the online reviews are any indication. The thing is, so many folks are running around trying to be successful in Hollywood, but they don't seem to see that they're running scared. You don't need anyone's permission to make a film. Especially these days. The studios no longer wield that threat. You want to make a film... Make a film! Hell, I used some of the top filmmaking software on my Macintosh in my living room to complete my cut of THE PLAGUE. Sure, if I want to make a \$200 million film, I'm probably gonna need a studio behind me. But I don't need \$200 million. My personal definition of success seems to be very different from the definition of the people who were telling me my career would be over if I finished my cut of the film.

HMB: After you started your petition and your website spreadingtheplague.com, did you get any response from Sony or Clive Barker?

HM: Nothing. Clive's people called my manager to ask "What the fuck?", but that was all I ever heard about. It wasn't until a bunch of fans started an email campaign to Sony to ask for a release of the WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT that Scott Shooman, who had never met nor spoken with me before, called my manager to find out what was happening. When I heard he called, I picked up the phone in the hope of starting a dialogue. He called me back a few days later and seemed rather irate that people who had nothing to do with THE PLAGUE were receiving hundreds of emails. He asked me what I wanted and I told him I wanted Sony to release the proper cut of the film. He told me straight up that would never happen as Sony had already lost money on the project. I reminded him that he was largely responsible for the cut that lost money, not me. So I said that if Sony wasn't

interested in releasing the proper cut, then I wanted the rights to distribute the WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT myself or take it to another distribution company. I was fine with them continuing to make money on their cut. I just wanted mine out there as well. I even proposed a split-rights deal in which they wouldn't have to put a single penny into the film, but would get a significant percentage of whatever profits it made. As I saw it, this was a chance for them to recoup some of that lost money AND satisfy the fans AND get me off their back. No go. "We don't do that." What Scott Shooman offered instead was that Sony would be willing to sell me the distribution rights to all things PLAGUE for \$1 million. I searched my pants pockets, pulled out a couple of quarters and told him I didn't have enough. So the campaign continues.



HMB: What's important for you when you attach yourself to a project and what have you learned about your experience with "The Plague"?

HM: John Cassavetes once said something to the effect that you should pick the five most important reasons why you want to make a film. Now those will be the first five things they'll try and take away from you in Hollywood. I've learned that I should never give up anything that I don't think I could live without. If the film itself is what is most important to me, then I don't hand the film over to anyone who doesn't care about it as much as I do.

HMB: One of your upcoming directing projects is the indie feature "CLEAN". What can you tell us about it?

HM: When my old agent saw what happened to me on THE PLAGUE, she stated that maybe next time I should try and make something more commercial. I had to laugh. THE PLAGUE is probably the most commercial film I have in me! CLEAN is, for lack of a better term, a psychological thriller about identity. And I say for lack of a better term because nothing I write seems to fit snugly into any one genre. Even THE PLAGUE is more a drama with horror elements than what a horror film is thought of by today's definition of the term. CLEAN is fairly challenging in that it follows four interconnected characters all spiraling downward as they frantically search for some meaning to the question, "Who the hell am I and can I trust my own memories?" The stories move back and forth in time and out of sequence. I think it will be very successful on the indie circuit. It leaves a lot up for interpretation. Which is something I love. I found when films don't do what people expect them to or want them to, they tend to think the film is flawed. Some even get angry. I have a feeling CLEAN will illicit that response from some. But others will gravitate toward it and hopefully be blown away. The last two people who read it had two very different reactions: One claimed that it left him numb. The other said she starting weeping as soon as she was finished reading even though she wasn't sure exactly why. And I love that! I love that two people sitting next to one another in a theater could potentially have two completely different reactions to the same film. I remember when I went to see Terence Malick's THE NEW WORLD. The friend I was with felt like the film had missed all the emotional beats. It left him cold. Meanwhile, I was sitting in my seat crying like a little schoolgirl. I thought the film was almost entirely emotional. Like the most effective poetry. I was blown away.

HMB: Some advice for newcomers in the directing and writing world?

HM: Don't believe anything anyone tells you. Especially if they're trying to tell you what you CAN'T do. And decide what's most important to you and why you're doing it. And know that there are good people working in the film industry. They're just surrounded by some of the most dysfunctional people you'll ever meet! And ask yourself honestly if the people you're working with want the same things you do. It's not a crime to want different things. It just might mean you shouldn't be working together. And try and move beyond your ego. It's not good for collaboration or for creativity.

HMB: What's next for Hal Masonberg?

HM: Well, getting CLEAN made is top priority. Then another film I've been writing set in Cornwall, England. A really beautiful story. Also looking at putting together a web series so that I can start working with all the amazing actors and other talented people I know out here. There are only so many roles and jobs on a film. There's too much unused talent in my little circle. I can't just sit by and not create something designed specifically for them. And how great to work with people you love and admire. What could be more satisfying than that?

HMB: Please choose 5 people out of the film business (dead or alive), you want to have at your dinner Table.

