

Julian Gilbey exclusive interview: British director talks 'Reckoning Day'



7 years after completion, Gilbey's directorial debut 'Reckoning Day' finds its way on to DVD...

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Channel: [Joel Gregory](#)

British director Julian Gilbey, best known for his 2007 film *Rise of the Footsoldier*, finally sees his directorial debut, *Reckoning Day*, released on DVD next week. An ultra-violent action movie made on a shoestring budget, *Reckoning Day* was completed in 2002 – so it's been a long time coming.

As a film it is certainly flawed: bearing the hallmarks of a director who, by his own admission, was looking to experiment and find his way, and featuring a cast of willing but limited novice actors. The script is often suspect and the progression of events sometimes nonsensical but, as Julian explains, mitigating factors there most certainly were. Amicable, well-spoken, and forthcoming, he discusses *Reckoning Day* itself, the difficulties facing low-budget movie production, and what the future holds...

First things first - why the 7 year wait for Reckoning Day on DVD?

We've had a nightmare with distribution basically! Unfortunately I got terribly ripped off by my sales agent at the time, but it did get distributed all over the rest of the world and played at a load of festivals. A lot of UK distributors sniffed at it because it's obviously not big enough to release theatrically, and although I probably could've got it out years ago I was just too busy with my other projects at the time. But I'm really happy it's finally coming out here, and when I took it to Revolver (the distributors) they wanted it straight away and asked why it hadn't been out years ago!

What was the motivation and inspiration behind the film?

Coming straight out of university at 23 I just wanted to experiment as much as possible with the medium of film, so I needed quite an outrageous storyline in order to do that. Having just spent three years studying black-and-white Russian cinema in the 1930s I wanted an outrageous 'slam-bang' action movie– I just wanted to come out and have a bit of fun.

As a first time director how difficult was the project to finance and bring together?

Well it's ultra low budget – I worked for a year in a restaurant and put aside about £10,000, and then just made it in bits and pieces over a number of years. A post-production house eventually saw the rushes and helped finance it, but the final budget is under £100,000. It was shot on clockwork 16mm, and although that all sounds rather charming the practicality is a

nightmare. Our camera could only shoot 30 seconds at a time but realistically it was 20, because after that it was 50/50 whether or not it was going to chew up the film!

Is there an intentionally tongue-in-cheek aspect to the film? It's been compared it to things like Evil Dead and Bad Taste...

I think that's a slightly blasé comparison, largely made because they're low budget films and shot using 16mm clockwork. Although Reckoning Day does have a lot of laugh out loud moments I wouldn't call it a tongue-in-cheek film as there are some pretty savage bits in it. Having said that, when I watched it again to do the commentary there is a lot of humour there, although it's not that same type of B-movie humour of heads falling apart and that kind of thing. I think partly the comparison comes from the fact that we had very 'Wild Bunch' style squibs and bullet effects: in this film when people are shot the blood really is everywhere!

Looking back on your directorial debut, are you pleased with the finished product?

I think it's a mixed bag. I think it has some real standout, 10/10 moments: I think the chainsaw fight in the film came out very well, and the opening sequence also. I think the film's got some really great sequences, but of course there are some scenes where the budget lets it down. But with the equipment we had it was like trying to win a Formula 1 race with a 2CV.

There's a violent thread that runs through your work – is the conveyance of violence something that's important to you as a director?

To be honest I was surprised that Reckoning Day was given an 18 certificate. I do realise that it's quite savage but I always thought it was less about violence and more about action, it's more of a shoot 'em up than anything I think. Reckoning Day's an action movie in the sort of 80s and early 90s mould – if you look at things like Predator, Commando, Alien, they're all 18s and are so much more violent than what's coming out nowadays. I have to compliment a lot of directors today for being much more creative in making action sequences that aren't as violent but are just as exciting. I think in the end it depends on the film – some films the violence suits and some you have to be a bit more subtle. In my next film I've taken a step back from the savagery of my early work, and I think it's a bit more of a mainstream film.

And what of your next project?

It's a kidnap thriller set in the Scottish highlands about a group of mountaineers who discover an 8 year old girl who's been buried alive and left to die. Being good people they try to get the kid off the mountain as soon as possible, but all hell breaks loose in the process as they've discovered this horrific kidnap plot. What I really like about it is that it has some really heroic qualities to it. Frankie Potente (Run Lola Run, The Bourne Identity) is set to play the lead – it's a really heroic role for her – and I think it's got some characters that one can more easily relate to than some of my other films.

Reckoning Day is out on DVD September 14th.