



Hi everyone! Welcome to the first Spell Newsletter, what I hope will be the first of many as the film begins its journey into the world. For those of you that don't know this, the story we tell in The Spell is based on a true story, the story of Emma Whale, a girl who phoned me about six or seven years ago wondering whether her story would make a good film. I was so moved by what Emma told me that I agreed to write a first draft screenplay, a screenplay which sat on the shelf for four years until, in the summer of 2007, I finally decided it was time to tell Emma's story and began the process of making The Spell.

Since then it has been quite a long road, one not without its ups and downs, lots of them in fact, but the film is now finished, following a marathon eight months in post production and is about to hit an unsuspecting world with, as the tagline for the film puts it, a powerful tale of good and evil.

When the film opens in cinemas on 18th September, following its world premiere, we will get our first taste of public reaction to the film. Well, not quite the first taste as we have conducted three test audience screenings, one for 17 and 18 year old school sixth formers, one for university students and one for a more general audience. To say that the film was universally acclaimed might be to exaggerate a little but we were pleased with the feedback from those screenings with three quarters of those who saw it rating it as Excellent, Very Good or Good and a third rating it as Excellent or Very Good. Four out of ten also found it frightening (the rest refused to admit they were scared in case their girlfriends laughed at them!). That so many found it frightening was particularly pleasing to me as getting a psychological thriller to work in that sense is notoriously difficult. But with three of the UK's major cinema chains now saying they want to show the film in some of their cinemas, it obviously does work.

Preparing for the Big Day

Big day! What big day, I hear you ask. Well you might think that once a film has been edited and is "in the can", so to speak, it's in the can. Not so! In this day and age, lots of films never even see a can, let alone get into one. That's because lots of films are now made using digital technology but don't worry, I'm not going to get all techie on you! All I'm going to say is that most cinemas can't do much with a load of 0s and 1s, they need something to shine a bright light through so that pictures appear on the screen. So, one of the jobs which is now under way is to transfer The Spell from the 0s and 1s which it consists of now to 35mm film. Then the cinemas can shine their bright light through it and the people sitting in the audience can see the film.

Now, you might think this is an easy thing to do, but it isn't and, because it isn't, it costs quite a lot of money. When we realized we were going to have to do this because all these lovely cinemas had said they thought our film was good enough to show to people who have paid good money to see it, we also realised we didn't have the money to get it done. So, we thought..... and thought.... and thought..... and then I remembered talking to Franny Armstrong (who made The Age of Stupid) at a seminar last year about "crowd funding". Geronimo, we had a plan. And you know what the most amazing thing about the plan was? It worked! Seventeen people (all of them nice, lovely, warm, friendly, generous people) gave us money, well invested it in the film to be exact, so that we could get the transfer done.

Can You Help Us?

As the cinema release of The Spell draws near, we are keen to get as much help as we can to publicise the film. It's taken a lot of effort and money (maybe not by Hollywood standards, but even so!) to get to this point and we now want people to see what we have done. So, pleeeeeease, please, please (yes, we are begging, OK) please join us in our attempt to fill every cinema where the film is shown for every performance. That way the cinemas which have given us their support will get the reward they deserve and lots of people will get to see a really good film.

So, how can you help us? We-ell, the best thing you can do at the moment is spread the word, tell people The Spell is coming. Forward this newsletter to them and ask them, no, tell them to send us their e-mail address so that we can keep them up to date with what's happening instead of you having to do it. They'll be able to tell us to stop anytime they want so it's not really asking that much.

In the Next Issue

In the next issue we will bring you more news about what's happening with The Spell including more information about where you will be able to see it on the BIG SCREEN!

Cannes

Cannes was, well, Cannes. It was hot, mostly (nice for Becca and Amber who spent loads of time sunning themselves on the beach), not so nice for me and Neil and Jill trawling the booths in the bunker known as the Marché du Film in the bowels of the Palais de Festivals. Actually, that's not fair, Becca and Amber also did do some bunkering, and very well they did it too!

We screened The Spell twice in the Marché and got reasonable audiences at both screenings – needless to say I was nervous about seeing the film projected from an HDCam tape for the first time, but it looked really good – so well done Stevy baby!

We have received invitations to submit the film to two quite important film festivals as a result of the Cannes screenings (their Artistic Directors were at our first screening) and neither of them charge submission fees so there's no reason for them to write and invite us to submit unless they're thinking seriously about including the film in their programmes – so we've done that, no surprise there!



Cannes from the Old Town