

THE HATCHETT REPORT

Art, Food, Music, Dogs, Anarchy



Ron English beautifies Charlie Manson

BY LILY HATCHETT

MUST BE MAGNETIZED FOR FILM. Here is a good batch that collided with me and stuck, some more than once.

Popaganda: The Art And Crimes Of Ron English, produced and directed by Pedro Carvajal, is a documentary about one man's crusade for billboard liberation and culture jamming.

Let me preface this story with a sigh of relief and a couple of ha ha ha's. Behold a beautiful sight. Funny, dangerous art, on a billboard. Free for all. Yes, folks, here it is—Gonzo Billboard Hijacking as Art Form! Finally, an artist that takes "going all out on a limb, stepping over the edge, risking disapproval and arrest" as artistic imperative. Bear in mind that this artistic imperative is realized with extreme skill, wit and agility. Watching Ron English, we see a sublimely funny

master at work. First it starts with research for an accessible billboard. Back in the studio, the idea has to be hand painted with acrylic on photo backdrop paper. Hand-painted, yes, but slick to a Madison Avenue caliber ad-man. And, he is fast! Finished and dry in record time, the next step is to apply the Ron English Billboard to its designated location. This calls for teamwork. Ron prefers to do this by day, during working hours. Looking like guys on the job, he and his cohorts go about the "mundane" task of putting up a billboard. They are poised and ready to paste and run, and run they did immediately upon putting up the "Let's Get Drunk and Kill God" billboard that evoked killer rage in the onlookers. "It's called criminal mischief, it's a second degree felony," says Ron, "but it is a way to give the art to everyone."

Ron has covered the full spectrum of

topics, from politics to surrealism. He calls his art Popaganda (www.popaganda.com). The idea is to leave no stone unturned in his quest to tease and subvert marketing icons of popular culture.

This newly revised version of Pedro's documentary (78 minutes) includes Ron English's new "Art Crimes" committed during festival screenings as well as new interviews and follow-up. Also included is art by Shepard Fairey, ArtFux, Cicada, Anthony Ausgang with music by The Dandy Warhols, Daniel Johnston, Tripping Daisy and more.

The Future Of Food, intellectual property and gene splicing gone horribly awry, is an expose of a devious and underhanded plan that affects all of us. Deborah Koons Garcia made one dangerously smart movie, a movie that can arm the viewer with facts, facts that can awaken even the most complacent and make them aware of how the "controllers"

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are tightening their grip. Tampering with mother nature can produce everything from tasteless tomatoes to crops classified as insecticides, plus other mutant horrors. This documentary about our vital needs is extremely well produced, well written, and there is never a dull moment—the information is jaw dropping! Forget the scary movies of yore, forget the blood-curdlers and the devil hunters, the really scary stuff is not forged of fantasy but of greed and ignorance. No amount of wealth can heal the monster unleashed by the id. Everyone must see this film, the real revolution begins with knowledge and altruism.

The Future Of Food has already been instrumental in the passing of “Measure H” in Mendocino County, a local initiative to ban GMO crops. Hail to the power of film!

The Steve Plan premiered at the Breckenridge Film Fest, and was slated to open the New Orleans Film Festival in 2005, but Katrina abruptly stopped that.

All that Steve planned to do was to retire from medicine to create art full-time. He was counting off the days on his kitchen blackboard calendar. Most artists have to have a day job or some way that pays the bills. Steve Laser’s job is ER medicine. Medicine was a good profession for Steve, who mused, “I like working here at Charity Hospital, providing free services for people.” Antediluvian New Orleans emergency medicine consisted mostly of gunshot wounds, tens of thousands annually. “It is an important, but futile task.” He was asked to participate in a art exhibit using bent up confiscated guns. His piece, using guns, an old gurney and a clipboard received quite a bit of notoriety. He caught the attention of a couple of British filmmakers, as well as the director of the hospital.

The cinematography of *The Steve Plan* is striking. The extraordinary choice of music, especially considering New Orleans expectations, is mesmerizing. Steve Lesser, when questioned about the opportunity to examine his life through the eyes of a documentary gained, “intense feedback, a clear view without

personal filters.”

The IFP side stairs of the Puck Building were the epicenter of meeting and grooving with filmmakers.

A 2005 IFP Market selection, *Cast In Gray*, written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, was given to me on those steps. I had to watch this award-winning short film twice to fully savor the joke. I like a well-written, subtle piece of humor, rich with content, questions and plenty of rain. The international blend of cast and crew gave this Chicago film a world language, a cross-culturally understood modern fable. *Cast In Gray* is a rakishly quiet, wry smirk of a film, a tale of two men, a car, a dog, and of course, lots of rain. They can be found at festivals all over, fundraising to make it a feature.

I first met filmmaker John Daniel Gavin outside the Puck Building as the IFP Get-It-Made Conference 2005 was winding down. There was a gathering of some filmmakers and IFP staff. That must have been a moment of peak convergence, as quite few connections happened. John rushes toward us with remarkable glee, as I am the only one facing his direction, he immediately starts telling me about being on that Jet Blue flight out of LA with the askew landing gear and the most excellent landing. That’s the reason he was late for the conference. He did have a film. A genuine, bona fide, one-man independent film he called “the new high watermark in no-budget feature filmmaking.” He was busting out with unaffected enthusiasm. I had to see his movie. Written, directed and played by Gavin, *Johnny Montana* has better than good production values, and good, honest acting and directing. The feature is a cautionary tale of a modern everyman tasting the raw edges of the underworld to make a living. For a low budget indie, Gavin pulled together an admirable cast and crew. johnny@johnnymontanathemovie.com

He didn’t know whether he was Serb, Croat or Muslim. Assassin “Uncle Vanya” was an orphan out of Bosnia. He really wanted to get out of the profession but due to blackmail, could not.