HM: Ugh... I hate these questions... And can't resist them... Stanley Kubrick, David Lean, Michael Powell, Carole Lombard, Krystof Kielowski. All gone now.

HMB: Any people that came along in your life you wish to give a special thanks to and credit in this interview?

HM: You, for one! This interview wouldn't be taking place if you hadn't been interested! And to every damn person who has been putting up with my endless PLAGUE campaign!

HMB: Thank you so much for the interview Mr. Masonberg, and all the best for 2009 for getting your cut of "The Plague" released on DVD!

HM: Thank you.

Links to Hal Masonberg:

To sign the petition and check out the documentary on Hal Masonberg's fight to have version of "The Plague" released: <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com>

Imdb: <http://imdb.com/name/nm0557005>

The Plague (Director's Cut) Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UFFJOW2OF0>

MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/plaguefilm>



HAL MASONBERG DÉFEND SON FLÉAU... et demande votre soutien

Source : fangoria.com

Catégorie : En production

Rédacteur : Nicolas L.

Article publié le : 07 Juillet 2007 à 14h06

L'année passée sortait en DVD un film d'horreur intitulé *Le Fléau* Selon Clive Barker que j'ai l'honneur de chroniquer lors de sa parution – comme vous pouvez le lire, ce métrage ne m'avait pas particulièrement convaincu. Et bien sachez que son réalisateur **Hal Masonberg** vient de confier au magazine Fangoria qu'il est sur le point de proposer une version plus personnelle.

Il s'explique :

« En automne 2005, les financiers du **Fléau** nous retirent, au co-scénariste **Teal Minton** et moi-même, la responsabilité de la post-production du film. Il faut savoir que la fabrication du métrage a été très longue, huit années de dur labeur. Et après ça, les producteurs nous retirent tout notre travail pour recommencer le montage à zéro ! Ils ont alors rajouté des plans issus du chutier (ndt : le stock de réserve écarté au montage), de nouveaux dialogues ont été enregistrés, et le film est sorti sous le titre de **Clive Barker's The Plague** alors qu'il est très éloigné du travail de l'écrivain et que, de toute manière, la nouvelle qui a servi de pitch était bien trop courte pour servir de support. Dans cette version définitive rien ne reflète les résultats de notre travail artistique et professionnel. C'est uniquement un produit des producteurs.



Cependant, lorsque j'ai été éloigné de ce projet, j'ai emporté mon travail car j'avais décidé de le finir à ma manière – au format DVD, sur mon mac équipé pour la post-production. Le résultat, aujourd'hui

ce film au format "Writer and Director's Cut" et tous ceux qui l'ont vu en sont restés sur le c.. (ndt : le postérieur, quoi !). Mais malheureusement, cette version peut très bien ne jamais voir le jour car le distributeur actuel du film, Screen Gems, ne prévoit pas d'éditer ma version.

Je vous demande s'il vous le voulez bien de jeter un œil sur [mon site](#) qui contient une heure de documentaires, dont des entrevues avec les acteurs, et notamment **Dee Wallace**, des journalistes et des critiques. Il y a également de nombreuses infos sur la genèse tumultueuse du Fléau et un formulaire de pétition. Grâce à vos signatures, nous espérons pouvoir convaincre **Screen Gems** que notre version intéresse le public, et sensibiliser tout le monde sur ce genre de problèmes, qui sont hélas trop fréquents. »

Alors, un petit clic pour faire plaisir à un jeune réalisateur privé de son œuvre ?

Nicolas L..





7/2/07

My Guest This Week - Hal Masonberg



You may not know director Hal Masonberg, but you will after this Thursday's show. Hal wrote and directed a great horror film called *The Plague*, which was then subsequently ripped from his hands by the studio and bastardized. Welcome to Hollywood where they'll promise you everything and then fuck you without as much as buying you dinner first.

This is from Hal's website:

After 8 years trying to get his film made, Writer/Director Hal Masonberg did, only to have it taken from him in post and recut almost beyond recognition. But that didn't stop him from finishing it anyway! Now he's started a grassroots internet campaign to get the film's distributor, Screen Gems, to release his cut which

he completed on his laptop. He's even made a documentary interviewing several cast members, film authors/journalists about their desire to see this cut released.

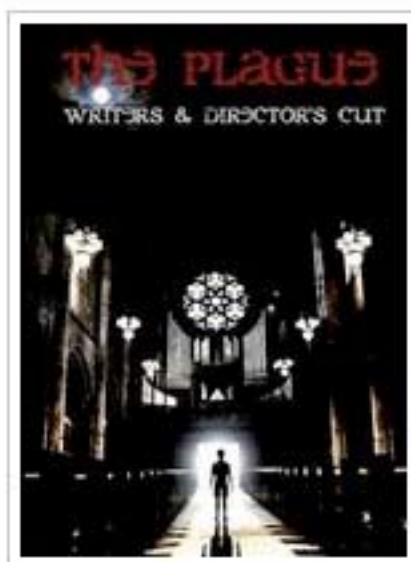
You can read more about it at <http://www.spreadingtheplague.com>

All you aspiring film makers might want to tune in this week to see what life on the inside of Hollywood is really like. And we'll be playing Rock Band Anagram. Sweet!



