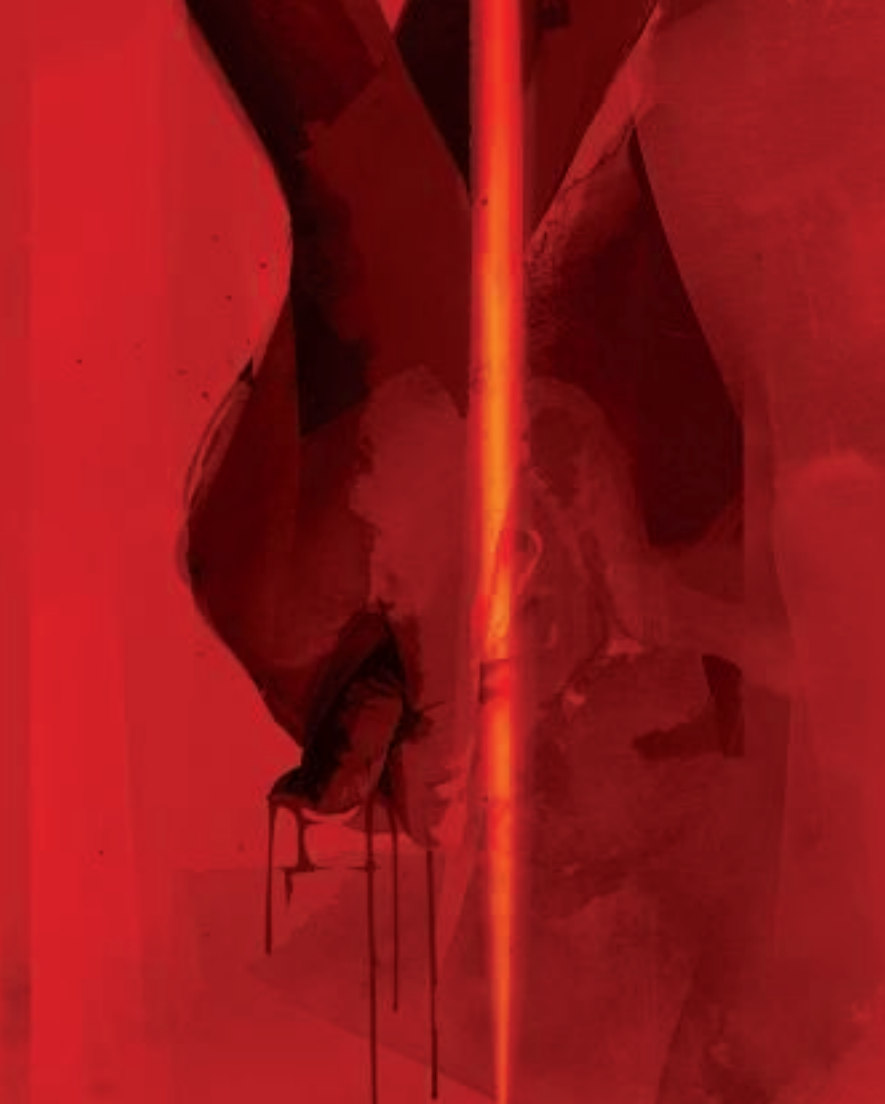
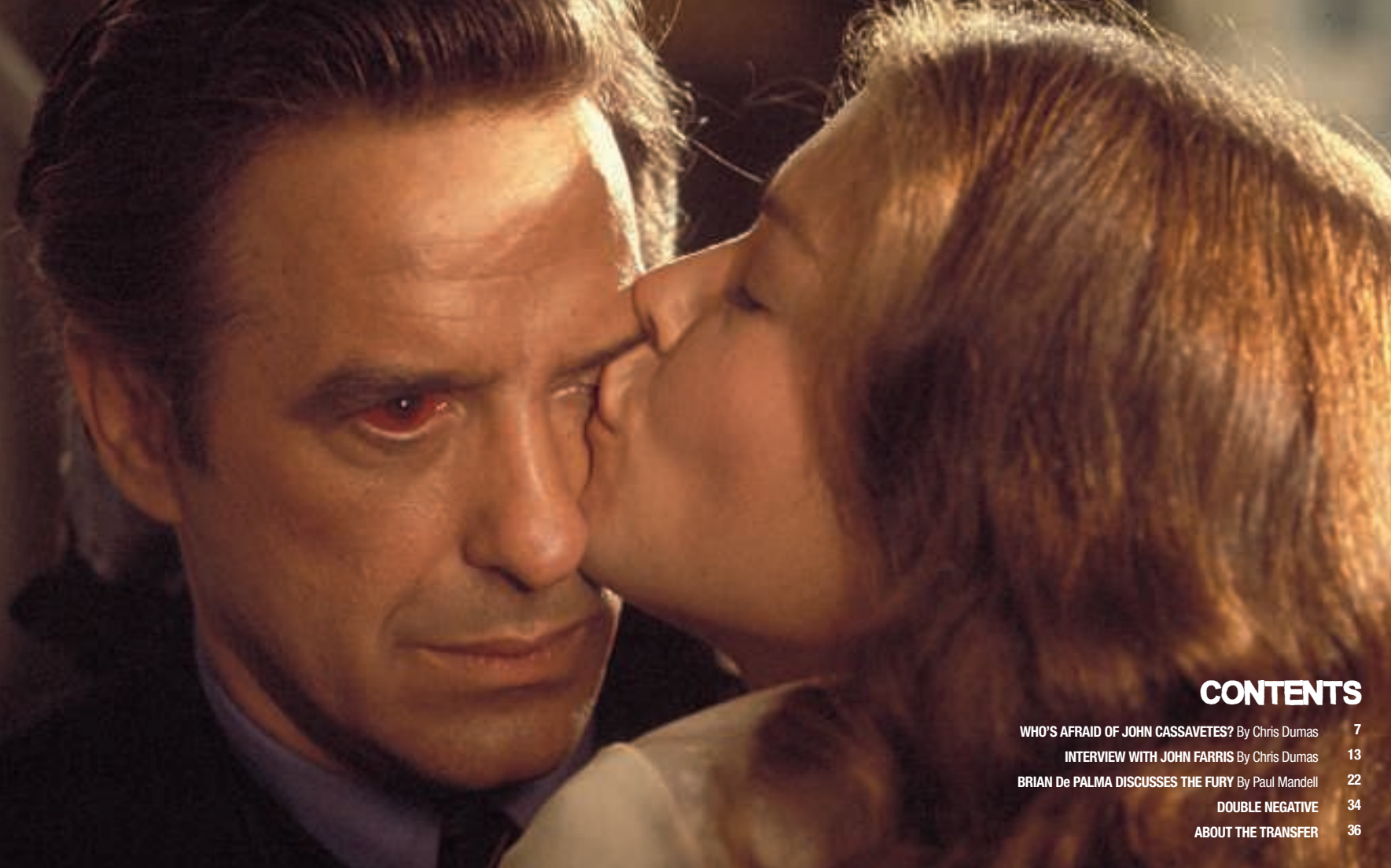


CREDITS

Directed by **BRIAN DePALMA** • Based on the Novel by **JOHN FARRIS** • Screenplay by **JOHN FARRIS** • Produced by **FRANK YABLANS** • Original Music by **JOHN WILLIAMS** • Director of Photography **RICHARD H. KLINE**
Edited by **PAUL HIRSCH** • Special Make Up Effects by **RICK BAKER**

STARRING

KIRK DOUGLAS as Peter Sandza • **JOHN CASSAVETES** as Ben Childress • **CARRIE SNODGRESS** as Hester
CHARLES DURNING as Dr. Jim McKeever • **AMY IRVING** as Gillian Bellaver • **FIONA LEWIS** as Dr. Susan Charles
ANDREW STEVENS as Robin Sandza



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WHO'S AFRAID OF JOHN CASSAVETES?

by Chris Dumas

As hopped-up and garish as a racing bus painted to resemble a forest fire, *The Fury* is possibly the most bizarre film in Brian De Palma's filmography — and, lest we forget, this is a filmography without a single "normal" film in it. It's a real smorgasbord of weirdness, being a tale of twin psychics and the shadowy government conspiracy that seeks to harness their powers, and it features — alongside such delights as projectile nosebleeds and rear-projected hallucinations — the most outrageous finale, by far, of any American film of its decade.

