

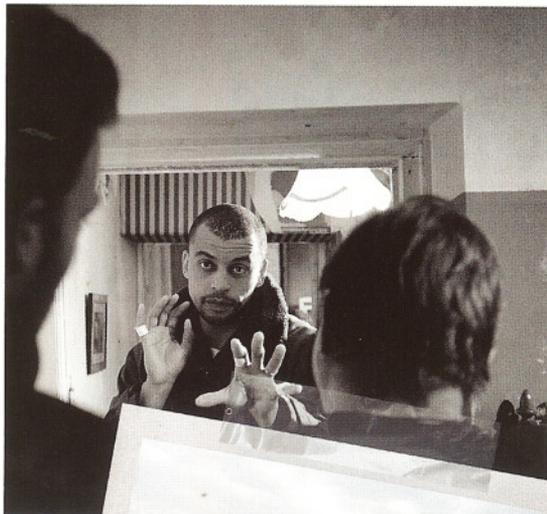
On the road

A rain-lashed motorway. A woman spied in the back of a truck, naked, caged, screaming. British thriller *Hush* has got Hollywood buzzing and revved up director Mark Tonderai's career. He hands over his diary to Total Film...

4 FEBRUARY 2009

It seems strange to be on the cusp of my first release considering I never, ever thought I would get here... Almost a decade ago I was on the radio. I used to be on Radio 1. But when a new regime came in, my face didn't fit and I didn't get my contract renewed. I had always been a writer and thought maybe it was time to pursue that. I wrote a film called *Dog Eat Dog* (it was the first film to feature Ricky Gervais), but it flopped. I sold bits and pieces of work and our company got Film Council slate funding. Then when my brothers started a company that put up advertising in football stadiums I decided to help them out for extra cash. It was a hard, tiring job, but it was intermittent work, which meant I could write. But then one year turned into two, then three, then four... and I still hadn't made a feature film.

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15 SEPTEMBER 2006

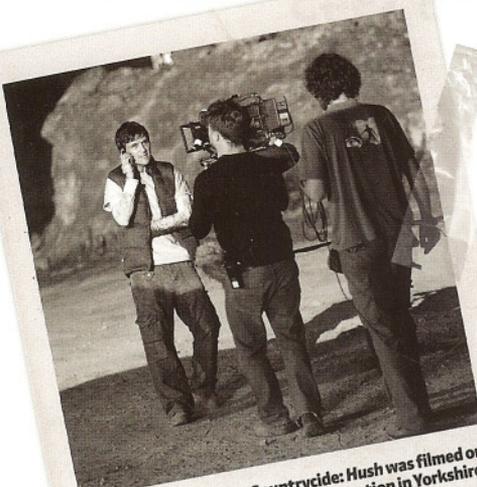
Today's a big day as I've decided to renounce the World Of Film. Yes. I'm tired of catching the 18 bus with a watchful eye for inspectors. I have no lights in my toilet and haven't had for over two years as we can't afford to get the roof fixed. You tried pissing in the dark? You get it all over your shoes. We've already re-mortgaged and money is an issue: we have none. But I have a plan: I'm gonna teach English to Chinese kids in Hong Kong. The World Of Film can go fuck itself.