8/31/07

The Plague Director's Cut Trailer



Remember a little while back I had director Hal Masonberg on my show, and he basically told us how he got screwed by the movie studios and they stole his film? Well, I managed to stumble upon the trailer for the Director's Cut that he's trying to get released.

Please do me a favor and help get this film released, if for nothing else but to just say a big fuck you to the Hollywood movie system. Go [download the trailer](#) and stick it up on your blogs and YouTube accounts, and help a good guy out. It'll only take a few minutes and it's important. Thanks you guys!





An Interview With Writer/Director Hal Masonberg

by Carrie Murphy

Let's start with the most basic question here... What happened? How did this smart, adult-oriented horror film end up being... well, something different?

[Laughs] Okay... Well... Clive's producers knew from the start that we weren't interested in making a typical Clive Barker film. That was laid out in our first meeting and reiterated many times over. I'm not interested in making those films. Not that there's anything wrong with them, it's just not who I am as a filmmaker. It doesn't appeal to me. The reason they claimed they were interested in making THE PLAGUE was precisely because it wasn't a Clive Barker film. "Clive Barker makes Clive Barker films," we were told. As it was explained to us, what they wanted to do was to create an avenue for smart, adult horror films of all shapes and sizes. They kept using the Clive Barker produced GODS AND MONSTERS as an example. Obviously nothing like a Clive Barker film, but a film with a horror movie theme. Now I don't believe they were lying because the next three years of development certainly reflected most if not all of our desires. We were all on the same page and we were all excited about what we were making. I even wrote up an official director's statement per the production company's request outlining my approach and intent. And this statement accurately reflected everything we'd been discussing and working on. Everybody got a copy and everyone agreed this was the film.

And what exactly was Clive Barker's involvement in the project?

THE PLAGUE was an original script. It wasn't based on any of Clive's work. It existed for a good 5 years before Clive's production company, Midnight Picture Show, came on board as producers. That said, Clive himself seemed to have very little involvement with the project. I only met him a handful of times and it was almost never to discuss the script. Turns out, after we made the film and the producers showed him an early cut, he hated it. Or so I was told. I never actually got to speak with him. And not for lack of trying, mind you. One of the main producers for Clive's company confided to me that he was totally confused by Clive's reaction. He thought it was as if Clive had never read the script. Through so much of development and pre-production, production and post, we were told repeatedly by Clive's producers, "Don't talk to Clive. He doesn't know what's going on." Well, that should have been a big red light for us, but you get so caught up in the fact that you're actually making your film that you push aside all those warning bells that go off in your head.

So when did you realize that you'd lost control of the film?

I walked into the editing room the day after my contract ended and was told point blank by one of the producers, "We're cutting down the characters and making this a killer-kid movie." When I inquired as

to why we were suddenly changing from a character-driven film to a standard horror movie, the answer I got was an astoundingly condescending, "Cause this is a 'horror' film called 'The Plague', not 'The Tom Russell Story'" [Tom Russell being the film's main character].

You hear horror-stories (pardon the pun) like this all the time: films being taken away from their writers and directors by producers, studios, etc.... How did you react when this happened to you?

Honestly, it was the most painful experience of my adult life. I know that's hard for a lot of people to understand. I mean, I'd get the comment, "Hey, it's just a film. You'll make another." But I'd spent 8 years trying to get this film made, not to mention a lifetime of dreaming and fighting to get to a place where I could make a film. ANY film! So to fight this hard, to invest so much of myself psychologically, creatively and physically, to be so passionate about this film, and then have it taken away and turned into the very thing I was making the film in reaction to... Excuse the cliché, but it's like giving birth to a child and having it taken away from you and given to abusive parents. It's devastating. You can't just let it go and move on. There's real pain involved.

In trying to process what happened, I spoke to a studio producer friend shortly after I was taken off THE PLAGUE. This producer's known me for a long time. Twelve years or something. I was telling him what had happened and how in shock I was and I was talking about how I think I'm easy to work with, how much I love to collaborate and how conscious I am of not letting my ego get in the way of what's best for the film, and he stops me and says, "You know, you're not actually easy to work with." Of course I'm surprised so I ask him what he means. He tells me that I have very strong opinions and that I'm not afraid to voice them; that I'm willing to fight for what I believe in. "In this town, that's considered difficult", he explains. Then he goes on to describe how they came about hiring the director for their last big blockbuster movie. "He doesn't have any opinions of his own. Or if he does, he doesn't voice them. He does exactly what we want." Now understand, this producer realizes exactly what he's saying. He explains to me that this same school of thought is the reason that film wasn't any good. Yet they're making a sequel and they've hired the same director again! And this producer doesn't expect the sequel to be any good either!