Every De Palma film has its adherents, but for most fans *The Fury* has always been overshadowed by his infamous Hitchcockian essays (*Dressed to Kill*, *Body Double*) or his expansive portraits of American violence (*Scarface*, *The Untouchables*). One reason for this is the subject matter: the idea of teenagers with psychic powers puts the film squarely in the lineage not only of *Carrie* but also of offal like *The Medusa Touch* or *The Power*, so it is bound to strike some (or even most) viewers as a little bit silly on the face of it, no matter how much *sturm und drang* that De Palma brings to the party. Another reason may be that De Palma didn't write *The Fury*, and the project — like *Scarface*, *The Untouchables*, and *Mission: Impossible* — didn't originate with him; there still exists a certain kind of *auteurist* who automatically won't take it seriously. Nevertheless, *The Fury* is a De Palma movie through and through; you can tell that just by using your eyes.

The Fury started out as a 1976 novel by John Farris; it was snatched up before publication by the producer Frank Yablans, who had endeared himself to De Palma in 1968 by doggedly (and single-handedly) shepherding the prickly draft-dodger comedy *Greetings* to a million-dollar-plus box office gross. Now an independent producer with a shingle at Twentieth Century Fox, Yablans secured the direct participation of Farris, who wrote the screenplay himself, and later brought De Palma on board. (For details, see the interview with Farris after the break.) De Palma, fresh off the success of the epochal *Carrie* — his *other* movie about teen psychics — was the natural choice to direct, and after more than a decade working on the lower end of the budgetary range, De Palma was almost

certainly champing at the bit to blow some shit *up*.

Armed with $6,000,000 and a brand-name movie star in the heroic form of Kirk Douglas, De Palma and Yablans went to work in late July 1977 (just two months after *Star Wars* landed) and shot for four months, starting in Chicago, then moving to Los Angeles for studio interiors and then, finally, to Israel for the beach gunfight that opens the film. The memorable score was supplied by John Williams, then very much in demand for his efforts on behalf of Han Solo *et al.*, while cinematographer Richard H. Kline (*The Andromeda Strain*, *Mandingo*, *Howard the Duck*) gave the foggy cityscapes and throbbing foreheads the luscious, grainy saturation typical of 1970s fantasy filmmaking. To properly set off the lurid décor (dig the wallpaper!), De Palma deployed an eclectic cast: not only the athletic scenery-chewer Kirk Douglas, but also Amy Irving — the lone survivor of the events of *Carrie* — along with a handful of De Palma regulars in secondary roles (Rutanya Alda, Charles Durning, William Finley), a startlingly young Dennis Franz… and, most memorably, John Cassavetes, the malignant star of *Rosemary's Baby* and the *paterfamilias* of character-driven improv cinema, wearing a black sling and a bored grimace as the evil military bureaucrat Childress.

By this time, Cassavetes had become so disgusted with the American film industry that he simply chucked it, distributing *A Woman Under The Influence* himself (carrying the print, it is said, from theatre to theatre by hand) and — like Orson Welles before him — taking any film role offered to him and redirecting each paycheck towards his own work. (Peter Biskind suggests that Cassavetes thought *The Fury* was garbage, but he came to set every day and did his best.) Given that Kirk Douglas, to an extent, also signified "independent filmmaking" — don't forget that, more than any other person, he made Stanley Kubrick's career possible — it's plausible to read *The Fury* as a tale of different styles, and ethics, of cinema. Every De Palma film, in some way, is an allegory of its own production, each one harbouring a ghost narrative about De Palma's career and the ethical choices he faced; *The Fury* is no different. What are these two "fathers" of independent cinema doing in this loony sci-fi fantasy, after all, if not standing in for two different ways of solving the ethical dilemma of participation in the film industry? (Both of them die.)

The Fury opened in March 1978, and while it didn't set the box office on fire (it cleared around $11 million), it did occasion one of Pauline Kael's most breathless reviews — a typical efflorescence of Kael delirium that, in the long run, didn't do much for De Palma's reputation. (It's the piece in which she first suggests that De Palma is a better director than Hitchcock. Andrew Sarris held that against him for the rest of his life; most everyone else, like sheep, followed suit.) As the film's theatrical engagement gradually faded from memory, its life on home video was compromised by poor transfers: the night scenes that Kael found so "velvety," for example, were squashed to near-unreadability on VHS, and when it first appeared on DVD, it was in the correct aspect ratio, but still

looked smeary and thin. This Blu-ray edition finally restores the lustre of the original celluloid; like De Palma's *Obsession* — also a disaster in its previous video releases — *The Fury* emerges here, in this new high-definition transfer, as a pin-sharp burst of highly controlled imagemaking.

Considering the film thematically, as a work by Brian De Palma, *The Fury* does seem anomalous. The surface themes are not De Palma's own: the paranoiac aspect of the narrative, for example, is an element that De Palma usually dissects with a dispassionate, satirical eye (as in *Greetings*, *Blow Out*, *Snake Eyes*), while the close friendship of the father and son we see at the film's beginning is probably the most science-fiction element in any De Palma film. (Brian and his own father were notoriously antagonistic towards one another; families, in De Palma films, are seething pits of hypocrisy and Oedipal aggression — take a look at his very next film, the queasily autobiographical *Home Movies*, for the most distressing iteration of this theme.) But if you consider *The Fury* as an exercise in pure cinematic technique, as De Palma evidently did, then it opens up like a rose. There's no split-screen — De Palma's most notorious strategy — but there is plenty of slow motion, video surveillance (frames within frames), the combined use of rear projection and actor-on-turntable (as in *Body Double*), a generous number of split-dioptre shots, and rapid-cutting-into-closeup — *The Birds* by way of *Carrie*. (The technique on display impressed even the resolute De Palma-hater Jean-Luc Godard, who quotes *The Fury* in at least two places in *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*.) On the other hand, there's also a palpable disinterest in the expository bits: De Palma does as much as he can to make the expository sequences interesting — often by keeping the camera in motion — but there's only so much any director could do with, for example, the Mother Nuckells sequence. (There are other stretches where it feels as if De Palma has left the room: the post-coital scene in the van is a good example.) By the time of *Dressed to Kill*, two pictures later, De Palma will have mastered every single aspect of film technique — thus the shot-by-shot, edit-for-edit *perfection* of that film. In *The Fury*, by contrast, you can still see the joints, and the rhythm is sometimes off; most crucially, De Palma hasn't yet figured out how to turn a bad performance to the film's advantage. (In *Body Double*, that's his primary aesthetic strategy.) But as Pauline Kael pointed out, the flaws in *The Fury just don't matter*. By the time the climactic explosion arrives, you've forgotten Mother Nuckells entirely.

For die-hard De Palma fans, *The Fury* has yet another layer of resonance. If De Palma can be said to have had a dream project — a film, like Jodorowsky's *Dune*, that *should have been* made, that would have altered the course of film history — that project would be *The Demolished Man*, based on the famed 1950's sci-fi detective thriller by Alfred Bester. That novel, too, is about telepathy, and like *The Fury* — the novel, not the film — it's a blizzard of Freudian themes and technological paranoia, as befits an artifact of the H-bomb era. (It sounds like a generalisation, but *all* cultural objects created in America in 1953 ooze with Oedipal themes and anxieties about technology.) Bester's novel reads like the De Palma ür-text: all of De Palma's mature themes are there, from

familial loathing to split subjectivity, from paranoiac self-deception to political impotence, from technologies of surveillance to the vampirism of the moneyed classes. De Palma has said in many interviews that he has spent his entire career trying to get that project off the ground; he may never have come closer than 1978, when Frank Yablans nearly got the film set up at Fox — if *The Fury* had been a hit, *The Demolished Man* probably would have been greenlighted. (Yablans told a writer for *Cinefantastique* that the film would definitely be made, and very very soon.) It didn't happen, of course; the most innovative projects seldom do. In this respect, one imagines that De Palma's heart has been broken more than any other director's: behind his extant filmography is a vast graveyard of unrealised projects, any one of which sounds more intriguing than any film that (say) Scorsese has made in the last thirty years.

