



Brian De Palma: Interviews (Conversations with Filmmakers Series)

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Brian De Palma (b. 1940) isn't your average Hollywood director.

For years he reigned as the "master of the macabre," the man who massacred the class of '76 in *Carrie* and stalked Angie Dickinson in *Dressed to Kill*. By the mid-1980s De Palma found himself assaulting his audience and critics, daring them to watch a chainsaw enter a man's skull in *Scarface* and a power drill disembowel a defenseless woman in *Body Double*.

What drove De Palma to such extremes? In the late 1960s, he wanted to be the next Jean-Luc Godard and revolutionize American cinema. Instead, he found himself ostracized when Warner Bros. removed him from *Get to Know Your Rabbit*, his first Hollywood feature. De Palma sought the refuge of Alfred Hitchcock until the late 1970s (*Sisters*, *Obsession*), when his surreal approach to horror became a genre unto itself (*Carrie*, *The Fury*, *Dressed to Kill*). Ironically, just as De Palma achieved the success that his fellow Movie Brats George Lucas, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Spielberg had enjoyed since the mid-1970s, he could not hide his resentment toward Hollywood. After battling with the MPAA in the 1980s, he gradually became part of the mainstream with the success of *The Untouchables* and *Mission: Impossible*, although he never suppressed his desire to make audiences aware of his camera-eye and his dark, penetrating worldview.

Brian De Palma: Interviews follows De Palma's fortunes as he makes the difficult transition from underground filmmaker to celebrity auteur. In profiles and q&a interviews, he emerges as a fascinating figure of excess and ambivalence. De Palma is not afraid to share his opinions about censorship, violence, feminism, American culture, and the fate of cinema in the twenty-first century.

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Editorial Review

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Although he will probably forever be most closely associated with the horror movies *Carrie* and *The Fury*, which put him on Hollywood's map, DePalma started out as a Godard-wanna-be in *Greetings* and *Hi Mom*, low-budget, politically conscious films starring a young Robert DeNiro, and has since directed everything from by-the-numbers blockbusters (*Mission: Impossible*) to bloated gangster flicks (*Scarface*, *The Untouchables*). Despite his eclecticism, he remains tainted by his reputation for violent misogyny (he cast his then-wife, Nancy Allen, as a prostitute in three consecutive films), the blatant Hitchcock rip-offs that characterized his early work, and the notorious megaflop *Bonfire of the Vanities*, which derailed his career in the early '90s. These 19 interviews, drawn from major publications such as the *New York Times* and *Esquire*, specialty film publications, and even Web sites, don't shy away from the controversies surrounding DePalma's work. By turns evasive and confessional, the director voices his bitterness about Hollywood despite the fact that he has played the system cannily, making commercial blockbusters to get the green light for smaller, self-written efforts. *Gordon Flagg*

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From the Inside Flap

Profiles and q & a interviews which follow De Palma's fortunes as he makes the transition from underground filmmaker to celebrity auteur

About the Author

Laurence F. Knapp, an instructor of film studies at Northwestern University, is the author of *Directed by Clint Eastwood*.

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