Why do you think this happens? Obviously there are people working in the industry who genuinely want to make good films, no?

Absolutely. But there's a sad thing that happens to a lot of people in Hollywood. I've watched it happen to friends and I've struggled not to let it happen to myself. The first things most artists give up in exchange for success are the very things that made them passionate about wanting to make films in the first place. It's something Cassavetes noticed and often spoke about. I watched it happen on this film. I watched a guy who was passionate about making a smart, adult horror film- someone who fought alongside myself and my writing partner for three years- turn silent when it came time to stand up for what he believes in. He allowed the film to be turned into what he himself described as "not the film we set out to make."

There are different definitions of success. There's personal success and then there's financial success. And the two aren't mutually exclusive. But you'll find very few people in Hollywood- at least in my experience- who will choose personal over financial. If a popular filmmaker makes a couple of

films in a row that aren't as wildly successful as his or her most successful (and we're talking numbers here), they're suddenly seen as being in need of some kind of intervention. They're told they need to "reinvent" themselves. Even if that person's films are still turning a hefty profit, they're not as successful and therefore they must be slipping down some dark, artless chasm. An agent quoted in a recent NEWSWEEK article on M. Night Shyamalan suggested Shyamalan reinvent himself by directing "some big, great script that a studio is trying to get to someone like Spielberg" instead of continuing to write his own scripts. There's no room to grow as a filmmaker with this attitude. To suggest that anyone's salvation lies in following in someone else's footsteps is ludicrous. Despite what you think of his films, Shyamalan's definition of success seems to be making the films he wants to make; saying the things he wants to say. You shouldn't have to change who you are in order to be successful. That's a trap. I would consider myself more "successful" making lower budget films, than making successful "big-budget" blockbusters that really aren't very personal for me.

However, there are many filmmakers out there -working both in Hollywood and outside- who manage to make films from their hearts, films that are considered by many to be great "art".

And thank God. The Academy gave the Lifetime Achievement Award to Robert Altman a few years back. Hollywood has a long history of honoring the people in our lives that take chances and succeed. But it also seems to me that, at the same time, they try and squelch the life out of any potential future honorees!

Altman managed to make his own films his own way. And they're nothing like anything else out there. They're certainly not marketable in a way that most studios know how to market. And lord knows the guy made some films that just fell flat on their faces, both financially and, some would say, artistically. But we wouldn't have all those brilliant films he made if he didn't constantly take chances. And when you take chances on a regular basis, you're bound to come up with some films that just don't quite work the way you'd like them to. I guarantee you, if Altman had made a film and secretly gave it to a young unknown director who brought it to a studio, they'd tell the guy that the film is a mess and needs to be dramatically altered. They wouldn't know how to market it unless they could call it "A Robert Altman Film". They'd tell the guy he just simply can't continue making films like this if he wants to be successful.

You almost have to make your films despite the system. In my experience, the word "artist" is a dirty word in Hollywood. They throw it around like they understand it, the whole while trying to wipe the taste from their mouths. I just read a recent quote from some anonymous "blockbuster" producer that stated, "When someone is given total artistic freedom, the result is usually bad." I don't know about anyone else, but that's not the environment I want to be making films in.

Which leads us to the next question, how DID you manage to finish your film despite having been removed from it?

I knew from the get-go that I needed to finish the film no matter what. A lot of people I spoke with seemed confused by this. I was told no one would want to see my cut, that it would be a waste of time, etc., etc. But I knew I needed to finish it for me. And it would have an audience, if only my friends and family, then so be it, but someone would see this film. Hell, I wanted to see this film! So I took the digital dailies I had on DVD [the film was originally shot in Super 35] and transferred them into Final Cut Pro and started editing the film from scratch. Since I was now making the film for only

myself, I no longer had to compromise my vision. Understand, when I was working with Midnight Picture Show and Armada [the film's other production company], I knew there would be compromises and was prepared and willing -not just willing, excited- to go down that path. This had become all of ours, not just mine. But something shifted in post production. Something that wasn't being discussed with me. Even after I was removed from the film, I offered my services in helping the Clive Barker guys attain their goal of satisfying Screen Gems, but I was told that my ideas were "shit" and that they didn't want or need my help. I was blown away. These were guys I'd been working with for three years!

