

"Tom Hits His Head" – REVIEWS

"★★★★★"

"This film walks a tightrope between experimental and narrative... The use of camera angles and imagery is excellent, and Putnam is able to make the silliest looking prop (like the devil's head made from a baby doll) work in the film. The choice to use 16mm color reversal films was a great decision. With the shockingly vivid colors amidst a sea of grain and grittiness, the film stock meshes with the film's themes of panic, avoidance and the general question 'What's wrong with me?'"

-- Kevin Carr and Rory Aronsky, Film Threat

"The genesis of 'Tom Hits His Head' mirrors the subject of the film: writer/director Tom Putnam hit his head, which catapulted him down a road of anxiety and fear over the following months. While this may sound like a documentary subject, Putnam has taken this inspiration and crafted a very funny stream-of-paranoia tale guest starring his good friend, the devil baby. Sound off kilter? It is."

-- Tim La Torre, Indiewire

"The narration and images complement each other to hysterical effect... Filmmaker Tom Putnam is as sharp as he is clever -- and funnier than a barrel of anxiety-ridden middle-class men inventing insane fantasies to cope with their normality."

-- Arion Berger, Washington City Paper

"The Best American Short Film... At once hilarious and terrifying... Must be seen to be believed."

-- Chris Garcia, Fanboy Planet

"Tom Hits His Head looks a great deal like a Harmony Korine film while feeling a great deal like an "Upright Citizens Brigade" sketch... The frenetic surrealism of the bit (a visit by a baby doll Satan while Tom's on the toilet is a classic) serves ultimately as a spot-on satire of the aspirations that haunt the quiet hours."

-- Walter Chaw, Film Freak Central

"One of the most well-showcased movies to ever hit the festival circuit."

-- Microcinema Scene

"Reminds us that short films are an art form of their own rather than simply time-constrained feature films. At a total budget of \$2,000, it also proves you can design a film to fit within a budget and not sacrifice a thing. Tom Hits His Head is a stellar film -- sensitive, funny, sad, sometimes painful but always entertaining -- and it would not be any better for having more money spent on it. It is, in its own way, perfect. You probably won't see a better depiction of mental illness on the screen and you definitely won't find one so charming."

-- Chase Gordon, Filmmakers Alliance Magazine

"Tom Hits His Head"

Past and Upcoming Film Festivals and Screenings:

OFFICIAL SELECTION: OVER 200 INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

Academy Award Qualifying for "Best Live-Action Short Film"

Slamdance International Film Festival

****Winner, Spirit of Slamdance Award***

Aspen Shortsfest

****Winner, Grand Jury Prize, Best Comedy***

York International Film Festival (United Kingdom)

****Winner, Best Short Film***

Capalbio Cinema Short Film Festival (Rome)

****Special Jury Award***

Regensburg Short Film Week (Germany)

****Special Jury Award***

Dionysus Film Festival (Los Angeles)

****Winner, Best Short Film and Best of Festival***

The Valley Film Festival (Los Angeles)

****Winner, Ten Degrees Hotter Award (Best Short Film)***

Black Point Film Festival (Lake Geneva, Wisconsin)

****Winner, Best Short Film***

West Chester Film Festival (Pennsylvania)

****Winner, Best Short Film***

River's Edge Film Festival (Paducah, KY)

****Winner, Best Short Film***

Method Fest Film Festival (Los Angeles)

****Runner-Up for Jury Prize and Audience Award***

Anchorage Film Festival

**** Honorable Mention***

Ashland Independent Film Festival (Oregon)

**** Honorable Mention***

Topanga Film Festival (Los Angeles)

**** Honorable Mention***

Film Festivals and Screenings (continued):