So if *The Fury* looks like a dry run for something bigger and better, that's probably no accident. Each of the psychic hallucinations looks like an experiment in visual narrative, each one different; De Palma was clearly interested in finding a proper cinematic language with which to visualise telepathy. (*The Demolished Man* would have presented many such challenges, including an action scene that takes place in complete darkness.) However, if there is anything surprising about *The Fury* when considered in this context, it's the amount of potentially De Palma-esque material in Farris's novel that got left out of the movie. In the novel, for example, the shadowy governmental organisation is run by a loquacious, motherly transvestite named "Granny Sig": one naturally imagines John Lithgow in the role. There's an early action sequence in a hospital, a long and complicated one, that in De Palma's hands could have been a masterpiece of multi-planar organisation (like the motel parking lot climax in *Raising Cain*); the movie elides it altogether. There's also the grotesque sexuality of the Robin Sandza character, whose developing psychosis manifests itself in spasms of uncontrollable copulation: note that the psychic teens, in the book, are both fourteen years old! One squirms in discomfort, imagining what *that* movie would have been like. (Leif Garrett raping Fiona Lewis?) However, it's important to remember that this *was* 1978, not 1972: Vietnam was over and Reagan was about to land in the White House, and the American public was no longer ready — if they ever were — for the blast-wave of perversity that *The Fury* could have been.

Despite all that, *The Fury* is jam-packed with pleasures… and, of course, there's that magnificent ending. De Palma apparently shot it twice; the first time, some of the cameras jammed and the flying body parts didn't go in the right directions, necessitating an expensive retake. It took a week to rig everything back up again, but luckily, the second try was the keeper. Every time I watch the scene, I can't help but appreciate the directorial sleight-of-hand that sends a toppled lamp towards the viewer: it draws the eye away from the convulsing John Cassavetes, who — in the blink of a cut — is replaced by an exploding dummy, probably rigged by the legendary A.D. Flowers. (In the book, Gillian drowns Childermass in his bathtub.) Pauline Kael was the first critic to reference the 1970 Warner Bros. film *Zabriskie Point* in regards to this scene, and indeed, it is in relation to Antonioni's legendary *film maudit* that the ending of *The Fury* is funniest. Antonioni's exploding house is probably the last great visual image of the political filmmaking of the era; as a metaphor for the empty, impossible hopes of the revolution — complete with aural orgasm by Pink Floyd — it's as desperately overstated as any cinematic symbol could possibly be. (One might call it the "Rosebud" of the student Left: the whole commodity system returns to some kind of protean, elemental condition, nothing but atoms and swirling dust and the vibrating roar of a guitar.) De Palma — the former Godardian, the jaded horror *auteur*, the future "thief of Hitchcock" and "vicious woman-hater" — takes Antonioni's scream of revolutionary fire and, from it, fashions the best gag of his career. Who else but John Cassavetes, the original "pioneer of the independent cinema," could blow up quite like that? It's a classic moment, and it makes the movie. I hope Gena Rowlands was proud.

Chris Dumas is the author of *Un-American Psycho: Brian De Palma and the Political Invisible* (Intellect Press, 2012) and the operator of Vetoxa Records.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN FARRIS

by Chris Dumas

John Farris had his first million-selling novel (*Harrison High*) at the age of 23, and since then has been an inspiration to – and influence on – three generations of American writers. He is the author of dozens of best-selling novels and several screenplays, including both the novel and screenplay of *The Fury*. This interview was conducted via email over two weeks in July-August 2013 and has been slightly rearranged for clarity.

CHRIS DUMAS: The timeline is a little bit unclear, in terms of Frank Yablans and his purchase of the rights to The Fury *— did he buy them when the book was in galleys, or was it already in print?*

JOHN FARRIS: I finished writing the novel in Oct. 1975 and turned it over to my lawyer (Eddie Colton) and agent, Audrey Wood, at the newly-formed ICM. Audrey gave it to Bob Bookman from their LA office. Bob happened to be in NY and we met in Audrey's office in November. He had mentioned *The Fury* to Ron Preissman, who worked for Frank Yablans, and so the novel went over to Frank's office at the Sherry-Netherlands. Mary Ann Pasante, one of Frank's associates (now Mary Ann Farris, I'm happy to say, and a senior vice-president at Lionsgate), spent all night reading it and the next morning Frank was on the phone to Bookman. The deal was closed in January. There was never any question that I would do the

screenplay, since I had already written and directed a film (*Dear Dead Delilah* [1972]) and sold scripts to producers such as Paul Monash and Ed Scherick. But before doing the screenplay I turned out a 125-page treatment, because of the length and complexity of the novel. That spring I met with Frank at his house in Scarsdale (we were virtually neighbours; lived only a few blocks apart). He had no criticism of how I was handling the story except to ask for a stronger ending. Finished the screenplay in August, which went to Alan Ladd Jr., then president of Fox. The movie was green-lit in a matter of days.

About that time Bookman put me together with another client, Brian De Palma, to work on an adaptation of the Mary Higgins Clark best-seller *Where Are the Children?* which Brian was attached to direct. I spent a couple of months on a screenplay that would work. By then Brian was bored with the project. *Carrie* had been released and was a big success and he wanted something more challenging than a fairly mild mystery. "What are you working on?" he asked me.

So on January 17 we all met in Frank's office, agreed that day on Kirk Douglas as the lead, called him, and then the real work began. Seven drafts of the screenplay later, Brian began filming on a beach in Chicago.

CD: I was going to ask about Dear Dead Delilah. *Was that one self-financed? Was De Palma familiar with it?*

JF: The picture was financed by the Nashville record producer Jack Clement, who also was the producer for Sam Phillips at Sun Records in Memphis, at the time that Cash, Jerry Lee, Elvis, and Roy Orbison were showing up at Sam's door in rapid succession. I had about a hundred thousand to work with, a third of which went to Agnes Moorehead in the title role.

I don't think Brian ever saw the movie, or expressed any curiosity about it.

CD: One of the things that I find particularly interesting is that your original novel is far more perverse than the movie (and I mean "perverse" as a compliment). Was the decision to make Gillian and Robin several years older your decision? I note, too, how extremely streamlined the adaptation is — not just the past-lives backstory with Gillian and Robin, but the Bellavers as a family are extraordinarily reduced, Peter's search has radically fewer twists, etc. Are there any reductions that were made that you regret?

JF: On writing: what works in a novel frequently doesn't work visually, or is irrelevant, as were the back-stories in *The Fury*. When adapting my novels or someone else's, I first determine what the

film story is, and what should be left out. I visualise as I write as if I were watching the movie, and write with a film editor's eye.

As Brian worked on *The Fury* from his particular point of view, he requested changes, additional scenes, and eliminated other scenes, including those involving the old song-and-dance couple. I liked those characters but Brian was right: by that point in the movie they just got in the way. Another, later scene between Robin and his psychiatrist/lover in her bath was filmed but just didn't work.

As for the ages of Gillian and Robin, they are only couple of years older in the movie, for casting purposes.

CD: Was the exploding Childress yours, or De Palma's?

JF: Blowing up Childress was my idea.

CD: That was a brilliant stroke. It's impossible to forget that ending. Did you and De Palma talk about the ending of Zabriskie Point*, with the house exploding over and over?*

JF: At the time we did *The Fury* I hadn't seen it; I caught up to it years later. Brian never mentioned the movie to me.

CD: I'm wondering about the specifics of the writing process. Did De Palma improvise storyboards while you worked together? Were you in the same room hashing it out, or was there a lot of work over the phone?

JF: Brian and I worked Socratic-style. He asked questions about the script, and I answered them. As we got closer to start date he drew stick-figure story boards as memos to himself. Outstanding film directors have three gifts: story sense, gut-instinct casting sense, and visual sense. They all have the ability to run the completed movies in their heads before they shoot a foot of film.

CD: The idea (in the novel) that Gillian and Robin are ancient beings who have been rebirthed together for thousands of years -- that seems like it would be terribly difficult to get across on screen. Did you and De Palma attempt to figure out a way to translate that idea in purely visual terms?

