

Q&A: Director Ryan Haysom and DP talk neo-giallo short "YELLOW"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Friday, 11 January 2013 08:25



Undeniably stylish—hypnotic even— Ryan Haysom's neo-*giallo* short YELLOW is currently garnering strong praise across the globe as it slides through festivals, finding a sweet spot between reverence to its cinematic idols and modern construction. The director and cinematographer Jon Britt spoke with Fango about the film and their own spin on the hunt for a black-gloved killer.

{vimeo}47713897{/vimeo}

FANGORIA: In making something like YELLOW, was there a story you decided to work out in a *giallo*-esque manner, or was your first thought to make something with that aesthetic?

RYAN HAYSOM: I'm a massive horror fan and I grew up watching a lot of Italian horro; Lucio Fulci and Dario Argento are big heroes of mine. When I was fifteen I saw SUSPIRIA on TV, and it really captured my imagination as a young filmmaker, and since then I'd always dreamt about making a *giallo*-styled film. It wasn't until I started collaborating with my cinematographer Jon Britt (right with Haysom and producer Catherine Morawitz below), after I'd moved to Berlin from London, that I felt it was a possibility.



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We both have a very strong Euro art house sensibility, so we complement each other very well. When we started talking about making a film together, a *giallo* just made sense and the ideas we were discussing were very exciting. I always liked the idea of normal characters thrown into extraordinary circumstances and that is a usual plot point in Italian horror, so when we cast Stephen M Gilbert, things really started to take shape. The main focus was to make a *giallo* in our own style, and to not try and make something that's pretending it's from a bygone era.

JON BRITT: The initial idea came from the love we had for the aesthetics of *giallo* films, but it was a combination of both. We wanted to make a film that was very visually striking and atmosphere-based, and for this to be the primary way we told the story; to have a sparse plot and dialogue but include a lot of the classic *giallo* markers.

FANG: Obviously, many genre fans speak the language of Italian horror, but how do you find the line between nods and homage, and it getting in the way of the story you're telling?

HAYSOM: We financed our budget through a crowd funding website, so there was some pressure to deliver classic scenes for the the Italian horror fans who supported us. We tried to come up with some stylish death scenes that would please them, but overall we made a point of not watching a lot of the old films. We were really focused on trying to create a fresh take. A lot of our influences for the film also came from outside of the genre. David Lynch, Francis Bacon, and Michael Mann were strong inspirations, but the backbone of the film were the things I love about the genre—the cut throat razors, black leather gloves, and stylized violence. I also really love the Italian actresses who appeared in the films. They were these beautiful, iconic women who oozed sex appeal. We were very lucky to cast Hester Arden, an incredibly talented actress from the U.K. She really embodied what I think a classic Italian horror actress is.



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BRITT: Personally, because I was not as much of a *giallo* geek, I was coming to it from an outsider's view. I'd only really seen a few key *gialli*

prior to shooting, so a lot of the visual elements were influenced by our own ideas and other films like *LOVE IS THE DEVIL*, *MANHUNTER* and *FEAR X*. We were still really aware that it was a fine balance, knowing if and when enough was enough, especially with it being a crowd-funded project. We knew there was a real desire to see the classic stuff in there.

FANG: *YELLOW* is bold with its use of color. Can you break down your choices a little, and the mood each represents?

HAYSOM: One of first things people think when it comes to *giallo* is very stylised lighting—and this is something that we really wanted to utilize—but as stylized as it can be, we wanted *YELLOW* to feel like there was a touch of reality in there. We didn't want to go over the top like *INFERNO*, with artificial lighting everywhere. It was a fine balancing act of creating an atmosphere that felt slightly unreal, but also kept one foot firmly in reality so we feel a connection to the main character and the lonely world he inhabits.

BRITT: This was one of the visual elements we wanted to emphasize. It wasn't so much that the colors represented something with a specific meaning but about trying to create a mood that just felt right. It should set the main character's view of the world and the viewer's way into it. It seemed right to really try and keep the darkness and neon feeling of a city; the thing you find in a lot of slick Michael Mann films. Again, it was trying to judge when we had the right balance, and when combinations of colors worked together. But because we both love surreal films, and especially *AMER* as an example of a modern sensation-based *giallo* film, this was another approach we really wanted to try and use too. This language feels immediate but at the same time has mystery in its images.



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FANG: Is YELLOW standalone? If so, what's next?

HAYSOM: Jon and myself are currently working on our first feature film, which is a mix of European art house cinema and classic Hitchcockian Hollywood. We are moving away from another *giallo* for now, but it will incorporate the mood and style of YELLOW in a character study. Antoni Maiovvi, who created the fantastic original soundtrack for YELLOW has already started creating music for us and it's very exciting to see it all coming together. For the moment, YELLOW is a standalone piece, but one day I would love to revisit what we created with a bigger budget and bring a *giallo* feature to the big screen.

BRITT: As Ryan said, I think it's a one-off, at least as such a direct *giallo*-inspired film. With YELLOW we started working on mood and image ideas that we want to continue developing, taking you deep into a mystery involving another curious character.

YELLOW continues its festival run throughout 2013, with the UK, Germany and Brazil up next at the following dates. For more on the film, visit its [official site](#) .

January 19 [Horror-on-Sea Festival](#) – East Sussex, UK

March 13-18 [Landshuter Kurz Film Festival](#) – Landshut, Ger

May 4-20 [Fantaspoa International Fantastic Film Fest](#) – Porto Alegre, Brazil