

A 'PLAGUE' WORTH SPREADING

Can I Spell This Out For You?

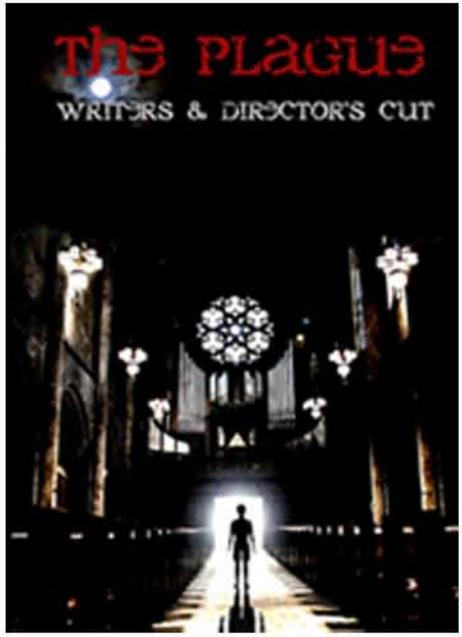


Contributing Writer

By: Drew McAnany

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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