So I spent the next six months putting the film together. Unlike the 7 weeks I'd spent in the editing room before I was taken off the film, this time I really got to study the dailies. I knew every frame that was shot, every actor's nuance, every angle, every breath. And I started to see not only the film I'd written, but more important, the film we'd shot. There are so many unexpected moments that happen during production; things you could never plan on: something an actor does, or the Director of Photography, or the Production Designer, the weather, for Christ's sake, an unexpected moment of creative inspiration from yourself or someone on the crew, or simply a moment of panic or necessity that allows you to do something different that is quite simply better than what you had planned. Whatever it is, it's what you find yourself with in the editing room and once you wrap your head around what's there instead of what's not there, you suddenly realize what you actually have and it starts to take on a life of its own. Editing really is another stage in the process of writing and directing the film. It becomes somewhat of a different animal simply by nature of existing in a different format. It's no longer in your head or on paper. It's now on film. You can actually watch it, manipulate it. But it takes a little while to get there. At least it did for me. That first week in the editing room, I thought I'd die. There was so much we didn't get, so much that had been left to second unit that just seemed unusable, that I thought we'd never be able to put a decent film together. We were only given 20 days to shoot this thing. Ten days less than we were told we needed! But even then, as I started editing, I found myself becoming excited and surprised by what I was actually able to do. Once I ended up on my own, it was like another door opening. Suddenly, I found myself having a whole new relationship with the material, with the film itself. Now I can't imagine doing another film and not allowing myself to have that intimacy with it.

I started teaching myself how to do effects; people removal, rotoscoping, green screen work, you name it. I did the sound design myself, mixed and created the temp score from other sources and made it work almost as well as if the score had been written specifically for THE PLAGUE itself. I discovered that this part of the filmmaking process was one of my favorites and a part of the process I never want to live without again. Here's more joy, more excitement, more passion. Here's the little boy with his super 8 camera!

The last thing I expected when I was kicked off this film was that I would discover something greater than if I had remained on board.

So now you have your cut of the film and the producers have theirs. What's the difference?

The film the producers put together is a completely different film from the one we made. They threw ours out, it seems, and started from scratch. They changed the structure, the intent, almost all artistic and storytelling choices that we had made, both in the script and in the cutting.

Who's "we"?

Oh, my writing partner and I.

I storyboard extensively. A lot of time and energy is put into these choices. They're not just random. Cutting back and forth between scenes, making connections between shots... Their cut of the film does not reflect who I am as a filmmaker nor Teal and I as writers. The only thing that remains are my compositions, the images themselves. But even those don't connect the way they were designed to and many are not my preferred takes. Even veteran cinematographer, Bill Butler, wasn't invited to color-time his own work. He's still waiting! Now, of course, none of this means that [the producers'] version is bad. It's just not my vision.

So what would you say to people who are curious about the "producers' cut" of the film known as CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE"?

Go out, rent it, buy it. It's out there. Just know what you're seeing.

So, after going through this experience on your first feature film, what words of advice would you have for other first-time filmmakers?

It's taken me a while to understand that the fantasy I had about making films in Hollywood was just that. A fantasy. I carried with me from childhood a notion of making films in a certain environment. And I thought for many years that environment was Hollywood. But after 18 years in the film industry, I've slowly discovered that in order to be the filmmaker I want to be, I have to let go of the fantasy. It's like growing up to marry the person of your childhood dreams only to discover that the two of you are not very compatible and you don't much like each other! Doesn't mean you can't still have a happy marriage. It just won't be with that person! Once you let go of the fantasy scenario (and that's not easy, let me tell you), a whole new world opens up.

I happen to be attracted to the idea of making genre films. And those films are often seen as simple entertainment, not as character pieces or films with something to say. At least not nowadays. That makes it especially hard for me to work within the Hollywood system. But if your passion is telling stories, growing as both an artist and a human being, and taking chances that might yield something that reaches people on some deep level, then go do that. Don't be fooled by someone else's definition of success. If your definition of success is to keep working and making money, then do that. Both are valid. But know which one you want. Which one will make you happy. And if you're lucky, maybe you'll get both. But there's a good chance you'll only get one. So which is the most important one for you? Which one would you need to still consider yourself "successful?"

THE HAL BLOG

Film, Grateful Dead, Politics & Other Miscellany



Why Fight For A Director's Cut Of A Low-Budget Horror Flick?



Every once in a while someone asks me that. And it's a valid question. **THE PLAGUE**, even in my cut, is a flawed film. It was compromised before we shot a single frame and that's the sad truth.

But regardless, everyone involved –well, those who cared about the integrity of the film and its story, rather– believed that even a low-budget genre film could have something to offer, could extend the reach of the genre's more recent conventions and create something unique, something with a voice, a film with something to say, questions to ask. So for all the people who had hoped this film would offer something of that, however small, myself

included, it remains important to stand up for the film we set out to make and the intentions behind making it. For our reputations, for what the film attempted to say, and for future films and filmmakers that find themselves in a situation like ours. For me, it's being true to who I am and to the promises I made to both myself and others. And, strange as this may sound, to the audience that may have actually gotten something, anything, out of watching this film.