JF: In the beginning Brian and I kicked around a couple of ideas for establishing the "psychic twins"

concept before giving up on it as unworkable and unnecessary in the context of a movie.

CD: When the shoot was happening, I seem to recall reading that you were on set, at least part of the time. Is that the case? Were you there for the shoot at the indoor amusement park?

JF: I was on-set most of the time in Chicago, scouted the amusement park with Brian but wasn't there when the company shot the scenes. Also spent a few days in L.A. But being on-set if you don't have a specific job to do is pretty much of a bore, and I was working on *The Demolished Man* screenplay, and finishing a novel (*All Heads Turn When the Hunt Goes By*).

CD: The song-and-dance couple — were their scenes shot but dropped in the editing room, or were they dropped before shooting?

JF: Donald O'Connor and, I believe, Gloria De Haven were signed to play the song-and-dance couple and construction was underway on their apartment set when they were cut from the script, a few days before we began shooting in Chicago.

CD: Donald O'Connor and Gloria De Haven!!!! Holy cow. I had never heard that. Talk about a missed opportunity! Do you know whether any test footage was shot, perhaps with the two in costume? If so, I hope that's in a vault somewhere.

JF: Test footage on O'Connor and Gray? I don't think anyone tested for *The Fury*. Brian knew who he wanted and what they could do.

CD: Are there other scenes that were shot but edited out? I recall that De Palma shot Kirk Douglas and Amy Irving in a boat of some kind, looking for Childress's compound, but that he dropped it — either because it wasn't needed, or because there was rear-projection involved and it didn't work correctly.

JF: I had a scene in an earlier draft where Peter and Gillian were on a ferryboat crossing Lake Michigan, but it was ruled out because of budget and logistic considerations and the scene was later played on a bus in LA. Ho-hum. So much for production values.

As for locations, Brian wanted to do the beach scene in the Chicago Museum of Art. No chance. As you know, the scene with Dunwoodie shadowing the girls and tuning into Gillian psychically he later adapted to great effect for *Dressed to Kill*. Dunwoodie's assassination and a nice overhead shot of

his sprawled body with beachgoers walking around it were cut in editing.

By the way, *The Fury* introduced Daryl Hannah, Jim Belushi and Dennis Franz to the movie business.

CD: Did you get to interact at all with either John Cassavetes or Kirk Douglas? How about William Finley (or any of De Palma's other stock players, like Charles Durning or Rutanya Alda or even Amy Irving)?

JF: Charles Durning was interesting to talk to during down-time in Chicago, but I don't recall that he socialised with anyone. Pat McNamara had a lot of questions about his character, and Kirk [*Douglas*], about dialogue he thought was over-written. He was always right. Cassavetes had bothered to read the novel and expressed regret we weren't shooting the wrecking-ball scene. Dennis Franz was so nervous he had lockjaw off-camera.

CD: Did you attend the premiere? Were people like Scorsese and Spielberg there? I ask because of the infamous closing paragraph of the Pauline Kael review, where she imagines all of De Palma's friends in awe and "choking with laughter" at that ending -- I've always wondered what they actually thought of it. How did the premiere audience react?

JF: Pauline Kael didn't like the screenplay but loved the movie. Go figure.

If there was a premiere, nobody told me. I think Brian screened the movie for Spielberg *et al*. I've no idea what they thought of *The Fury*.

CD: With regards to The Demolished Man*: I know that Yablans tried to get it set up at Fox right after* The Fury*, using your screenplay. That's a crucial unmade film for De Palma. What happened?*

JF: The film rights belonged to a Hollywood wannabe who was in the hotel business. I don't recall his name. Brian was attached to write the screenplay and direct and the project was set up at Paramount. Mike Eisner thought Brian's script needed work, although he was thrilled with the project, etc. I was brought in at Brian's suggestion. Read his draft, which I thought was excellent. I did a 30-page treatment, adding new angles but not straying far from the novel. Brian okayed the treatment. I did the new screenplay. Next thing I knew Yablans was involved, took the project away from Paramount and gave it to Fox. There were heavy-duty politics involved in this move. But Fox passed and Brian was irate. For more on that story, you would have to talk to Brian. He never mentioned *The Demolished Man* to me again.

CD: What did you think of The Demolished Man*, as a novel? Had you read it in the 50s, or did you only read it when De Palma brought it to you? I've read elsewhere that De Palma was also a passionate admirer of the John O'Hara novel* Appointment in Samarra *— did that one come up in conversation?*

JF: *The Demolished Man* I had read in college. As for *Appointment in Samarra*, the list of producers and directors infatuated with that novel is long. Brian never mentioned his interest to me.

CD: A friend of mine — a grad student in film studies at the time — once had an opportunity to ask Oliver Stone about De Palma; Stone replied that De Palma was "the saddest person" he'd ever met. (I assume that by "sad" he meant "despondent," rather than something like "pathetic.") Did he strike you as a melancholy sort?

JF: Brian was 36 when he made *The Fury*. I found him to be somewhat shy, not overly talkative but humorous and engaging when his guard is down, intensely observant but not judgmental, far too intelligent to be anything but annoyed by the Hollywood game, impatient with anything or anyone that caused him to lose focus. And, I think, disappointed that his career hadn't taken off like that of his friends Spielberg and Lucas. Friends, but rivals, in what Brian has referred to as 'The Competition'.

A friend of mine since high school had played the female lead in *Hi, Mom!* and had briefed me on her experiences with him during filming. As a fledgling director he gave her a tough time. But he was younger then, and still unravelling the emotional knots of growing up in a prosperous but dysfunctional family. I'm not trying to psychoanalyse him. Adolescence wasn't paradise for most of us. But having heard from Brian about certain incidents in his early life, which are strictly his business and will not be related here, it's clear that they profoundly affected the direction, or trajectory if you will, his career has taken. For complex studies of where his fascination with, and terror of women has led him creatively, try watching *Sisters*, *Dressed to Kill*, and *Raising Cain* one after another.

CD: I have read a lot about De Palma's adolescence, and yes, his career reflects the family material I've read about. Without getting into specifics about what he said, I'm interested in the mere fact that he spoke about this stuff to you in the context of a writing partnership. You're four years older than he is, correct? Which means that neither of you are "Baby Boomers," strictly speaking. (Plus you have the experience of growing up Southern, which has additional layers of complexity.)

JF: That grew out of discussions over lunches at Musso and Frank's, relevant to the script of *The*

Fury and how much of the relationship between Gillian and her mom should be in the movie. Also there is something about me that often has near-strangers eager to talk about moments in their lives they wouldn't confess to a priest. Basically I guess I'm a just a good and uncritical listener.

CD: Did you see Carrie *during its theatrical run? Had you seen* Sisters *or* Phantom of the Paradise *or* Obsession *at that point? Were you familiar at the time with De Palma's beginnings, i.e. his early street-theatre radical cinema, like* Hi, Mom!*?*

JF: I had seen *Sisters*, *Obsession* and *Carrie*, brilliant exercises in what can be done when you have almost no money to spend. Other than what my actress friend had told me about *Hi, Mom!* I didn't know anything about Brian's student-film years.

CD: Have you kept up with all of De Palma's movies since then? You mention Raising Cain*, which I still think is one of the funniest movies I've ever seen, like Preston Sturges remaking* Psycho *-- did you have a similar reaction to it? I wonder what you thought of the particularly political ones, like* Casualties of War *and* Redacted *and even* Snake Eyes*, and I especially wonder what you thought of* Scarface*, given its initial failure and its unprecedented second life on home video.*

JF: *Scarface* is my second-favourite De Palma movie, after *The Untouchables*. It has a near-hallucinatory quality, wonderful script and a visual flair to make any of his rivals in 'The Competition' envious. I also liked *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. That one was a lose-lose situation for Brian, based as it was on an overhyped, revered "masterpiece." If you don't "get" Brian, then you hate the movie. Pauline, where were you when he needed you?

Casualties of War is another good one. Haven't seen *Redacted*. As for *Cain*, I think it's a minor masterpiece waiting in the wings to be properly acknowledged by film scholars. The only movie Brian has made, and at a very stressful time, that is so obviously about himself.

