

# filmireland

# NOBODY WANTS YOUR FILM

And other movie tales from the internet

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# NOBODY WANTS YOUR FILM

NOBODY WANTS YOUR PETER DINKLAGE FILM NOBODY WANTS YOUR SAM ROCKWELL FILM NOBODY WANTS YOUR PETER STORMARE FILM NOBODY

:: If You Want It,  
 Come And Get It ::

*Nobody Wants Your Film* is a documentary about low-budget filmmaking and the perils of distribution. LIR MAC CÁRTHAIGH talked to director Peter Judson about making the film, and reaching an international audience through the internet.

IF YOU'RE A Gmail user, and an ever-increasing number of us now are, you'll know all about targeted advertising. Targeted ads are what allow companies like Google to provide their services for free, and (unlike banners, pop-ups and flash movies) they can't be blocked by clever pieces of software like Firefox and its plugins. Yet, by reading through my emails, the big brain at Gmail

has formed an opinion of me based on what I type, and provides me with ads that it thinks are suited to me. According to the Gbrain, I want to 'Learn How to Understand Men – And Beat Them at Their Own Game!' while choosing from 'The Top Four Sites About Cake' – and maybe that's true. Regardless, I never follow the links – except for one time. This time the Gbrain wasn't peddling

discount projector bulbs or bouncy castles direct from the manufacturer, it was luring me to a site called 'Nobody Wants Your Film'. How could I resist?

**Black and white and read all over**

The Nobody Wants Your Film site is as austere as the homepage of Zentropa – white text on a plain black background, as no-frills as the average road marking. The only hard-sell here is the roll call of names that runs around the page: Steve Buscemi, Peter Stormare, Peter Dinklage, Sam Rockwell, Alexandre Rockwell – indie darlings of the highest order. The Spartan aspect of the site just adds to the mystery – what exactly is this film that nobody wants, how are these respected filmmakers involved, and – perhaps most annoyingly – why does nobody want this film, whatever it may be? I was tantalised. After a quick perusal of the other pages (offering, among other things, t-shirts emblazoned with the *NWYF* logo – in black or white, of course), I paid the \$3.99 asking price via PayPal and downloaded the film. A marketing guru once explained this process to me as 'AIDA': Attention, Interest, Decision, Action. In other words, it was a textbook sell.

*Nobody Wants Your Film* is not itself the film that nobody wants; it's a 93-minute documentary made on the set of an independent film, and presents a scene that will be familiar to anyone who's been around the set of a low-budget production. *NWYF* intercuts behind-the-scenes footage and interviews with an email correspondence between the filmmakers and fictionalised producer/financer 'Alan Smithee'. Getting a film made is always a challenge, and this film is no different; we follow the exhausted crew through the familiar late nights and early mornings. Here is a committed group of people willing to go through whatever is necessary to get the job done. Actor Peter Dinklage sums up the general feeling on set: 'We're lucky; few of us get to do stuff like this; few artists, actors, writers and directors.' Once the film is complete, however, Smithee tells the filmmakers in no uncertain terms that no-one is interested in it; all of the labour that we have observed so closely has been consigned to the scrap heap by a few perfunctory lines of email.

It would be trivialising *NWYF* to describe it as a 'behind-the-scenes documentary'. With notable exceptions (such as *Burden of Dreams*, *Hearts of Darkness*, or Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe's Terry Gilliam documentaries), behind-the-scenes pieces tend to be little more than promotional exercises, neutered and relentlessly upbeat. This kind of material is usually shot solely to advertise the film, or as uncritical padding for the DVD release. *NWYF*'s director Peter Judson agrees. 'Most of these behind-the-scenes things are all glossy and packaged, where *NWYF* gives you more of what I think is a true picture of the ups and downs of the life'.

**Non-fiction**

Part of *NWYF*'s unconventional style and approach can be attributed to Judson's background in fiction filmmaking. 'Because I was trained as a narrative filmmaker I never saw *NWYF* as a documentary, which is why I think the film turned out the way it did'. Judson was trained at NYU, and produced and



line produced four low-budget features while in and out of their graduate programme. It was in an organisational capacity that he originally became involved in the production that *NWYF* documents. 'I was hired as the assistant to the producer/co-writer Brandon Cole. The original film was shot digitally and I was responsible for buying all the equipment during pre-production. As well, Brandon had me shoot all the auditions.' During this latter task, the seeds of the documentary were sown. 'I began to shoot what Alex, the director, was saying to the actors between filming their auditions. Brandon nodded his approval and the idea began to take hold. Then, once the production started, all my hectic pre-pro work ended; it was then that Alex actually asked me to shoot behind the scenes footage for the DVD. He also had his assistant do the same. So during the shoot most of my time was spent shooting on the set.'