I make no claims to **THE PLAGUE** being a masterpiece or even great cinema, but it's better than what was presented. It's more than what was handed to the public with our names and reputations attached. And for anyone who saw some trace of something decent, something interesting and possibly thought-provoking hiding at the edge's of the producers' cut and wondered to themselves, "What happened here?" and took that

Here's the latest comment posted to our ever-growing petition to Screen Gems:

"Having watched part of the Clive Barker film last night I was frustrated as there was clearly a message that the film didn't properly show, leading me to look at the grapes of wrath and to the website for the film. I find horror films very boring which is why I turned over part way through as it was just a slasher pic and what is the point of those? but flicking through the channels happened to see the last few minutes so tried to see some of the film on the +1 channel but it was still just a slasher pic. leaving me unsatisfied and thinking it was a good film gone wrong. **THIS WAS ALL BEFORE I SAW THE INFO IN THE WEBSITE AND KNEW ITS HISTORY.**"

Makes it all worthwhile for me every time someone writes something like this. So long as the truth behind this film and its intent is out there for people to discover, then there's still some hope that at least people are still trying to make decent films and that, next time you see a film that should have been better than it was,

you might realize that there's a good chance it actually had been. At least at some stage. And then maybe, **MAYBE**, if we're really lucky, people will start asking for what they should have received, all those films that might have effected them in some way that they were denied for a myriad of reasons. One of those reasons being a lack of faith or respect for the vision and passion behind the work itself and the people imagining and fighting to bring it to life. Yes, even if it's just another low-budget horror film.

Working in the film industry, it is so easy to forget that not everyone knows how things work here and what happens behind the scenes. Too many people believe that the films they see are the films that the writers and directors intended them to see. It is very often not the case. The average person doesn't know the lengths to which a film can be entirely re-imagined in editing and post. And then there are the people within the industry and elsewhere –in this bizarre age of celebrity obsession– who believe that it is more than enough to simply get a film made, any film, no matter how it turns out. That it's the credit that is important. For some, that may be true. But for many out there, the credit means nothing if the creative vision for the film never makes it to fruition, if the storyteller's voice is rendered obsolete. During post-production on **THE PLAGUE**, when we were told point blank by Sony Screen Gems' Head of Acquisitions "We own this now and see no reason for the writers and director to be involved," I knew my work on this film was just beginning. And all these years later, I've never been more proud of that work.

<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/plague/>

<http://www.spreadingtheplague.com/>

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This entry was posted on February 5, 2011 at 6:07 pm and is filed under [Blu-Ray](#), [DVD](#), [Film](#), [THE PLAGUE](#), [Writing](#) with tags [Clive Barker](#), [Dee Wallace](#), [Director's Cut](#), [Film](#), [Head of Acquisitions](#), [horror](#), [low-budget](#), [petition](#), [Screen Gems](#), [Sony](#), [spreading](#), [THE PLAGUE](#), [writers](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0 feed](#) You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site. [Edit this entry](#).



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Topic: Hal Masonberg Interview - Director of "The Plague"

This is a shoutout to a good friend of mine, Michael L. King aka Phantassm, who was able to talk with and interview a guy named Hal Masonberg, director of "The Plague".

Now for those who don't remember, "The Plague" was a flick that was produced by Clive Barker and starred James Van Der Beek. Doesn't sound promising, right?

Well, I'll let my friends words on his video discuss it:

"This is the official introduction video to the upcoming multi-part interview with the director of the film "Clive Barker's The Plague," and let it be known that while Masonberg directed the film, his edit of the movie was rejected by studio suits and he was literally ejected from the production. Studio executives ordered a new edit of the movie immediately. This new edit was put together by Clive Barker's people and totally in disregard to what Masonberg wanted. In this series of videos, Masonberg opens up and reveals his personal feelings about the making of the movie, the loss of control of the film and the hopeful future he has for a Director's & Writer's Cut of the movie truly revealing his intended cut of the much maligned movie.

It is my goal to help him as much as possible to make this dream a reality. Visit Masonberg's official sites and show your support please and remember even if you have no plans to buy his film if indeed it becomes a director's cut, (and I believe it will eventually.) you can still offer your support because its the right thing to do. please visit:

<http://www.Spreadingtheplague.com>

&

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/THE-PLAGUE.....98492638?ref=ts>

Thank you all. "

So apparently, Clive Barker screwed with a guy who actually had a vision or...at the very least, a better movie. So my good friend got in touch with him and the guy actually gave him an interview...interesting stuff.

I would actually urge people to take a look at my friend's review...just because it really discusses what happened aka 'what's going on'...

Basically I wanted to spread the word, not just for my friend but for a director who seems like a decent guy. And that's what deadpits all about.



Special Assignment – The Plague: The Writers and Director's Cut

Posted on June 30, 2009 by The Film Reel



Suddenly all the children in the world fall into a catatonic state. 10 years later they awaken and begin killing all the adults in a small town.

Directed by – Hal Masonberg

Written by – Hal Masonberg, Teal Minton

Starring – James Van Der Beek, Ivana Milicevic, Brad Hunt, Joshua Close, John P. Connolly, Dee Wallace, Brittany Scobie, Bradley Sawatzky, Jon Ted Wynne, Arne MacPherson, Gene Pyrz, Genevieve Pelletier, Chad Panting, David Stuart Evans, Jan Skene

This one has taken me way, way too long to get to. Quite a time ago I reviewed this movie and received a comment from the director, Hal Masonberg, pointing me to this website – Spreading the Plague. He had been working on getting a new version of the film released. The studio, as I'm sure the often do, had recut and released the film and it was much different from the director's original vision. Hal had been trying to spread the word about the movie and how he was attempting to get a writers and director's cut released. I contacted him and expressed my interest in helping to spread the word and he gratefully sent me a copy of his cut of the film.