CD: Did you work on any projects with De Palma other than The Fury *and the Mary Higgins Clark & Alfred Bester adaptations? Did you work with any of the other Film School Generation directors on unmade projects? How about Frank Yablans?*

JF: Dick Zanuck sent my script of *The Uninvited* to Brian, who declined to be involved. So *The Fury* was my only film with Brian, and we lost touch. Same for Yablans.

CD: Are you still involved with the movie business?

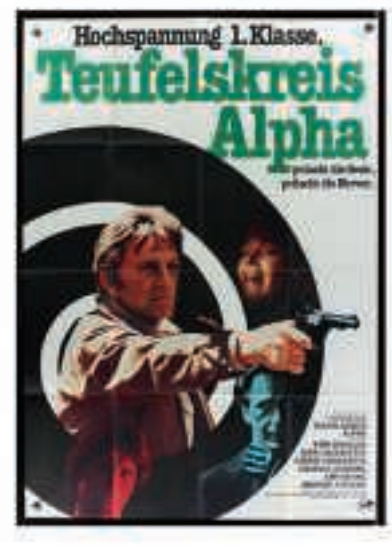
JF: I'm involved currently in setting up financing for two films based on books of mine, both of which I'll produce or co-produce and one that I'll direct.

CD: Anything you care to divulge about them?

JF: As for my current projects, they are based on my novels *You Don't Scare Me* and *Phantom Nights*. They will be shot in Georgia beginning in April of next year, *YDSM* first.

CD: And finally, the Most Obvious Question: how do you feel about the film of The Fury*, 35 years after its release?*

JF: I thought about 75% of the movie as I visualised and wrote it made it to the screen. A very high percentage, really. In retrospect, it's amazing how smoothly everything went on the movie, from the deal to the wrap in 18 months. Almost never happens. As Bookman said to me a few years later, when we were putting together a three-cornered deal for *Fiends* at Tri-Star with Richard Donner to direct (it went on for months), "It's a miracle when anything gets made."



BRIAN DE PALMA DISCUSSES THE FURY

by Paul Mandell

This interview originally appeared in Filmmakers Newsletter Volume 11 No. 7 *in May 1978.*

Thirty-seven-year-old Brian De Palma is again back in New York City where he lives a relatively normal life far from the madding crowd of Hollywood. Beside a cigarette-littered ashtray on a table in his modestly furnished Fifth Avenue apartment sits a $50 portable typewriter with a piece of paper rolled through the carriage. On that paper are fragments of ideas for a new project, bits and pieces of a script that will gradually fall into place. Eventually he'll take it back to Tinseltown, show it to the film factories, and some day return to New York again with his imaginings realised on celluloid. "The great disadvantage of living in Hollywood is that you can lose your sense of what you are. Also, I don't think you know the audience you're dealing with unless you get out, walk around, and talk to people outside the industry. It's the only way to get some grasp on why things work and don't work."

One thing that seems to be working is his new film, *The Fury*. The critics appear to like it, and so does De Palma. And as far as he's concerned, the latter's opinion is what really counts.

The Fury is "pure De Palma," only this time lavishly mounted, starts off on location in Israel, and the marquee sports heavyweight names like Kirk Douglas and John Cassavetes. But typical of a De Palma film, there are no holds barred in the more sanguinary sequences. And the finale is literally a mind-blower.

So while *The Fury* is somewhat of a departure from his usual style, the basic elements are still there. Instead of laying out a logical structure in which all the pieces fit neatly into place, De Palma likes to confuse you, leave a lot of loose ends hanging, even throw you into a dreamlike netherworld. "I like to make very stylised set pieces and use them to get you into a whole surrealistic or expressionistic world."

What kind of a guy is this who brews up such bizarre films? I kept thinking as I crossed Washington Square Park one brisk New York morning and headed towards De Palma's apartment building. "I've lived in empty places all my life," I recalled him saying once in an interview. "I don't care where I live or what I look like." Mmmm. I remembered reading how he spent his high school years designing computers and dreaming of going to the moon. I also remembered reading that he had been disinherited; had worked at a Greenwich Village bistro, the Village Gaslight; and had caught a bullet from the NYPD at the age of 23. Mmmm. I rang the bell.

At the door appeared a pleasantly mellow-looking fellow, tall with a short beard. "Sit down and relax," he said as he disappeared into another room. The furniture was quite sparse. "I've never had an interest in anything material," he once said. "I've always found it difficult to buy things. I'm just very bored by the process of going into a store. In fact it makes me quite uncomfortable." Lining the walls were glass-framed posters of his films. A neon candelabra spelling out *Phantom of the Paradise* blinked at me from a corner of the room.

A photographer from *Us* magazine was also there with his battery of lights and motor-driven Nikon. Brian and I sat at a circular table and somehow communicated between camera clicks…

PAUL MANDELL: What made you decide to film The Fury*?*

BRIAN DE PALMA: After *Carrie* I was trying to have several of my projects financed and I was running into some problems. Then one evening I took Jill Clayburgh to see the opening of *Silver Streak* and afterwards to a big bash at the Tavern on the Green. Among those sitting at our table were Frank Yablans and Alan Ladd, Jr. Frank mentioned he was working on a script with a writer named John Farris. It was called *The Fury* and he thought I'd probably be interested in it.

The next day my agent, who it so happens also represents John Farris, sent me the script. I read it and liked it. I saw in it some elements I could extend from *Carrie*, and also like the *French Connection*, *Three Days of the Condor* element in it – the cat-and-mouse game with agents chasing each other, big stunts, and elaborate special effects sequences. So I called Frank, told him I liked it, and we sat down and went to work.

PM: The Fury *has two basic themes, espionage and psychic phenomena. Do you think they blend well in the film?*

BDP: I think it was an interesting mixture of genres. We'll have to see how well it blends together. I like the Kirk Douglas-John Cassavetes "man against man" element and the interweaving of those storylines in the script. I've never dealt with that before. In fact, I don't think it's ever been done.

PM: John Farris wrote the novel and the script. What did you contribute to the screenplay?

BDP: I changed some of the dialogue, that's all. One scene was completely improvised: where the two girls are talking at the table and suddenly one's nose starts to bleed. That was a fake nose, by the way, with tiny tubes inside through which "blood" was released.

PM: Do you enjoy showing a lot of blood on the screen?

BDP: I use blood when it's effective – in other words, in the right place at the right time. The reason it's so effective in *The Fury* is because it happens at strong dramatic moments which viscerally affect the audience. Then again, it's all a matter of how well your audience is set up for it. I'm used to that sort of thing; my father was an orthopaedic surgeon and I saw a lot of operations, corpses, limbs, and various body parts hanging around. That influenced me in the sense that I have a very high tolerance for blood. Things that shock other people don't shock me.

PM: Are you bothered about the way the colour of blood comes off on screen? At times it seems to look more like tempera paint.

BDP: I guess it's all a matter of what you consider looks real and what looks stylised. In *The Fury* I wanted it to be vivid and red. It's obviously redder than what real blood looks like, but that's the effect I wanted. Take a film like *Taxi Driver*. There was so much blood in it they were afraid they

were going to get an X rating so they toned it down to a sepia colour. I was there when they were timing the sequence. Martin Scorsese wanted a sort of *Daily News* look for it – you know, the look of a gangland killing in a barbershop. Then he had to pull out the colour because he was afraid of getting an X. Sometimes you just don't have any choice in the matter.

PM: Most of your films deal with bizarre types of family relationships. Is this any kind of personal statement?

BDP: To some extent, yes. The type of manipulation which occurs in familial situations in my movies is the same kind which occurs in the early years of our lives. At least that's what I perceived in my family – a certain amount of manipulation by various family members.

PM: Like Hitchcock, manipulation is very much a part of your style.

BDP: I really like seeing an audience respond in a visceral way. It gives you a real sense of satisfaction to know you've emotionally caught up your audience. The thing is, when you're effective at what you're doing, you are always accused of manipulating your audience. But I'm not cynical enough yet to feel you can push buttons and know exactly how people are going to respond. If you could do that, everybody in this business would be a lot richer.