One last job stood between he and a change of careers. This is where the story starts to convolute and get good. Vlado Nikolic’s *Love* was shot digitally, “for the price of a mid-sized SUV, with help from Swiss Effects for the 35mm transfer.” There is some great use of gyro-cam in a brand new way, placing the viewer into disconnected space. The soundtrack worked on me on some deep, primal level. The sinewy, slinky, Balkan/Oriental melodies were like threads, pulling me into the film’s core. *Love* has had a considerable amount of festival play and acclaim since its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival 2005. The Pioneer Theatre in NYC will host its first theatrical release. www.love-thefilm.com

Matt Zoller Seitz called his film *Home*, “\$1.98 Nashville.” Matt, the film critic, became Matt, the filmmaker, because he wanted to make a movie that had qualities he liked in film, and to see what it meant to be in filmmakers’ shoes. Therefore, he went straight to the masters, Robert Altman and John Frankenheimer. In fact, he “appropriated” shots and direction directly from his heroes. He challenged me to find them. *Home*, Seitz says, is built on a bell curve. The theme is a house party. As the party grows, so the number of characters and interactions grow, and then taper down to the first two. We have all been there, at all points of the curve. *Home* will have its theatrical release at the Pioneer Theatre in March. Matt’s next film is a puppet parody, *The Rabbit of the Siph*.

The Peace One Day film project is the brainchild of British director Jeremy Gilley. Supported by world leaders, individuals and organizations, the film documents the establishment of the United Nations International Day of Peace, an annual world event, a day of global cease-fire and non-violence which falls on September 21. (www.peaceday.org)

Quilombo leader, Zumbi of Palmares, died 310 years ago on November 20. Zumbi was the militant leader of an African country that existed inside colonial Brazil. The quilombo of Palmares was created by escaped and freed slaves near the city of Recife, and had

a population of as many as 30,000. They defeated every attempt at conquest until 1694, when the Portuguese succeeded.

Leonard Abrams, one man with a camera, walked into that world full of lore, of ceremonies, festivals and life. Quilombo is the Angolan word for encampment.

A few years later, Abrams emerged with *Quilombo Country*, a film filled with Forro beats and mysterious beliefs. It is a private, unpressured look into a contemporary, parallel world, another dimension, an opportunity to listen to the music, the words, and the cosmologies, both different and unifying. www.quilombofilm

Finally, watch for the Belgians. Perhaps they will save the world! Pamela Peeters is an environmental economist and founder of the Sustainable Planet Film Festival (Walter Reed Theatre, April 20, ‘06, in conjunction with Earth Day). She is also producing a 35mm short film called *Snoopy Dance*. Snoopy has become such a cultural icon as a metaphor for happiness. Director Ian Fischer brings his Rene Magritte inspired, surrealistic, existential tale to the screen with a unique international team, including DP, Chris J Lytwyn, Joel Johnstone and Tamiko Joye Ball. www.pamelapeeters.com



Johnny Montana

IN THE DETAILS

POPAGANDA: THE ART & CRIMES OF RON ENGLISH

Documentary 78 minutes
Director/Producer: Pedro Carvajal
Editor: Kevin Chapados
Featuring the art of Ron English, also featuring art by Shepard Fairey, music by Dandy Warhols, ArtFux and more
Associate Producer: Nicole Steffen
Email: Harvest-Moon@juno.com or pedro2nd@hotmail.com
Publicity contacts:
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Larsen Associates
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f: 415 945-1520
e: larsenass@aol.com

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Producer/Director:
Deborah Koons Garcia
Distribution through:
Cinema Libre Studio,
Good Company Communications
Other Deborah Koons Garcia films:
Grateful Dawg, *Poco Loco*,
All About Babies
www.thefutureoffood.com

THE STEVE PLAN

Produced by: Laura Gregory,
Nathalie Marciasno
Editor: Scott Stevenson
Music: Mix: Steve’s Choice
Great Guns Productions
Founder: Laura Gregory
London, England
www.greatguns.com

CAST IN GRAY

Written, Directed & Edited by:
I. Michael Toth
Produced by: Christopher Gentry
Co-Producer: Frank T. Herbert
Executive Producers:
Predrag Konstantinovic,
Charles Renslow
Co-Executive Producers:
Steve Weiss, Martin Selak,
Siro Pieri
Cinematographer:
Sasha Rendulic
Production Designer:
Slobodan Radovanovic
Sound Designer: I. Michael Toth
Costume Designer:
Natasha Vuchurovich Djukich
www.castingraymovie.com

HOME

95 min./DigitBeta
Matt Zoller Seitz, film critic,
New York Press, Star-Ledger.
Director: Matt Zoller Seitz
Producers: Sean O’Dea,
Jeremy Seitz, Matt Zoller Seitz
Screenwriter: Matt Zoller Seitz
Director of Photography:
Jonathan Wolff
Additional Photography: Steve Hopkins
Editors: Matt Zoller Seitz,
Jeremy Zoller Seitz,
Cast Jason Liebrecht,
Nicol Zanzarella, Stephen Neave,
Minerva Scelza, Erin Stacey
Visslaili, Bradley Spinelli,
Jennifer Larkin, Pavol Liska
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