Honestly, the first version that I saw wasn't that bad really. I just felt that it had some unexplored ideas that I would have liked to have seen more of. Now with this version I didn't really notice too many changes but the ones that I did catch do make the movie much more fulfilling than the studio version. There's more to the characters and I actually found a better understanding for some of them. It also made me more sympathetic towards them as well. It's not a masterpiece but it's still a really good movie.

The ideas that are peppered throughout the film are really intriguing and I still would like to see them explored more. This global crisis of every child falling into a coma and the fact that any child born within the last 10 years suffering the same fate is a very cool idea. This version has some subtle references to the effect that it's had on the global economy which I don't believe were in the first version. Either way, I give these guys credit for taking what was a good horror film and injecting some character development, thereby making it not only a good horror flick, but adding a level of suspense that wasn't there before.

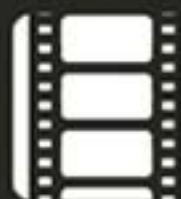
Now, I also agreed to give my two cents on the entire DVD, as it's a 2 disc version, and the entire package itself. The packaging looks great and the DVD's themselves, while obviously made at a lower budget, look well done and would only look better if made more professionally. What really blew me away was the

amount of extras here. While we're typically treated to overblown interviews with stars and some made-for-tv documentaries on the making of, this DVD had some impressive behind the scenes looks at the film. For a film buff like me who really takes an interest in how a movie is made it was amazing. There's some really in depth stuff here with storyboard to film comparisons, a director's diary, and a documentary (which is also available for viewing at the above mentioned site) giving more insight into how and why everyone would like to see this cut brought out for the audience.

The one thing I didn't get to was the commentary. I started to listen but then wanted to just watch the movie to better get the differences in the two versions. I'm glad I did as what is missing from the studio cut is alot of character development. I can only imagine that the commentary is equally as entertaining and informative as all the other features on the disc. It's a shame that both versions weren't released together since that's usually the case nowadays. It goes to show how just a few minor changes can affect a movie so drastically.

You can find my original review [here](#). And I still recommend checking out the [Spreading the Plague](#) website and signing the petition to help get this movie released. I don't know how many of you guys enjoy movies the way I do but this type of stuff has always been interesting to me and it's a great way to show support for a filmmaker.

Under the marquee – Will



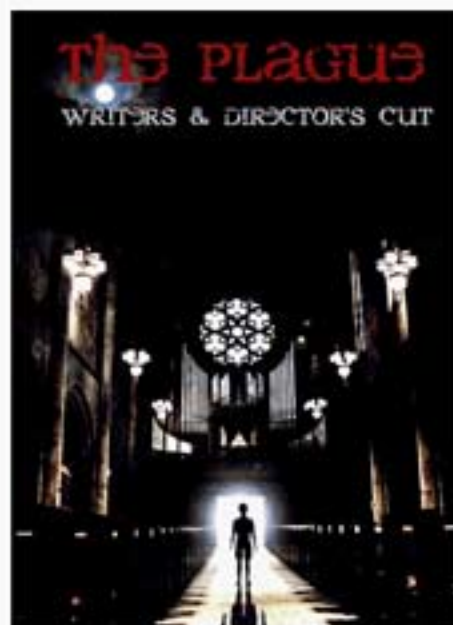
This is some scene

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Spread The Plague!



Hello, This Is Some Scene contributors and readers! Sorry I've been MIA (Missing in Action) but I've been hard at work acting, writing, working, and trying to maintain a social life. But I am trying to get back on the ball! Till I post reviews again which will be soon, please take a moment to check out these interesting press releases I've been receiving!

The first press release I received is from writer and filmmaker, Hal Masonberg, who is fighting to get his film not only noticed... but seen!

According to the press release:

Writer/Director Hal Masonberg is fighting to get his film seen; a film he finished AFTER he was removed from the project. Now he's heading an international campaign to get his film released. The film in question is, THE PLAGUE, a thought-provoking, socially relevant horror movie dealing with the subject of kids, violence and fear. THE PLAGUE was taken away from both its writers and director during post production after they'd spent a total of 8 years struggling to get it made. A producers' cut version was released

to DVD under the title CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE even though it had been an original script and concept by Masonberg/Minton and not based on any of Barker's work. The good news is that there is a web site, growing quickly in popularity, that is devoted to getting the Writers & Director's Cut of this film released. On it one will find, not only a link to a petition with an ever-growing number of signatures, but an hour-long documentary titled SPREADING THE PLAGUE: INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT which contains interviews with Masonberg and cast members, including one of the film's stars, Dee Wallace (E.T., THE HOWLING), as well as noted film authors/ journalists. All participants openly voice their desire to see this cut of the film released. There are also written interviews, radio interviews, links to forums and articles all focusing on getting this film out to the public.