PM: Other than Hitchcock, what other directors have influenced you?

BDP: Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas and Jean-Luc Godard, along with documentary filmmakers like the Maysles.

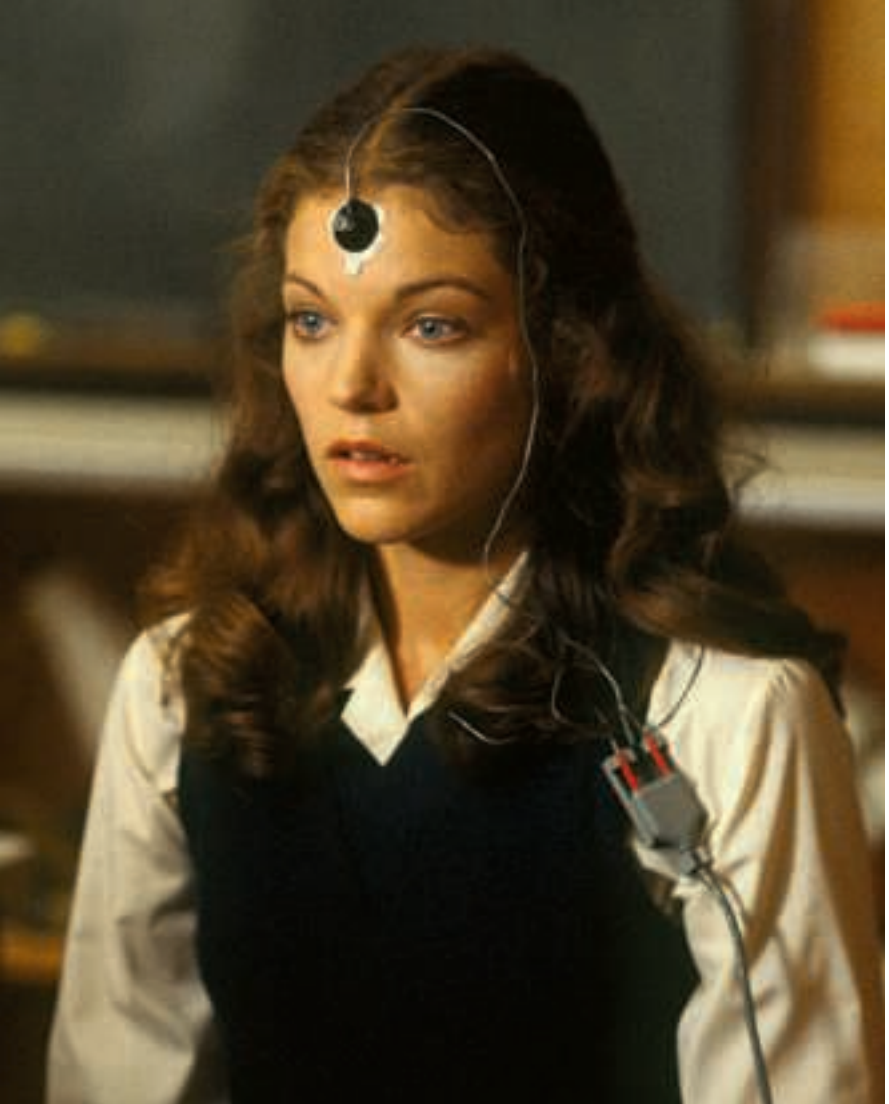
PM: How much did The Fury *cost?*

BDP: $5.5 million.

PM: Was there much studio interference?

BDP: Making this picture was good in that sense because I was shielded from any studio interference by Frank Yablans; he handled them very well. They liked the script, liked the rushes, came to see a rough cut, made a few suggestions, and that was about it.

PM: Do you have any particular interest in ESP, telekinesis, or the like?



BDP: No. I only like to explore that area because it lets me get into surrealism and expressionism. When you're dealing with the interior of someone's mind, you can do all kinds of stylised things. And that's a form I'm drawn to.

PM: You used Richard Kline as your DP. How did you choose him?

BDP: He was available (he had just finished *Dog Soldiers*). I talked to a lot of people about him, got a few recommendations, and liked the way he had lit some of his films. So we sat down, looked at the book, decided what kind of filming style we wanted to use, and then did it. And we worked together quite well.

PM: Did you have Kirk Douglas in mind for the lead from the outset?

BDP: I like Kirk Douglas and I've also liked a lot of his films, although in the last couple of years he's been in some not-so-hot ones. I wanted the kind of driven, obsessive character he plays so well. At one point I said to Frank Yablans, "We need a Kirk Douglas type." And he said, "Why don't we get Kirk Douglas?" Kirk had worked with Frank at Paramount before, so the next thing I knew I was talking to him on the phone. Kirk was great! He has a lot of experience and he brings all those years of movie-making to your film.

PM: Why did you pick John Cassavetes as the heavy?

BDP: I picked him because John happens to play a sinister guy really well. The trouble with movies like this is the risk of falling into terrible clichés of heavies and heroes. But John is such a good actor, he has a way of turning even a cliché into a style all his own. He wasn't just another guy in a black suit with his arm in a sling.

PM: Amy [Irving]'s flashback on the staircase with [Charles] Durning was very effective. Was that a rear process shot?

BDP: Yes, I used back projection. I was shooting a lot of process and the idea of using it for a flashback came to mind. My first idea was to have the camera move in a 360 degree circle, something like what Hitchcock did in *Vertigo*, but then I realised there was the problem of holding focus on both characters: you couldn't have Durning in slow motion and Amy in regular motion. Then I got the really bright idea of doing it in process, and it worked out quite well.

PM: How about that beautiful dissolve from day to night taken from a high elevation?

BDP: That was taken from the observation tower of a building in Chicago. Originally the shot was to have been done at an airport, but I was up on top of this building having a drink with someone and I happened to look out the window and see the view. I immediately called Frank and said, "This is incredible! There's a whole city down there!" But our scheduling was so tight I couldn't do the shot personally. My second unit cameraman John Fox was running around shooting a lot of location stuff and I told him to lock the camera off on the observation deck, let the car come up to the parking lot, zoom back to show the Chicago skyline, then sit around for six hours and wait for the sun to come up. It's the kind of shot you've seen done many different ways in many different films; but what made this so effective was the subtlety of this pathetic little truck with the characters inside right in the middle of this huge city. We also had to do some tests to make it work because the observation glass John was shooting through was tinted green so we had to do some colour correction.

PM: Does your editor control the flow of the sequence, or do you lay it all out shot for shot and use the editor in basically a mechanical role?

BDP: Paul Hirsch is my editor, and we've done six pictures together. When he first worked on *Hi, Mom!* I almost marked the film; but as we progress from picture to picture he almost knows exactly what I have in mind. When he gets the footage back he knows my storyboards and lays it out just like that. So now I leave him alone most of the time.

PM: I was a bit disappointed with the Ferris wheel sequence. I thought it would have been much more dramatic had you intercut some close-ups of the passengers clinging for their lives – as Hitchcock did on the carousel in Strangers on a Train*. Did you ever consider doing something like that?*

BDP: To me the Ferris wheel was very much a throwaway sequence. There were so many disasters and major crises in this picture I decided to simplify the Ferris wheel scene and not mount it as a major set piece. Whenever something is too excruciating or extraordinary, it affects whatever scenes come after it. Also, you can't keep topping yourself; you run out of steam. So I wanted to get that sequence over with as fast as possible without pulling out every stop.

PM: You really seem to be into slow motion these days.

BDP: Yes. I think it makes things really poetic and romantic, and it's also very good for making the drama hyper. It's especially great for reaction shots because it gives them so much force. I chose to use it for the death of Hester because it was the most emotional death in the movie. I also wanted to structure it around her point of view – she's happy and exhilarated and then POW the car hits her.

PM: Does cutting slow motion shots present a problem?

BDP: It's very tricky to get in and out of slow motion. In this film it wasn't that difficult because it was basically an isolated section of the picture and it was all shot in 48 frames per second. But in *Carrie* I used a lot of slow motion against regular motion, and that was quite intricate. Basically you have to know how to use slow motion: when it's going to be 36fps, when to use 48, 72 and 800 fps. I've shot a lot of slow motion and I have a good sense of exactly how many frames per second it will take to exaggerate movement.

