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FILM BULLETIN

FILMMAKERS BRING "THE WARRIORS"
TO UNIQUE DRAMATIC SCREEN LIFE

Larry Gordon, since becoming an independent producer, put together two of last year's most successful and popular films: "The End" and "Hooper," both starring Burt Reynolds. "The Warriors" is his sixth film since stepping down as Vice President of Worldwide Production for AIP.

In a recent interview with Film Bulletin, Gordon explained how the film came about. "'The Warriors' was a tough haul for us, all the way through. I had read Sol Yurick's novel, the basis for our film, several years ago, but I never thought any studio would be interested in doing it, since it involved no major star roles. Then Paramount came onto the scene. We agreed on a development deal, and David Shaber went to work on the screenplay. A lot of the credit for making the film possible must go to Barry Diller (Paramount's Chairman) and Michael Eisner (President) for taking a chance with us on it."

Gordon elaborated further on the film. "We are taking an R-rating on this film not because of the violence so much as the language, which to remain true to the story and characters is necessarily rough and authentic. It's street talk, plain and simple. The way Walter Hill has directed the film, it has a kind of pop-gun violence. There are many action situations and fights, but we don't show and don't need to show a lot of

blood. This movie is basically an adventure film. I like to describe it was the difference between war movies and a picture like 'The Guns of Navarone,' which was an adventure film set against a background of the war."

"The Warriors" marks Hill's third straight writing/directing stint for Gordon, beginning with his maiden effort, the sleeper hit "Hard Times," with Charles Bronson, and continuing with last year's "The Driver." Before that, Hill was a successful screenwriter. Among his writing credits are "Hickey and Boggs," "The Getaway," and "The Thief Who Came to Dinner." Hill also spoke with Film Bulletin about "The Warriors."

"Larry really only gave me Shaber's script as a possibility to direct. The screenplay was solid, but I began to get interested in other ideas in the story, particularly in its allegorical aspects. I eventually wound up re-writing a lot of it. The novel is a bit more realistic than the film in its portrait of the gang subculture. We essentially converted that realism and used the gang mainly as a convention to tell a different kind of story. You'll find that the film sets up and works within its own fantasy world."

Hill continued, "It was a horrendously tough movie to shoot. We did it almost completely on location, in the streets and subway stations of Manhattan and Brooklyn. And those are nearly impossible situations to control. We also had weather problems--rain when we didn't want it and none when we did. And, of course, we shot only at night, which is very hard on the cast and crew."

Night-time filming seems to hold a fascination for Hill.

"Well, I am very strongly attracted to it. You know, things look altogether different and take on different connotations at night. It's all in the light, or the lack of it, and the artificial lighting you can use. It's quite a tough challenge to control, and our cinematographer, Andrew Laszlo, came through brilliantly. The night opens up all sorts of dramatic possibilities that you simply don't have during the day."

A native of Long Beach, California, Hill claims that he enjoyed every minute of filming, and living, in New York. "The Warriors" was his first experience with both. "The best word I can use to describe the film is bizarre. It operates on a baroque sensibility that I think you'll find is unique."

Executive producer Frank Marshall came to "The Warriors" with a varied background. He has worked on most of Peter Bogdanovich's films and on other movies as different as "The Last Waltz" and Orson Welles' legendary but still uncompleted "The Other Side of the Wind." In coordination with Gordon, Marshall wound up handling many of the line chores on "The Warriors."

Marshall also found time to talk with Film Bulletin about the filming. "Paramount wanted to shoot the film in New York, which ultimately was a wise decision although it posed severe problems. The Transit Authority had a few reservations about the screenplay, however they eventually gave us invaluable cooperation, allowing us to use real subway stations, including the one at 96th Street and the huge Union Square complex. They also allowed us to film during entire nights, uninterrupted, on moving trains, which hadn't been done before. We used real locations, although we did build one set at the Astoria Studios

on Long Island, the men's room where a large-scale battle takes place. We built it reluctantly simply because we couldn't find a real men's room large enough to shoot in comfortably."

"Our first problem," Marshall claims, "was the casting, the problem being that as soon as we put out the call, we were wall-to-wall with highly capable young actors. There's a tremendous talent pool in New York. We chose a solid cast that responded under Walter's guidance with good ensemble playing. In fact, by the film's end, the actors playing the Warriors had really become a gang of sorts."

Marshall paused a moment, then continued. "We started on June 26th. We tried not to publicize the shooting too much, attempting to keep a low profile, for reason of street control. But we did unavoidably run into some real gang problems. Larry, Walter and I agreed at the outset not to use real gang members as extras. But when the word got around about us, they came around. And we had a couple of tight spots with them. We learned very quickly that you don't fool around too much with those guys."

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