1 Reel Film Festival / Bumbershoot (Seattle)
AFI Los Angeles Film Festival
The American Cinematheque (Los Angeles)
Anchorage Film Festival
Anonimul International Film Festival (Romania)
The Antelope Valley Film Festival (Los Angeles)
Antimatter Short Film Festival (Victoria, BC)
Artists Salon (Los Angeles)
Artsfest Baltimore
Ashland Independent Film Festival (Ashland, OR)
Aspen Shortsfest (Aspen, CO)
Athens Film Festival
Atlanta Film Festival
Avignon/New York Film Festival
Bearded Child Film Festival (Minnesota)
Bend Film Festival (Bend, OR)
Best of the Boston Underground Film Festival (Lowell, MA)
Best of the Cinema Paradise Film Festival (Honolulu, HI)
Best of the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival (Paris, France)
Best of the Dionysus Film Festival (Irvine, CA)
Best of Flicker at the Adelaide Fringe Festival (Australia)
Big Bear Lake Film Festival (Big Bear, California)
Bilbao Festival of Documentary and Short Film (Spain)
Black Point Film Festival (Lake Geneva, Wisconsin)
Boston Underground Film Festival
Brief Encounters Bristol Short Film Festival (UK)
BUT Film Festival (Breda, The Netherlands)
Calgary International Film Festival
Capalbio Cinema Short Film Festival (Rome)
Caroline's Comedy Film Shorts (New York)
Channel Islands Independent Film Festival (Oxnard, CA)
Chicago Reel Shorts Film Festival
Chicago Underground Film Festival
Cine-Space Short Film Festival (Los Angeles)
Cinequest San Jose Film Festival
Cinema Paradise Film Festival (Honolulu, HI)
Cinema Tout-Ecran (Geneva, Switzerland)
Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival (France)
Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Exhibit at the Cannes Film Festival
Coney Island Short Film Festival (New York, NY)
COURTisane Festival of Short Film (Gent, Belgium)
Cucalorus Film Festival (Wilmington, NC)
Dahlongega International Film Festival (Dahlongega, Georgia)
Dam Short Film Festival (Boulder City, NV)

Film Festivals and Screenings (continued):

Dawson City International Short Film Festival (Canada)
DC Independent Film Festival
DC Underground Film Festival (Washington, DC)
DeadCENTER Film Festival (Oklahoma City)
Deep Ellum Film Festival (Dallas, TX)
Denver International Film Festival
Denver Underground Film Festival
Dionysus Film Festival (Los Angeles)
Dubrovnik International Film Festival (Croatia)
East Lansing Film Festival (Michigan)
Edge Works Short Film Festival (Corpus Christi, TX)
Emerald Eye Short Film Festival (Greenville, NC)
Expresion en Corto Short Film Festival (San Miguel, Mexico)
Festival de Cinema des 3 Ameriques (Quebec, Canada)
Filmfest DC
Filmfest New Haven
Flicker Atlanta (Best of the Atlanta Film Festival)
Flicker Austin
Flicker Los Angeles
Florida Film Festival
Frames of Mind Mental Health Film Festival (Vancouver, BC)
Friar's Club Short Film Series (Los Angeles, CA)
Future Shorts (London, UK)
Gen Art Film Festival (New York)
Guerrilla Film Festival (Washington, DC)
Hi-Lo Film Festival (San Francisco, CA)
Hi Mom! Film Festival (Chapel Hill, NC)
Hollywood Shorts
Hull International Short Film Festival (United Kingdom)
The Icehouse (Long Island, NY)
IFP Los Angeles Film Festival
Independent Exposure San Francisco
Indianapolis Underground Film Festival
Indie Memphis Film Series (Memphis, TN)
Indonesia Independent Film Festival
Interfilm Berlin Short Film Festival
International Film Festival of Boston
Izmir-Kisa International Short Film Festival (Turkey)
Kinofilm Short Film Festival (Mahchester, UK)
Lake Arrowhead Film Festival (California)
Light Plays Tricks Film Festival (Calgary)
London Film Festival (UK)
Long on Shorts Film Festival (Dallas, TX)
Lucania Film Festival (Pisticci, Italy)
The Mantua Lives Art and Music Festival (Ballinagare, Ireland)
Maryland Film Festival

Film Festivals and Screenings (continued):