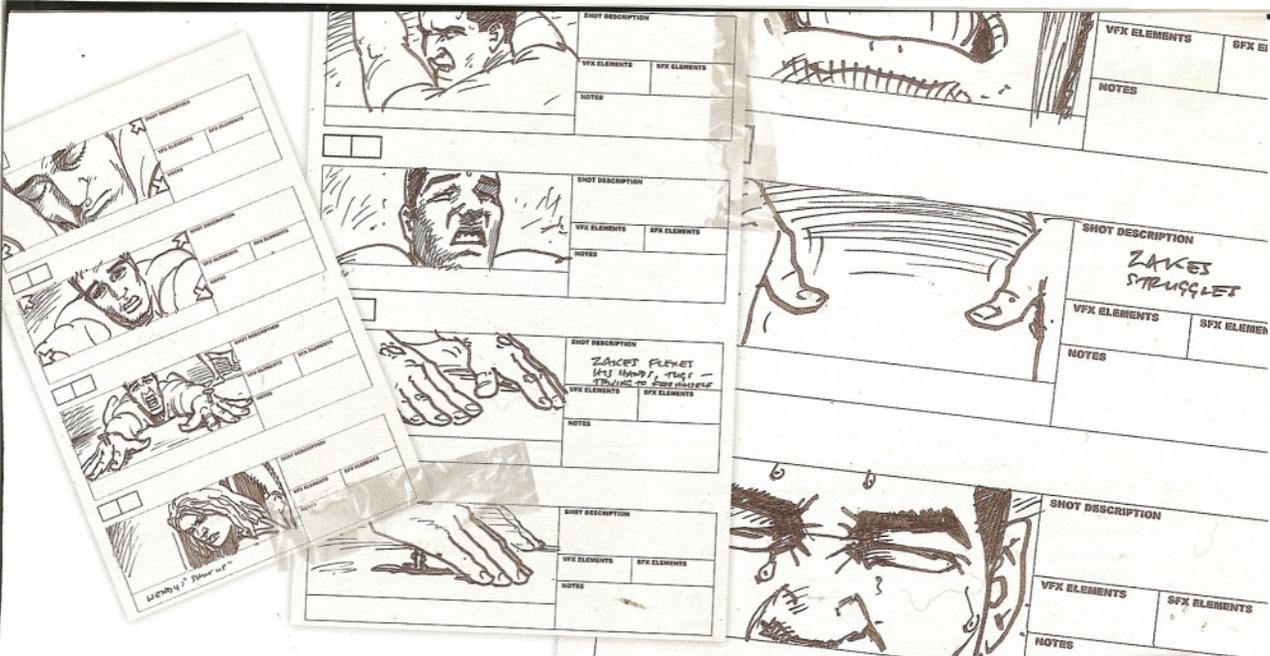
Desperate times: Tonderai had no money and no movie. He did, however, have mice. "They look at us like we're vermin! Brazen fuckers!"

6 OCTOBER 2006

I've not left for China. In fact, I'm in Italy. My wife entered me on a scheme called SCRIBES. It's a scheme run by Arista for black and Asian writers. Positive discrimination - what a load of bollocks. But fuck it, I'll take what I can. Let's not forget I piss on my shoes. To get on the scheme I've had to submit an idea. This time my producer wife and I have worked backwards and tried to create an idea around a price range that I think I'll get financed on. I've kept the plot simple. *A man driving on the M1 sees a naked woman in the back of a truck. Caged. Bleeding. The man doesn't help...* That's all I've got. But I know what it's about. It's about being trapped. Let's be honest... it's about me. I've made the hero a writer who isn't getting anywhere. I've even given him my shitty poster job. And this afternoon I gotta go pitch the full idea. Fuck.



Countrycide: *Hush* was filmed on location in Yorkshire.

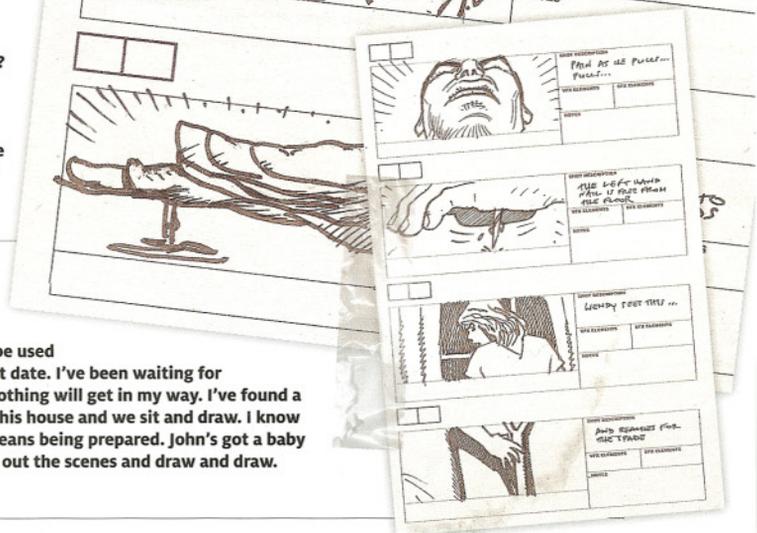


14 FEBRUARY 2007

I've just handed in my first draft! And guess what? I got paid too! The script has been a bastard to write... especially the Third Act. The Third Act is pony! It needs to deliver! It's Valentine's Day and I've been sweating over the computer and my wife I can see wants me to be the Walrus Of Love. But I can't leave the script. Without the Third Act, Warp will pull the plug...

