



HAROLD'S GOING STIFF

Press Pack

2011

CONTACT

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Logline

A nurse befriends a man who is slowly becoming zombieified.

Synopsis

Harold Gimble has become the first man to suffer from a new neurological disease called Onset Rigors Disease (ORD). The first symptoms are stiffness in the arms and legs, followed by confusion and an eventual zombie-like state.

Harold's lonesome existence is shaken up when a vivacious thirty-something nurse, Penny Rudge, is assigned to help alleviate his stiffness by using special massage techniques. Her success at loosening him up brings a new sense of hope into his life and they become close friends.

Due to Harold's slow deterioration, a neuroscientist, Dr. Shuttleworth, believes that Harold might hold the clue to a cure and invites him and Penny along to his practice to test a new drug. The results are fantastic and Harold is able to enjoy a day free from stiffness. But the following morning Harold has taken a serious turn for the worse.

After Penny overhears the doctor's dire prognosis for Harold, she decides to sneak him away the next morning. On the run and with Harold rapidly deteriorating, they must try to avoid a group of violent vigilantes who are out for Harold's blood.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Our production base was a beautifully renovated Edwardian house called The Parsonage just on the outskirts of Penistone, Sheffield, teetering on the edge of the beautiful Peak District National Park. With several bedrooms, a large dining room, kitchen, two lounges, one of which we converted into a production office (well, we just put a computer in it) not only was The Parsonage a place for us to eat, meet and sleep, it was also to provide us with locations for some of the film's key scenes. This decision to put the main cast and crew in one big house turned out to be a massive advantage in terms of speed of production. In the evenings we could plan the next day together, we could get up early and start shooting, and when we set off to locations we all went together as a convoy, eliminating the usual problems of people getting lost or just not turning up on time.

We had a small crew of about eight that was broken down into director, producer, sound recordist, two make-up artists, production assistant, runner/stills and catering. This level of people worked out really well for us in the end, all of the main bases were covered in terms of getting the key stuff on the screen (great sound and make-up) and keeping people happy behind the scenes (great food and transportation). We never seemed to be struggling with people-power on set; in fact if we'd had more people it may have just slowed us down.

The script was written to encourage a more improvisational approach and more naturalistic style during the shoot, but actually it turned out to be almost impossible to write scenes without dialogue, mainly because without it you have no real measure of character or the interactions between them.

The entire cast turned out to be brilliant, especially the two leads, Stan Rowe and Sarah Spencer, who both went through an emotional rollercoaster during the shoot. Sarah certainly threw herself into the dramatic climax with gusto, and you know that stuff is working when some of the crew begin to get emotional during takes. Lee, Andy and Richard as the vigilante zombie-killers turned out to be a fantastic combination, and it's almost annoying that Lee had some of the best lines in the film, none of which were written by the director; "*Times up crusty cock*" became a favourite amongst the cast and crew.

A number of people have been asking how we shot so fast, and really it boils down to a number of factors. Firstly we shot everything hand-held, documentary style and with as much available light as possible. Secondly it was really down to having a small and excellent crew who were always one step ahead.

Producer Richard Guy - "Working on Harold has been a fantastic experience for all involved and I feel that we have a completely unique film in the zombie genre"

Director Keith Wright - "What I was keen to do was explore the period between when a person is infected and slowly becomes zombieified. Our two main characters have a special bond and that is slowly dragged apart by a cruel disease"

Harold's Going Stiff is one of the first feature length films in the UK to be shot in High Definition on the Digital SLR camera the Canon 7D.

PRINCIPAL CAST

STAN ROWE as Harold Gimble

Harold's Going Stiff is Stan's first lead role in a feature film. His experience ranges from theatre to film and TV, including the long running and highly successful UK TV series *Heartbeat*. Stan also joined Michael Jackson on stage at the 1995 Brit Awards performance of the *Earth Song*.

He considers his performance in Harold's Going Stiff as one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of his career.

SARAH SPENCER as Penny Rudge

Harold's Going Stiff is Sarah Spencer's first feature film as a lead actress. Sarah was an RAF child brought up in the Scottish Highlands, and it was here at a very young age, that Sarah began to realise that she could chase her dream of becoming an actress.

Sarah has played a variety of roles in theatre, commercials, television and film and has worked alongside some outstanding performers such as Bruce Jones (*The Full Monty*, *Raining Stones*)

PHIL GASCOYNE as Dr. Norbert Shuttleworth

Phil got the theatre bug aged just 14, and since then has acted in or directed hundreds of theatre productions. Major roles include Mozart in *Amadeus*, McMurphy in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and theatre directing credits include *Brassed Off!* and *Dads Army*.

Phil was brought onboard at the very last minute to play the sophisticated Dr. Shuttleworth. This is Phil's second film with director Keith Wright after he appeared in *Take me to Your Leader*.