PM: How many cameras did you have on the exploding dummy of John Cassavetes?

BDP: Eight. Some were rolling at 800fps and others were going at *1500fps*! We mainly used the ones going at 800.

PM: Those are tremendous speeds. Did the cameras ever break down?

BDP: Yes! The first time we did it three cameras snapped. And they were built by the people who build missiles. Some of them didn't have shutters; the film just ran continuously. But looking at the *slates* was very boring. Three minutes go by before the slate goes out. The editor must have fallen asleep during those rushes!

PM: Were you satisfied with the ending shot?

BDP: This head crashing to the floor just seemed the most effective end for the movie. I wasn't going to freeze out the explosion with all the blood and fire hitting the walls. Using two shots of the dummy's head flying up to the camera and falling down was a little risky, but that's the chance you have to take. Rick Baker built the dummy and A.D. Flowers, the Master Powder Man, rigged it.

PM: Do you see yourself continuing to do psychological thrillers, or do you plan a change of direction?

BDP: I learned a lot from the genre, and I imagine that in the next 10 or 20 years I'll start moving into

more intellectually complicated things. Ironically, my next film will be a small, low-budget comedy along the likes of *Hi, Mom!* – called *Home Movie* [sic] – so I'm actually going back to areas I dealt with five or six years ago. And the one after that will be an elaborate sci-fi film called *The Demolished Man*. It's about an Oedipal murder in a telepathic society.

PM: Doesn't that smack of The Fury*?*

BDP: Not really, it's more like *Oedipus Rex* and *The Godfather* with strong character relationships. Even though it deals with psychic phenomena the basic theme is a father-son confrontation in the year 2100.

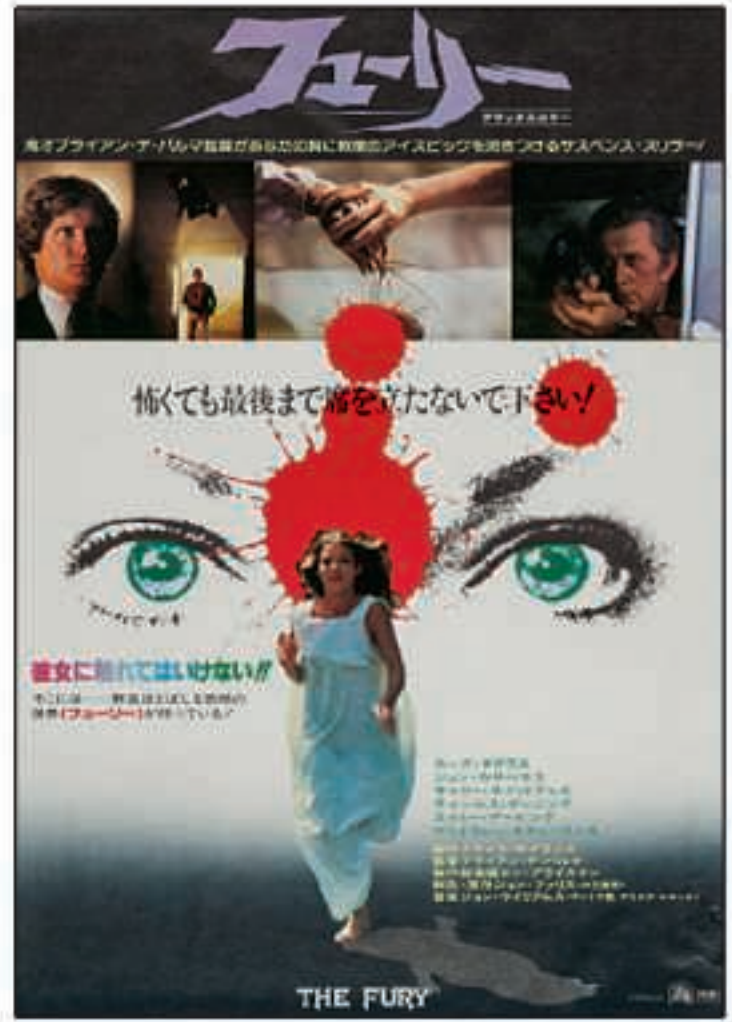
PM: To be able to talk confidently of what your next two films are going to be is a sign that you've finally made it, that you're bankable. How does it feel?

BDP: I've always been pragmatic about what I'm able to do with the time and the space I'm in. I tend to be very un-deluded by hype, and I also know how to make it work for me. You've always got to be aware of how the wind is blowing in a capricious industry. The film business is very much like the circus; and you've got to have that kind of circus mentality in order to succeed.

PM: Do you feel you've created a new style, almost a new genre?

BDP: Maybe I'm trying to hammer out a new genre. Somehow. Hitchcock did it. I don't know what people called it before they called it "Hitchcockian." They must have some Madison Avenue-type name for what I'm doing. You never know… *De Palmian?!?*

Paul Mandell is a film historian, filmwriter, and practitioner of stop-motion animation films.



DOUBLE NEGATIVE

Starring: **Bill Randolph** as Alec Ealing **Dori Legg** as Lucy
William Finley as Matt **Wayne Knight** as Max
Rex Robbins as Insurance Man **Justin Henry** as Young Alec

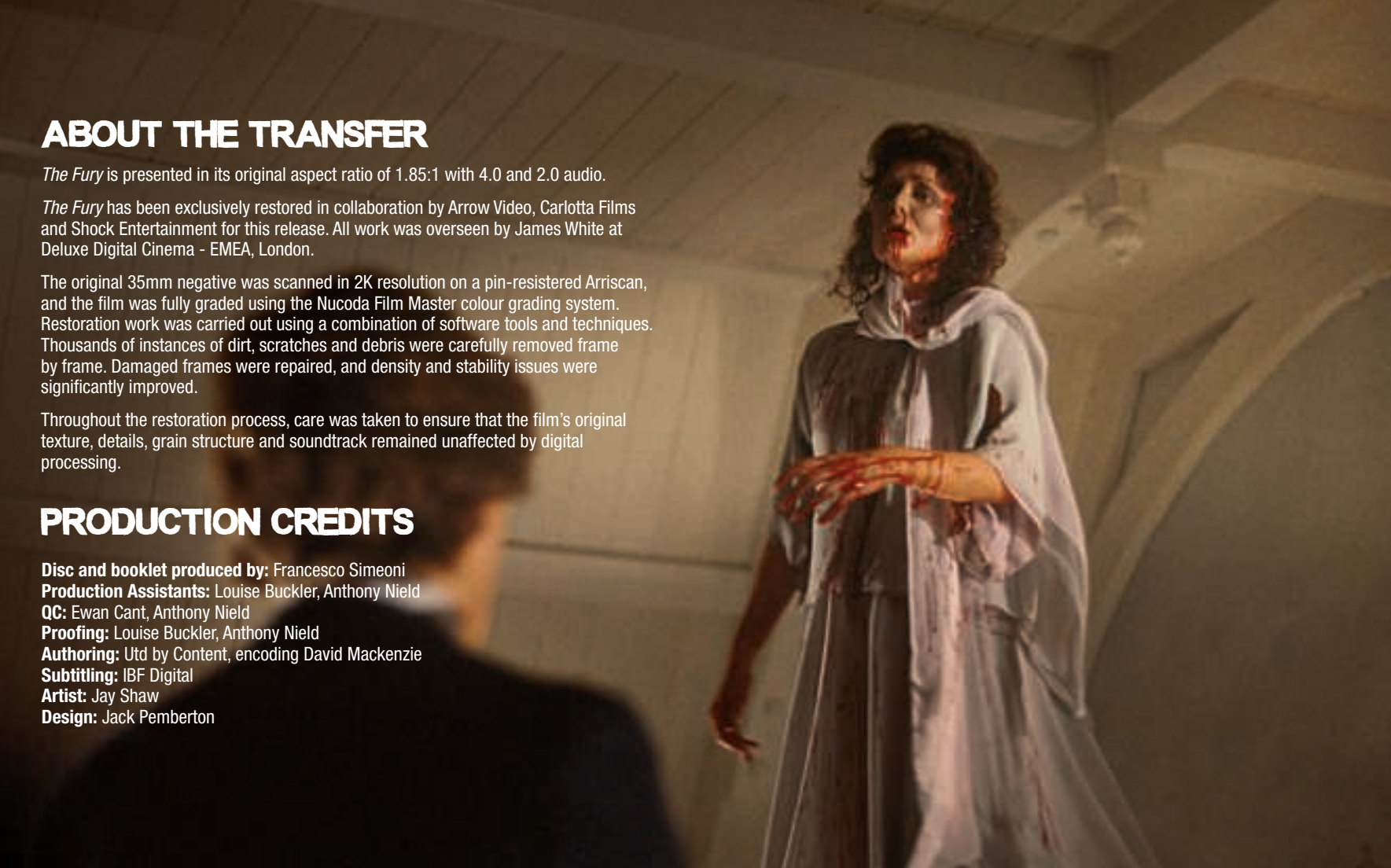
Written, Directed and Produced by **Sam Irvin**
Director of Photography **Steven Fierberg** Editor **Lisa J. Levine**
Music composed and conducted by **Lanny Meyers** Art Director **Tom Surgal**