Judson's official status as a member of the crew, rather than an 'outsider' visiting the set, affords him a unique opportunity to get his subjects to open up. Many of the interviews take place in an informal setting, some in Judson's car. 'Part of my job was driving some of the actors around, which is where all the car interviews came from, figuring at the time they would help give the work a through line.' Sometimes Judson's multitasking itself forms part of the narrative. He explains to Sam Rockwell that he had to drive actor Francesco Messina to buy cereal at a convenience store at six in the morning while half dead after a day's shoot; the actual footage of this is intercut with Rockwell's (rather accurate) impersonation of Messina's New York rasp. Judson himself is often the butt of the jokes, such as when he asks Peter Dinklage to repeat himself during an in-car talk. 'Are you going to listen to me during this interview,' Dinklage replies, 'or are you just going look at blonde girls driving by?'

#### Bits of business

Despite some hilarious moments, such as the insanely funny Peter Stormare brushing up his school-level German (a typical offering translates as 'Karl Marx was a donkey with long long ears'), there is a lot on show that charts the unglamorous day-to-day business of film work – and acting in particular. Steve Randazzo, a veteran actor in television and independent cinema, gives a perfect example of the love/hate relationship that exists between those who work on film and their chosen profession. After complaining bitterly about his uncomfortable shoes, he goes on to half-mockingly demolish the film industry: 'I never heard anybody here talk about one human thing, all I heard was about TV pilots, movies, what's coming, who's writing, who's directing... they get consumed with this fuckin' business – I hate it!' David Proval, the character actor who is probably best known for his menacing turn as Richie Aprile in *The Sopranos*, is particularly open with his experiences of the 'business' and its fleeting nature. He explains how he was briefly fêted early in his career after his leading role in *Nunzio* (1978). He won Best Actor at the Toronto Film Festival that year, beating Dustin Hoffman for *Marathon Man*, and was invited for a high-powered lunch with the studio big-shots. He saw his picture hanging over the table next to that



Peter Judson in *Nobody Wants Your Film*

## This whole thing has been about a filmmaker's unwillingness to let others dictate whether a film will reach an audience or not – whether an individual gatekeeper or an audience will judge the work

of Jimmy Stewart, one of his heroes, 'and the only thing I could think of was "I wonder who they took down to put me up"'. We later follow his unsuccessful struggle to insert a line he has improvised into the film. Directing the scene, Alex comments, 'it was once an improv, now it's bad writing'.

Having finished shooting the footage on set, Peter Judson was given a new job. 'I was promoted to post-production supervisor and flew back to NYC to do that job for the next six months. After that ended I went back to LA and started to play around with the footage on a laptop, figuring that I would learn how to edit on a computer. When I was at NYU they didn't have avids or any computer editing systems yet and we cut everything on film. As I cut the footage it began to show me that some sort of film was there.' While Judson was editing, news came through that the distribution for the feature he had been documenting had fallen apart. With this disaster came the hook that was to make *Nobody Wants Your Film*. 'For the next year and a half, *NWYF* took over my life as I lived off of my credit cards, eventually creating the final film.'

Judson funded post-production by credit card as well, but enlisted private investors for *NWYF*'s distribution. But, although he values *NWYF* as a work in its own right, 'really this whole thing for me has been as much about a filmmaker's unwillingness to let others dictate whether a film will reach an audience or not – whether an individual gatekeeper or an audience will judge the work.' One of the means that *NWYF* employs to reach an audience is the internet. Although the film is distributed on DVD in the US, the *NWYF*

website has proven highly effective in reaching an international audience. Even so, Judson recognises that creating interest is not a simple task. 'The tough part about promoting any film, whether in the real world or on the web, is getting people to notice. The advantage of *NWYF* is, obviously, the names attached and the title of the film, but without the names most people would more than likely have ignored it, sad to say.

But they haven't, and Peter is now taking submissions from other filmmakers who would like their work hosted on the *Nobody Wants Your Film* website. In this way, *NWYF* is a protest film; not only does it uncover the suppression of creative work by executives, it shows, through its affordable, international, web-based distribution, that there is a way to circumvent that system. The internet can put the power of international communication into the hands of the filmmaker. *NWYF* had the binary savvy of the Gbrain to help put them in touch with their audience – in this case me and presumably others like me, but as film and web evolve together, more forums will develop for filmmakers to distribute their work – an Amazon or iTunes for independent film. The *NWYF* experience just goes to show that *somebody* wants your film and, when filmmakers have established a more 'targeted' online community, it will grow increasingly easier to find those somebodies. 🍄

**For submissions to *Nobody Wants Your Film*, or enquiries about international distribution, email [submissions@nobodywantsyourfilm.com](mailto:submissions@nobodywantsyourfilm.com)**