

Gaspar Noé (Writer/Director/Producer/Director of Photography/Editor) of  
***Irreversible & Irreversible: Straight Cut***

Kyle: Today with me is Gaspar Noe, the writer, director, editor of Irreversible, which I just saw for the first time last week. I know I'm a little behind, but I'm very excited that I had the opportunity to watch it. It is one of the most twisted films that I've seen in my entire life and I enjoyed every minute of it. So Gaspar thank you for sitting down with me, I can't wait to chat about the film. Then, so my first question for you is, I mean, like I said, Irreversible is one of the most messed up things I've ever seen. And, so, where does this idea come from and what makes you go yeah this is a great idea, let me do this?

Gaspar: We're talking about the new version. The straight...

Kyle: Yeah, the straight cut.

Gaspar: Have you seen the old version of the movie that I have made years ago?

Kyle: I actually have not, this is a movie that's all around new to me.

Gaspar: So, this new cut, it's very clear cut editing and chronology code order. It's a clockwise movie, like most movies that we see. And it's like a solution to the previous edit that I released 20 years ago that was all told backwards. And many people came out of the movie and said "Oh, the movie's incredible, it's very raw!," etc. But it's like a maze and I know we keep the puzzle an hour ahead for a long time until we understand what the story really was about. So, 20 years later, my producers of the original Irreversible said, "Oh, do not take care of the remastering, this movie, so we have DCP or we consider it on Blue Ray, etc. So of course I'll take care of that. And I decided to do an alternative version of the movie in a straight order. And the result worked so well that I wanted this new version also to be released theatrically, go to film festivals, which happened, and now it's being, in its new version, it's being released in the United States, but it's not a director's cut, it's the director's recut. I liked always (inaudible) and I don't know any other movie that exists in a double version like one that goes backwards and the other one that goes straight forward and the storyline of the movie is very simple. It's a loving couple wakes up and it's afternoon, after having sex, and they have to go to a party with the ex boyfriend of the girl. So they go to this party and there is trouble in the party that the girl decides to leave earlier. And then the drama starts. She's alone and she gets a, there's an aggressor in the street, and then the whole movie is for people who go rape and revenge movie. But in this order, the movie seems much more simple, but also much more cruel because you

really understand what was going on in the previous version. It was a kind of maze in which things were also very (incomprehensible), but also very puzzling.

Kyle: Yeah and then, so you mentioned that the original version goes in reverse order and now you've remastered it to go in chronological order, but, so, with the credits, you jumped right in. The credits play an integral role in how people receive the film and it prepares them for how, what they're going to see going forward. The cinematography is topsy turvy, the camera is constantly moving. And again, those credits play an important role in how viewers will receive the film. Why was it so important to you to jump right in with the credits and start right there rather than ease someone into this like really harrowing story.

Gaspar: I wanted the end of the movie to be as dramatic as possible, so it was better to have like a short ending.

Kyle: uh huh.

Gaspar: Yeah, the other version was not a trip from Hell to Paradise, but for sure, this new version, it goes from Paradise to Hell, because it's a, yeah, everything goes wronger and wronger every minute in the movie and it's a... I'm like happy you enjoyed it because some movies are a good trip, some are a bad trip, this one is for sure a bad trip.

Kyle: Yeah, um, and then, so, both in the original and in this version and in this version, um, you're obviously seeing this series of terrible things that play out, one in reverse order and one in the correct order. I feel that in every scene, there's a juxtaposition of good and bad. I mean if it's the scene in, um, where revenge is finally exacted, whether it's the beginning or the end, there's kind of that moment of justice that people are happy, well this person finally got what they deserved, but also the cinematography is just wild. It literally makes you dizzy. If it's the rape scene with Alex, it's obviously the most difficult scene to watch, but the cinematography is just so crisp and perfect and the lighting is incredible. And then at the beginning of the film in this rendition of it, uh, obviously Alex gets some fantastic news, and that's great, but then you see everything play out. Or if it's the original version, and now seeing her get this incredible news, and then you're reminded of all these things that are going to happen to her throughout the next hour and a half. So why did you choose to create such a strong juxtaposition in every scene of the film this way?