Melbourne International Film Festival
Melbourne Underground Film Festival
Method Fest Film Festival (Los Angeles)
Mid-Coast Film Festival (Moline, Illinois)
Midnight Flix (Vancouver, Canada)
Midwestern Entertainment Conference (Lexington, KY)
Mill Valley Film Festival (California)
Nantucket Film Festival
New Filmmakers Los Angeles
Newport Beach Film Festival
Night of the Living Shorts (Termoli, Italy)
Oldenburg Film Festival (Oldenburg, Germany)
Olympia Film Festival (Washington)
Orinda Film Festival (California)
Out of the Blue Film Festival (Boston)
Palm Springs International Festival of Short Films
Paxico Film Series (Los Angeles)
Portland International Film Festival (Oregon)
Portland International Short Film Festival (Oregon)
Pren's Ca Court! Short Film Festival (Quebec, Canada)
Prime Shorts Chicago
Real to Reel Film Festival (North Carolina)
Red Bank International Film Festival (New Jersey)
Regensburg Short Film Week (Regensburg, Germany)
Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival (Delaware)
Rendezvous With Madness Film Festival (Toronto, Canada)
River's Edge Film Festival (Paducah, KY)
Rooftop Film Series (New York)
Santa Barbara International Film Festival
Seattle International Film Festival
Semarang International Film Festival (Indonesia)
Sex and Death Short Film Festival (Toronto, Canada)
Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival (Birmingham, AL)
Signals International Short Film Festival (Colchester, UK)
Silver Lake Film Festival (Los Angeles, CA)
Slamdance Film Festival (Park City, UT)
South Pole Film Festival (McMurdo Sound, Antarctica)
St. Louis International Film Festival
Stellenbosch Film Society (South Africa)
Thessaloniki Film Festival (Greece)
Topanga Film Festival (Topanga, California)
Tulsa Overground Film Festival)
Transient Short Film Series (San Diego, CA)
Ucer Gallery (Bridgeport, CT)
The Valley Film Festival (Los Angeles)
Waterfront Film Festival (Michigan)

Film Festivals and Screenings (continued):

West Chester Film Festival (Pennsylvania)

York International Film Festival (United Kingdom)

"Tom Hits His Head" has also been released theatrically worldwide with the Independent Exposure Short Film Tour, the Hi-Lo Traveling Film Festival, The Future Shorts European Film Tour, and was featured on-line at www.atomfilms.com

Past broadcasts include HBO Latin America, the PBS/ITVS "Independent Lens" series, and ZedTV in Canada.

Available on home video on the Hypnotic short film compilation "Headcases: People With Problems" through Vanguard Releasing.

"Tom Hits His Head"

Contact Information:

Production and Print Contact:

Tom Putnam c/o Three-Headed Monster

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Technical Information:

Running Time: 10.5 minutes (10:30)

Shooting Format: 16mm color reversal (Kodak)

Available Screening Formats: 35mm film, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVD

Aspect Ratio: 1:1.85 (hard matte / letter-boxed)

Final Sound: Stereo, English (Dolby NR on 35mm print)

Country of Production: United States (Los Angeles, CA)

"Tom Hits His Head"

Synopsis:

"Tom Hits His Head" is a comedic short film about a not-so-funny time in the director's own life. We follow Tom Putnam after he hits his head and spends the next six months afraid to leave his house. He gets dizzy for no apparent reason. He starts having panic attacks. He buys guns and a HAZMAT suit. He sees the devil in his bathtub and a ghost in his living room. He thinks he's the Antichrist. In short, Tom needs help.

This visceral look at one man's struggle to keep his sanity, avoid a Prozac solution, and survive the trials and tribulations of a post 9-11 world should ring true with anyone who has ever uttered those painful words: "What's wrong with me?"

Short Synopsis:

Ever since Tom hit his head he's been getting dizzy spells, indulging in eBay, and having conversations with the devil.