Double Negative was the directorial debut of Sam Irvin and a film rife with Brian De Palma connections. Irvin had first worked on a film set when he served as an intern on *The Fury*. Two years later he would receive an associate producer credit on De Palma's next feature, *Home Movies*, and work as De Palma's assistant on *Dressed to Kill*. *Home Movies* had also provided early credits for *Double Negative*'s director of photography Steven Fierberg and art director Tom Surgal, while editor Lisa J. Levine had been an apprentice on *Blow Out*. Many of *Double Negative*'s crew, right down to the grips, had also worked on *The First Time*, a 1983 comedy produced by Irvin on which De Palma was credited as 'creative consultant'.

Lead actor Bill Randolph had a small role as "Chase Cabbie," Nancy Allen's taxi driver in *Dressed to Kill*, but the major De Palma connection comes with William Finley's presence. The actor appears as Raymond Dunwoodie in *The Fury* and is best known for playing *Phantom of the Paradise*'s eponymous hero. A regular since the early sixties, he made a total of nine pictures with De Palma prior to his death in 2012.

De Palma himself receives a special thanks on *Double Negative*'s end credits, as do three of his editors: Paul Hirsch (*Carrie*, *The Fury*, *Blow Out* and more), Jerry Greenberg (*Dressed to Kill*, *Scarface*, *Body Double* and more), and Corky O'Hara (*Home Movies*). Between pictures, De Palma allowed his Kem flatbed editing machines and rented editing room (at 1600 Broadway, New York) to be utilized free-of-charge for the editing of *Double Negative*.

Sam Irvin (standing) on the set of The Fury speaking to Brian De Palma.



ABOUT THE TRANSFER

The Fury is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with 4.0 and 2.0 audio.

The Fury has been exclusively restored in collaboration by Arrow Video, Carlotta Films and Shock Entertainment for this release. All work was overseen by James White at Deluxe Digital Cinema - EMEA, London.

The original 35mm negative was scanned in 2K resolution on a pin-resistered Arriscan, and the film was fully graded using the Nucoda Film Master colour grading system. Restoration work was carried out using a combination of software tools and techniques. Thousands of instances of dirt, scratches and debris were carefully removed frame by frame. Damaged frames were repaired, and density and stability issues were significantly improved.

Throughout the restoration process, care was taken to ensure that the film's original texture, details, grain structure and soundtrack remained unaffected by digital processing.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and booklet produced by: Francesco Simeoni
Production Assistants: Louise Buckler, Anthony Nield
QC: Ewan Cant, Anthony Nield
Proofing: Louise Buckler, Anthony Nield
Authoring: Utd by Content, encoding David Mackenzie
Subtitling: IBF Digital
Artist: Jay Shaw
Design: Jack Pemberton

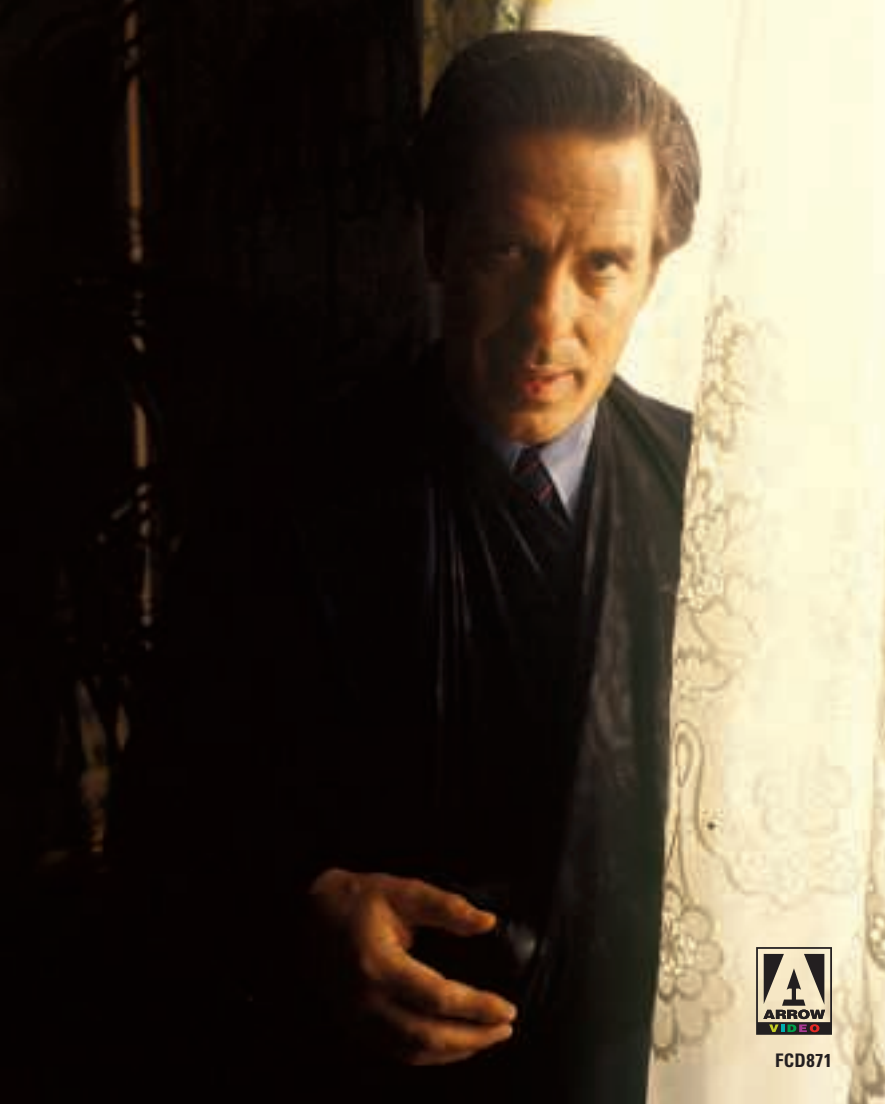
RESTORATION CREDITS

Film Restoration Supervisor: James White
Film Restoration by Deluxe Production: Mark Bonnici, Graham Jones, Paul Collard
Datacine Colourist: Stephen Bearman
Restoration Department Supervisor: Tom Barrett
Assistant Supervisor: Clayton Baker
Digital Restoration Artists: Debra Bataller, David Burt, Anthony Cleasby, Lisa Copson, Dana O'Reilly, Tom Wiltshire

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Fabien Braule, Schawn Belston, Sean Coughlin, John Farris, John Farris Jr., Robert Fischer, Joshua Hibberd, Sam Irvin, Erin Kono, Alistair Leach, Vincent Paul-Boncour, Caitlin Robinson, Jennifer Rome, Melanie Tebb, Jerome Wybon, Shock Entertainment, Hollywood Classics

The Fury poster image courtesy of Posteritati Movie Posters, NYC, http://posteritati.com



ARROW VIDEO

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