Screen Gems has stated that they would consider releasing the Writers & Director's Cut if they felt there was an audience for the film. Let's show them that there is.

Check out the web site, please sign our petition, and help us spread the word. [Click here to watch the trailer.](#)

NOTE: After you sign the petition, iPetitions takes you to a page asking if you'd like to make a donation. YOUR SIGNATURE HAS ALREADY BEEN RECORDED. You do NOT need to donate money. Simply close out the window and you're done!

- [Jonathan Jones](#)

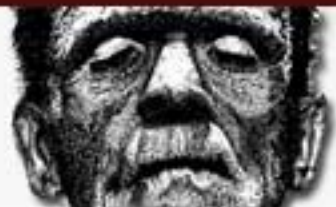


Stephan Mark (sm), 17.07.07

NEWSbits: "The Plague"

Hype um einen "Director's Cut": Hal Masonberg will den Mystery-Thriller "The Plague" komplett neu gestalten.

Neufassung: Regisseur und Autor Hal Masonberg ist unglücklich darüber, wie sein nach acht Jahren der Planung durchgeführtes Filmprojekt "The Plague" veröffentlicht wurde. Der Mystery-Thriller mit James van der Beek wurde von Sony Entertainment direkt auf DVD veröffentlicht, zuvor hatte man Masonberg die Kontrolle über das Projekt weggenommen und den Film komplett umgeschnitten. Dieser hat nun seine Version des Films fertig gestellt und wirbt auf seiner Website für Unterstützung. Eine Dokumentation der Ereignisse und zahlreiche Statements von Befürwortern einer neuen Fassung sind dort online.



THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT needs support

Posted by: **Hal M** on 7/10/2007

In the fall of 2005, the film, **THE PLAGUE**, was taken away from its writers and director during post. After an 8 year struggle to get the film made, the footage was re-cut from scratch by the producers without the involvement of the film's creators. Stock footage was added, new dialogue recorded, and the film completely restructured. It was released to dvd in September of 2006 at a running time of 88 minutes under the title **CLIVE BARKER'S THE PLAGUE**, though it was not based on any of Barker's work (it was an original screenplay by director Hal Masonberg and co-writer Teal Minton) and Barker, personally, had very little to do with the making of the film. That version of the film in no way reflects the years of hard work, creativity, or artistic intent of the writers and director of the film. Nor do they feel it reflect any conversations, development ideas or intentions that were shared during the three-year collaboration process. It is solely and completely a "producers' cut"

However, after having been removed from the film, director Hal Masonberg, in an unprecedented move, took it upon himself to finish the film anyway with the materials available to him (the film's dailies on dvd and a Macintosh computer-turned post-production facility). The film was originally shot in Super 35mm by veteran cinematographer, Bill Butler (**JAWS**, **THE CONVERSATION**, **ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOOS NEST**, **FRAILTY**), who was also not invited to partake in the film's post-production process.

The response to this Writers & Director's Cut by those who have seen it has been through the roof. However, without further support, this film may never see the light of day as the film's current distributor, Screen Gems, has no plans to release this cut.

I ask that you take a look at this site. On it you will find an hour-long documentary containing interviews with, not only director Hal Masonberg, but many others including Dee Wallace and other cast members, film authors/ journalists.

There is also a link to a petition and much more info on what happened to this film.

The link is:

<http://www.spreadingthepague.com/>

Thanks in advance for your interest.



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

The Plague (film)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Plague (also known as Clive Barker's *The Plague*) is a 2006 horror film directed by Hal Masonberg and written by Hal Masonberg and Teal Minton; it was also co-produced by Clive Barker. The Region 1 DVD was released September 5, 2006. *In addition to this release, there is also an unreleased cut of the film known as **The Plague: Writer's & Director's Cut**.*

Plot

Simultaneously one day all of the world's children under the age of nine fall into a catatonic state. For the next ten years, every child who is born, is born in a state of catatonia. After ten years, the children wake up, hell-bent on killing all adults. Things get even worse when the adults realize the children have a sort of collective brain—what one learns, they all learn. As the children get smarter by the hour, the adults must find a way to stop them before it's too late.

The story is similar to the 1960 British film *Village of the Damned*.

Cast

James Van Der Beek as Tom Russel
Ivana Milicevic as Jean Raynor
Brad Hunt as Sam Raynor
Joshua Close as Kip
Brittany Scobie as Claire
Bradley Sawatzky as Nathan Burgandy
John P. Connolly as Sheriff Cal Stewart
Dee Wallace-Stone as Nora
John Ted Wynne as Dr. Jenkins
Arne McPherson as David

External links

Spreading The Plague.com-The Official Site of THE PLAGUE: WRITERS & DIRECTOR'S CUT

The Plague at the Internet Movie Database