14 MAY 2007

I have my Third Act. We have the green light. There was a stage when we were amber for a long while. Only in the World Of Film can a word like amber be used with any seriousness. We have a budget. We have a start date. I've been waiting for nearly 10 years. I have to deliver. It's that simple. And nothing will get in my way. I've found a storyboard artist called John Erasmus. Every day I go to his house and we sit and draw. I know the key to this film will be getting coverage. But that means being prepared. John's got a baby and sometimes he has to draw with it on his lap. We act out the scenes and draw and draw.



Driving me crazy: (left) Christine Bottomley as Beth; (above) William Ash as Zakes. "I never yelled cut. We were always in the moment," says Tonderal of his leads...

31 AUGUST 2007

So the worst thing I ever did was set the film on a motorway. You're not allowed to shoot on a motorway. I also think a lot of the car stuff looks like it was shot on a low loader [like a trailer you place the car on]. When you shoot on a low loader you can't talk to the actors or get interesting angles. But then a plan hit us. Back projection, like the old Hollywood movies! But doesn't that look shit? Well, I'll have rain bleeding down the car - that way it should blur any shit-looking bits and give the movie more atmosphere!

I use a technique Spielberg did when he made *Duel* - we draw huge 3-D drawings of the route. We then do the route by car. Then we do it with a tracking vehicle and film all the angles. Profile. Side. Back. We shoot for three nights, drinking lots of Red Bull to keep awake. I then dash to London where myself and colourist Gareth Spensley start cutting and grading the footage. He's a legend that boy. I then get picked up and zoom down to Gloucester. We've found a quarter mile stretch of highway that we can use. The fire services practice on it. Only problem is it's six lanes wide. Shit. We'll have to use CG to bring the lanes in.

▶ **8 SEPTEMBER 2007**

Chrissy [Bottomley] and Will [Ash] are in my mind two of the finest actors we have in this country. They always hit their marks, always connect with the truth and this film's success owes a great deal to them. Will, in particular, matched me stride for stride and never complained when I put him through the mud and rain.

▶ **7 DECEMBER 2007**

Lantau Island. Hong Kong. So most of my family have flown to the Far East for my older brother's birthday party. I take out the AFM trailer that Pathé made, slot it into the DVD player. I am very nervous. This is it. I press play. They watch it. It finishes. They clap, but better still ask if I can play it again. Well that's enough for me.

When I started in this industry things happened easily for me. I thought it was my right to tell stories. I now realise it's a privilege. The bleak years taught me that. Without that struggle, there would have been no *Hush*. I needed to learn to appreciate what I do for a living and needed to respect it.



Waiting game: Hush sees Ash's Zakes playing a dangerous game of cat and mouse with a crazed trucker.

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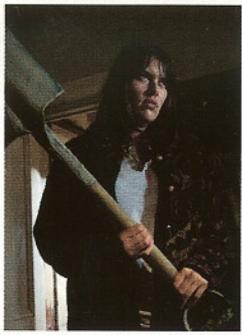
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▶ **12 FEBRUARY
2009**

So where am I now? I'm writing my second film for Pathé, *The 12th Prophet*. I have another script optioned with Lionsgate (with the brilliant Noel Clark) called *10 Hours From Light*. And I got some Polish builders in which means I no longer piss on my shoes. I owe thanks to the following people: Noel Clark. Zoe Stewart. Jim Hodges. Mike Hodges. Dave Hodges. Duncan Macdowall, Barry Ryan. *Hush* opens on 13 March and is reviewed on page 56.



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