

## CHRIS SMITH – BIOGRAPHY



After four critically acclaimed movies, CREEP, SEVERANCE, TRIANGLE and now BLACK DEATH, the award-winning horror director Chris Smith has elevated his position from a talent to watch to one of the leading lights of the British cinema scene.

Born in Bristol, 1970, Smith always wanted to be part of the UK film industry. After writing and directing two short movies – THE 10000<sup>TH</sup> DAY (1997) and THE DAY GRANDAD WENT BLIND (1998) – and scripting three episodes of ‘Eastenders’. He was also a researcher, then assistant producer, on Barry Norman’s SKY TV show ‘Film Night’. There he began writing his first

feature film script ‘Chameleon’.

I got some development money so I left SKY and moved to Manhattan where my girlfriend lived”, Smith explains about the circumstances behind making his movie debut. “That money soon ran out so I got a job at Kim’s Video Store on St. Marks Place. I was renting three DVDs a day from them anyway and they knew my geek knowledge was pretty cool so I was hired. Inspired by the film library around me, it was there I wrote CREEP”.

Originally titled ‘Runt’, Smith got the idea for CREEP while sitting on a tube train.

“I was thinking about AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON and how much I wanted to make a horror film with as strong an impact. The train stopped in a tunnel for ages and it struck me...someone stuck on the underground, feeling helpless and alone in the dark and menaced by a manic monster. That’ll work!”

Filmed on location in London and starring Franka Potente, Sean Harris and Jeremy Sheffield, the late night train nightmare became a sizeable cult hit and firmly put Smith on every fan-boy’s radar.

His highly anticipated follow-up was SEVERANCE – “DELIVERANCE with a cut at the beginning instead!” – a black comic horror about the tables terrifyingly turning on a group of arms dealers taking part in a team-building exercise weekend in rural Romania. Starring Danny Dyer, Laura Harris, Toby Stephens, Tim McInerney and Andy Nyman, the Hungarian/Isle of Man shot shocker was Smith’s winning experimentation with mischievous horror and gruesome murder.

“I wanted to prove you could be continually playful without endless one-liners but still provide the big scares”, he states. “It was all down to getting the mix of fun grimness and cliché right and those balanced elements made it a sizeable audience success”.

Between directing CREEP and SEVERANCE, Smith had the idea for his next film, TRIANGLE, charting the mysterious events yachting weekenders find themselves in when taking refuge aboard a deserted ocean liner during a storm. TRIANGLE took two years to get right because, as he comments:

“I wanted to make a fantasy movie with a MEMENTO style effect”, remarks Smith. “But less disruptive with a more linear narrative turning around on itself like a

whirlpool. I was a huge fan of the classic Ealing horror movie DEAD OF NIGHT and felt that circular emotion would work well here too”.

Filmed in Australia, with Melissa George giving a haunting central performance, leading critics called TRIANGLE Smith’s best, most polished and mature work to date.

Smith latest film, BLACK DEATH, is scheduled to be released nationwide from May 28, 2010. Set in the medieval England of 1348, an era under the scourge of pestilence, a young monk leads a group of mercenaries to hunt down a necromancer with the alleged power to hold the deadly plague at bay.

“I was sent Dario (WILDERNESS) Poloni’s script while editing TRIANGLE”, recalls Smith. “And it struck a chord with me because it’s a period I have always loved, a moment in history lessons where you’re really sitting up and listening. Plus there’s the whole WITCHFINDER GENERAL vibe to it...”

Starring Sean Bean, Eddie Redmayne, Carice Van Houten, Tim McInerney and Andy Nyman, and filmed on location in Germany, BLACK DEATH was in Smith’s mind deliberately the complete antithesis to TRIANGLE.

“It was straightforward compared to how complicated TRIANGLE was, but the richness comes in the mindset of the characters. To them the plague was either God’s punishment or the work of the devil”.

**ENDS**