Gaspar: Oh, actually, I'm surprised you haven't seen the, most people who have seen this new cut had seen, it's got something new. Well the events that were going to unfold with the story, but, um, I see now that it's very, I'm sure that most of the, at least half of the audience who's

going to see the new cut will not have seen the previous one. So, they will know what the subject of the movie is because friends always tell you or the press always tells you probably that they will not expect such a dark ending, because, if I had really released the, if I had really wanted the original version to be this dark, I would've never have had the financing. So, I wrote a story that ended by the previous day that was happy and the movie because of the celebrities involved in the movie, you know, Vincent Cassel and Monica Bellucci were like a couple of French cinema, um, Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise, so, they have (inaudible) their names and the movie happened. But I don't think I would have dared to do a movie that has no hope at all at the end, but I'm happy with this new cut that an impossible movie was made. And, uh, it's, I can't wait to see the reaction to this new cut by people who haven't seen the previous one.

Kyle: Yeah, it has to be incredibly rewarding to know that you did a lot of these things out of necessity so long ago and now you're being given this opportunity to bring to life exactly what you wanted in the beginning, um, I'm sure.

Gaspar: No one would have financed this movie twenty years ago.

Kyle: Exactly

Gaspar: Even less today, so it's like the impossible movie, like, that appears out of the water

Kyle: But it's, it's hard to explain. It's, again, like you said, it's one of these films that I, you don't, you probably wouldn't have been able to get finances for. People probably would've turned their noses up to it had they seen the original cut. Or, I'm sorry, this new cut, um, originally. But it resonates with people in so many ways. It's dark and it's very much a mirror image of the real world, even if it's an extreme throughout the entirety of it. Uh, so I'm really glad that you found ways to fund it and get it going because, while I hadn't, like I hadn't seen it. When it first came out, I'm really impressed with what I saw just last week:

Gaspar: It's like the dysfunctional death wish. Remember, they made number 1, number 2, number 3, and now this is number 4, but it's dysfunctional.

Kyle: You're absolutely right, you're absolutely right. And then, so, you obviously explained the logistics of filming in reverse order and why you filmed it in this way.

Gaspar: The beginning of the movie was done in chronological order. We showed the movie in the summer of 2001, the shortest script ever. It was just three pages long, it contained 12 scenes in chronological order, but it was like on one page you had four scenes, on three pages

you have 12 scenes, and with those three pages started the movie and of course with the names of the two celebrities involved in the production. But the, and the whole movie was shot as you see in the present cut. We didn't know what would happen exactly, the process of filmmaking, but I was very lucky to have that, uh, green, green light, or project with no readable script. (Inaudible) student, I would hear, yeah, the only decorator in France who manages to get movies financed with just two or three pages is Jean-Luc Godard. So, when it finally happened to me I was so happy I said "Oh, if I was Jean-Luc Godard, the truth is that I was just some young willingful director making movies with the two biggest celebrities of the country. And there were three, and also I was needy. I had to pay my rent, things like that, and when directors would ask, "why did you do this movie?," I always give the same answer, to pay my rent.

Kyle: You have to do what you have to do. That's it. Um, but then so, my question first is going to be what order did you film in, but you jumped into that. But, so, I imagine that filming in chronological order makes, now makes the editing process a bit challenging because you're trying to put everything on its head and, in a different order.