ANDY PANDINI as Jon Grayson

Andy was a stand-up comedian for many years before turning professional as an actor in 2005. He has since appeared in numerous films, including *Whatever Happened to Pete Blaggit?* *Simon and Emily* and the multi-award winning short film *Fish Can't Fly*. His television appearances include the hit UK series *Holby City* (BBC) and *Richard and Judy*. His stage appearances include *He Said, She Said* (Landor), *Dentity Crisis* (King's Head), "Turn the Blue Light Down" (Edinburgh)

CREW

KEITH WRIGHT writer/director

Born and raised in Sheffield, England, Keith Wright was inspired to make films after sneaking into late night video screenings organised by his parents. After leaving school he worked part time in a local video rental shop and studied Photography at Sheffield University. During this time he also wrote and published a magazine devoted to low-budget filmmakers.

His particular interest in the editing process led to gaining a three-year placement at the National Film and Television School, England, where he graduated with a Diploma in film editing. Keith returned to writing and directing with the multi-award winning short films *Where's Bingo Betty?* and *Long in the Tooth*, which supported *Billy Elliot* and *Mars Attacks* in cinemas. *Harold's Going Stiff* will be his second feature after he completed the improvised comedy *Take me to Your Leader* in 2008.

RICHARD GUY producer

As a young boy Richard's dad often took him to work at the television studios of LWT on the Southbank in London and over the years he gravitated towards film and television production. For the most part Richard has produced corporate films, with some 200 credits to his name, for big brands such as Rolls Royce, Microsoft, and Goodyear. He has an innate knack of being able to create small teams of people that work well together. Which was a real advantage on Harold's Going Stiff as everyone had to work and live together for the duration of the shoot.

Shot in only 7 days with just a matter of weeks for pre-production, Richard considers *Harold's Going Stiff* to be his biggest ever achievement to date. As such, he is incredibly proud to have Harold's Going Stiff as his first credit as producer on a feature film, and is passionate about its potential future commercial success.

GRANT BRIDGEMAN sound recordist

Grant Bridgeman is a sound recordist and sound designer who has been recording sound for over 25 years, and turned professional in 2001. On set, he has worked on a wide range of projects, including *Control*, *The Duchess*, *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, and *Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll* and on a number of commercials with Shane Meadows (including ASDA, DEFRA and Pizza Hut).

His location work covers a range of styles from the set piece complexities of a drama, to the run and gun style of documentaries. Which, considering the documentary style of *Harold's Going Stiff*, was a good thing really as the improvised nature of the script, combined with the speed and portability of Keith's 7D camera meant that the sound recording was something akin to capturing a freeform jazz odyssey.

TOM KANE music composer

Tom's musical career has been long and wide-ranging - he has written serious music for the concert-hall, composed for the theatre, film and television (*World in Action*, *Panorama*), written musicals for children and spent time on the road playing keyboards with TV stars Ant and Dec.

His most recent work was on the feature film *Surviving Evil* (Billy Zane, *Titanic*). Having loved Keith's previous film *Take me to your Leader* Tom jumped at the chance to work on *Harold's Going Stiff*.

REVIEWS – MAY 2011

“Funny and moving, this movie sets new standards for independent British film.

Intelligent, witty, and above all, sensitively handled... ..Harold’s Going Stiff is one of the most original zombie crossover movies to come out of the British film industry in a very long time”.

TVbomb.co.uk - Amy Taylor

“Harold’s Going Stiff is the most original zombie film I’ve personally seen, and I’ve seen quite a few. It also highlights the very real horror of growing old.

A highly, highly recommended film, with some great performances, laugh- out-loud scenes, as well as some astutely observed poignancy, it should be sought out by anyone. 9/10, brilliant film”.

IMDB review

“...Harold’s Going Stiff is both a wonderful film and a brilliantly different spin on the zombie sub-genre... ..captivating, unique and entertaining, a major thumbs up to Keith Wright for providing horror fans with this real gem”.

FlickFeast.co.uk - Kevin Matthews

“...an accomplished, endearing and unique take on the zombie format”.

DigYorkshire.com - Dan Wakefield

“Innovative, funny, and ingenious... ..beautifully shot and nicely paced, but the real achievement is the performances”.

National Media Museum - EmmaJ

“It’s a bold and uncompromising move by a talented and skilled director... ..beautifully acted, wonderfully directed... ..naturalistic performances. Keith Wright has a touch for characterisation that many other writer-directors would kill for”.

Leading UK Film Journalist - MJ Simpson

“I just loved this film: thought-provoking, hilariously funny, strangely credible and sweetly moving”

Elaine Macintyre
elainemacintyre.net

TECHINICAL INFORMATION

Full title: Harold's Going Stiff
Production Company: FrissonFilm Ltd. (UK)
Year of production: 2011
Country of origin/language: United Kingdom/English
Shooting and delivery format: HD
Aspect ratio: 16:9
Running time: 77mins

Extra content

Making of documentary
Director/producer commentary
Casting footage
Pre production test footage
Video diaries
Cannes diaries

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