"Tom Hits His Head"

Film Credits

Cast:

The Incredible Morgan Rusler as Thomas Andrew Putnam
Beth Kennedy as Tom's Wife
Bob Fourriel as The Ghost

Crew:

A Seven Guns Production
Written, Produced, and Directed by Tom Putnam
Produced by Michael Harbour & Jeff Malmberg
Director of Photography Alex Vendler
Edited by Greg Guzzetta
Music by The Standard and Jeff Saltzman
Color by Eric Putz
Production Assistants
Nathan Ardoin, Bob Fourriel, Johnathan Keyser
Special Thanks Michael Harbour & Lori Putnam

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"Tom Hits His Head"

Cast Bios

The Incredible Morgan Rusler starred in Tom Putnam's previous feature, the 1970s blaxploitation film parody "Shafted!" where he played a very confused white mental patient who thinks he's John Shaft. Rusler has also had supporting roles in "Galaxy Quest," "Solaris," and "Catch Me If You Can," and "The Tomorrow Man."

Beth Kennedy has appeared in numerous television shows and commercials, including "The Practice," "Party of Five," and "Sabrina the Teenage Witch." Her film credits include "The Tomorrow Man" with Corbin Bernsen, "Jerome" (produced by David Spade), and "Phenomenon."

Crew Bios

Seven Guns Entertainment, LLC (production company) is a Los Angeles-based partnership among filmmakers Michael Harbour, Jeff Malmberg, and Tom Putnam. The three met while students at the University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television. Seven Guns has produced two feature films, including the 2001 theatrical release "Shafted!" which played a number of international film festivals and is currently available on home video through Vanguard Cinema. As writers, the three have had numerous projects optioned, including the pilots for two series: "Alfred Hitchcock's My Favorite Murders" and "The Adventures of Yuen Kwai Kit!"

Tom Putnam (director/producer/writer) was recently named "One of the 25 New Faces of Independent Film" by Filmmaker Magazine. He has directed and co-written two feature films, most recently the "blaxploitation" parody "Shafted!" starring Morgan Rusler, Gary Coleman, and Angelle Brooks ("V.I.P.," "The King of Queens"). He has also won a number of screenwriting awards, including The Jeffrey Jones Award and second place in the Jack Nicholson Screenplay Competition. He recently completed a short film parody of the "Charlie's Angels" TV series for Toshiba North America. To date, the sales presentation has received six National Communicator Awards, two Summit Creative Awards, and an Axiem Award. His is currently in post-production on a 35mm Big Foot short for Fox Searchlab and a feature-length documentary about a little-known Japanese invasion of Alaska during World War Two.

Michael Harbour (producer) has previously produced and co-written two features, the Seven Guns productions "Static" and "Shafted!" He has received a number of screenwriting awards and has optioned screenplays to Skyline

Entertainment and Persistent Pictures. Harbour has also worked as a staff writer on the animated series "Monster Farm" for Saban Entertainment. While a student at USC, he studied creative writing under the tutelage of famed author T.C. Boyle ("The Road to Wellville"). In addition to writing and producing, Harbour has also worked as a digital effects technical director on dozens of feature films, including "The Time Machine," "X-Men," "Solaris," and "Die Another Day."

Jeff Malmberg (producer) co-wrote and produced the feature films "Static" and "Shafted!" He co-produced the experimental feature "The Bloody Child" for director Nina Menkes, which played as a special selection at the Sundance Film Festival and was named one of the top 10 films of the year by The Los Angeles Times. He has co-written a number of screenplays and series pilots with Michael Harbour and Tom Putnam. Malmberg also works as an editor in Los Angeles and has cut shows for Miramax Television, ESPN, CBS, and IFC/Bravo.

Alex Vendler (director of photography) was a 1998 Independent Spirit Award nominee for his first feature film, "The Bible and Gun Club," which played over 80 international film festivals. Vendler has shot over two dozen feature films, including the Slamdance award-winner "Better Housekeeping," director Nick Broomfield's "Kurt and Courtney," "Very Mean Men" for director Tony Vitale, and "Melvin Goes to Dinner," the directorial debut of "Mr. Show" star Bob Odenkirk.

The Standard (music) have become one of the Pacific Northwest's most popular bands. Their first record, the self-titled "The Standard," was one of the top three selling albums for local bands in Oregon and Washington. Their second album, "August," was released on Touch and Go Records in 2002 and was on the Billboard Top 100 for independent artists. They have toured with Clinic, The Shins, Wire, Apples in Stereo, Stephen Malkmus (formerly of Pavement), Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, and many other bands. Their third album will be released in 2004 by YepRock Records.