Gaspar: No, actually the, for example, when I wrote the three page script, I would do 12 scenes in one separate page, each one. I would write in chronological order and then reverse the pages to see if the story then would work backwards. When we showed it, we showed it with the pages in the right order, chronological order. And I knew that once later in the editing room, I would reverse the scenes. And, uh, we made like visual links from one scene to the other. Like when the camera starts flying, goes to the sky, comes down. Another thing, uh, it was done in a very elegant way, at least, when, uh, I decided to re edit it, to put the scenes in the right order, two years ago. I, uh, I just had to, uh, I got rid of one short thing that was useless, and, uh, with no dialogues. And also I reduced the links to make them faster. And so this new version doesn't contain any additional image, just has like three minutes less, that were those like experimental links between the scenes. And...

Kyle: Ok.

Gaspar: Yeah, there's nothing new in this one. There's even less than in the previous one. But the world is more cruel in many ways, far more emotion.

Kyle: Yeah. I unfortunately can't compare the two, but I'm going to make it a point to, uh...

Gaspar: The big difference is that now that the story goes straight forward. Your empathy doesn't go, doesn't work with the same characters. In the previous version, the movie would

start by killing, the killing was the cure. In the beginning was the catch of Albert Dupontel. So you would start hating that character and you get attached to this character, played by Vincent Cassel who seems to (inaudible), but, and then much later in the movie you will, after 45 minutes you will see Monica Bellucci appearing in the movie. And you're already in the head of Vincent Cassel, also because the camera movements portray his mental state, so, he was like the vehicle of the movie, and he's the main character in the movie. If you watch the new version, the movie starts with Monica Bellucci, and so you get linked to her, we love her, she's gorgeous, she's pretty, she's nice, she's got everything that any man or woman would love. So you get attached to her and when the drama starts, she disappears from the movie, and then your attention goes more to Albert Dupontel because he's being heroic while Vincent Cassel's character's just behaving as a vulnerable monkey who tassels around and is doing everything wrong. Pretty clearly when you watch this new version you don't get attached to this character, you kind of dislike him since the beginning. So, it's the emotional response towards different characters. It's very different. And at the end we truly understand why there is a killing at the end of the movie, but all the other issues that probably were not very clear when the story was told backwards.

Kyle: Yeah, yeah, that's really incredible that you're able to tell, I mean, the same story, but a completely different story at the same time. It's really really cool.

Gaspar: There was one movie by, um, by Christopher Nolan called, that was going backwards, and straight forward. What was the name?

Kyle: Um, Tenant?

Gaspar: No, no, no, one of his newer ones. And I heard, but it was a, the whole movie wasn't going backwards. It was just one way, then the other way. And then they did, um, a recut for the DVD, putting all these things in chronological order, but I tried to watch it, but it was not really working.

Kyle: Ok

Gaspar: Because I wrote the script in the two ways, I hadn't time to do this straight cut many years ago, but I finally did it. I'm very happy it worked so well, and it's, it makes the whole movie more complex because it's like if you, you had a baby 20 years ago, and then there's a twin baby that actually was hidden in the basement, and between babies, it's a girl, it's not a boy, and then, the whole project Irreversible of the order, the whole film becomes more complex because it has two different faces, huh?

Kyle: Yeah, you're absolutely right. And, um, Gaspar, again, I want to thank you for sitting down with me and talking about your film, both the original and the straight cut, um, I'm going to make it a point to find the original and watch that. Um, but I have one more question for you. I'm just curious, what are some of your favorite films?

Gaspar: Uh, again and again 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Kyle: Ok

Gaspar: And also, I'm a big film buff but the other movie that I watched 100 times is the short film by Bunuel and Salvador Dali, Un Chien Andalou, the Andalusian Dog.

Kyle: Ok! I'm making a list of films that I need to watch and that has officially been added to the list, so.

Gaspar: It's on YouTube, that's a good film, it's 17 minutes, short, that started the Salvadoran cinema. But you will find it, An Andalusian Dog. You can watch it.

Kyle: Perfect. Thank you so much, Gaspar, I really appreciate it. I appreciate you taking time out of your morning to sit down with me and chat about your film and, uh, keep in touch and have a wonderful day.

Gaspar: You too, bye bye.

Kyle: Thank you, thank you.