Jeff Saltzman (music) has produced and engineered nearly a hundred albums, many at Portland, Oregon's legendary Jackpot Recording Studio. In addition to The Standard's albums, he has worked on projects for King Black Acid and Stephen Malkmus of Pavement. Saltzman is also a member of the band Sunset Valley and recorded additional music for "The Mothman Prophecies" for Screen Gems.

Greg Guzzetta (editor) is a freelance producer and editor living in Los Angeles. His feature credits include post-production supervision and additional editing on the

feature film "Shafted!" as well as work on "The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" and numerous other television series.

"Tom Hits His Head"

Production Notes

Yes, Tom hit his head. And yes, he made a movie about it. What the hell did you think this was about?

In July of 2001 director Tom Putnam went to the doctor's office for an exam, got his blood taken, fainted (excuse me, *passed out*), and hit his head on the floor.

He hit it so hard, in fact, that he would spend the next six months calling in sick to work, having dizzy spells, growing increasingly paranoid, briefly thinking he was the Antichrist... And coming up with an idea for a short film called, appropriately enough, "Tom Hits His Head."

Putnam: "People kept asking me how I was doing since I hit my head, and I was frankly getting a little tired of explaining it to them, so I decided to make a movie I could just give them instead. Plus, I'd directed a couple of features since film school, but those took two to three years each to complete, and I wanted to make something much simpler, and much lower-pressure, where I could try a lot of things I didn't necessarily know would work."

Together with producers Michael Harbour and Jeff Malmberg, and director of photography (and Independent Spirit Award nominee) Alex Vendler, Putnam made a list of all the things he wanted to try: shooting the entire film hand-held, using notoriously hard-to-expose Kodak Color Reversal film stock, processing his own film, and even creating in-camera mattes for the movie's climax.

But there was just one problem: he was still having dizzy spells and panic attacks.

So he shot the entire film in his own house, car, and office. "That way I didn't have to go anywhere. Everyone could come to me instead."

The majority of filming for the 11 minute short took place over two weekends in February 2002. With the exception of a single light, all the equipment was borrowed from other filmmakers, enabling Putnam to shoot his entire project on 16mm film for less than \$2,000.

The lead role of Tom was played by The Incredible Morgan Rusler, who has had supporting roles in "Solaris," "Catch Me If You Can," and "Galaxy Quest." He also starred in Putnam's previous feature, the blaxploitation parody "Shafted!" Tom's wife was played by Beth Kennedy, a veteran of numerous TV series and Los Angeles stage productions.

Putnam: "The biggest cost, and the most difficult part of the film, turned out to be the special effects shots." In order to create their in-camera mattes, the filmmakers needed to use high-contrast title stock. But they would have to expose and process dozens of tries before they found one that worked, which was well beyond their budget. So Putnam and Vendler talked a chemist at Kodak into sending them the processing formula for the special high-contrast film. Then they went to a local chemical warehouse, "signed a ton of forms for the ingredients, some of which were really toxic and flammable," and mixed their own processing bath.

Two months and \$500 later, they had their 16mm effects matte. Then they turned an old Russian movie camera into a poor-man's optical printer that could expose three pieces of film at a time. "We had a shot of the devil sitting in front of some lava. So we put in the matte, a shot of the lava, and with the unexposed film we shot our devil. And it worked!"

While editor Greg Guzzetta cut the film, Putnam worked with Jeff Saltzman and The Standard to create the film's moody, off-kilter score. But how was Putnam able to get The Standard -- one of the Pacific Northwest's most popular bands, whose second album "August" is in the Billboard Top 100 -- to score the film? Putnam: "My brother's in the band."

The film was completed in late December 2002, just in time for its world premiere at the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. Since then, it has gone on to play over 180 international film festivals, where it has won the Grand Jury Prize at Aspen Shortsfest and a Special Jury Award at the Capalbio Short Film Festival in Rome.

Tom would also like you to know he's much better now. He's not afraid to leave the house, he's stopped seeing the devil in his bathtub, and he hardly ever gets a headache any more.

So was it all worth it?

"Uh... No."