

AUTOMAT PICTURES PRESENTS

# SPINE TINGLER!

THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY



HE WAS JUST ANOTHER  
MOVIE DIRECTOR...  
UNTIL HE FOUND  
HIMSELF A GIMMICK



JOHN WATERS JOHN LANDIS TERRY CASTLE QUINN BAKER ROBERT COHEN JOE DANTE STUART GORDON JOHN BADHAM MARCEL NUSSBAUM JEFF OLEN RAY PLESHARD WALTIN FURBER J. KIRKMAN

AUTOMAT PICTURES presents "SPINE TINGLER! THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY"  
a film by JEFFREY SCHWARZ supervising producer SONJA NELSON associate producers TARYN TEIGUE & JACK MULLIGAN  
design & animation GRANT NELLESSEN editors PHILIP HARRISON & JEFFREY SCHWARZ music by MICHAEL "THE MILLIONAIRE" CUDAHY  
www.spine tinglermovie.com produced and directed by JEFFREY SCHWARZ

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## TIP SHEET

**TITLE**  
**GENRE**  
**RUNNING TIME**  
**FORMAT**  
**SHOOTING FORMAT**  
**EDITING SYSTEM**  
**COPYRIGHT**  
**PRODUCER/DIRECTOR**  
**EDITORS**

**COMPOSER**  
**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

### LOGLINE



*SPINE TINGLER! THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY*  
*DOCUMENTARY*

*80 MINUTES*  
*DIGIBETA*  
*BETA SP / DVCAM*  
*FINAL CUT PRO*  
*2007*

*JEFFREY SCHWARZ*  
*PHILIP HARRISON*  
*JEFFREY SCHWARZ*  
*MICHAEL "THE MILLIONAIRE" CUDAHY*  
*GRANT NELLESSEN*



*"SPINE TINGLER! THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY"*  
*CHRONICLES THE LAST GREAT AMERICAN SHOWMAN,*  
*FILMMAKER WILLIAM CASTLE, A MASTER OF BALLYHOO*  
*WHO BECAME A BRAND NAME IN MOVIE HORROR WITH*  
*HIS OUTRAGEOUS AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION GIMMICKS.*

*IN THE 1950S AND 60S, CASTLE TREATED DELIGHTED*  
*MOVIEGOERS TO BUZZING SEATS, FLYING SKELETONS,*  
*LUMINESCENT GHOSTS AND LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES.*  
*HIS IS A RAGS TO RICHES TALE OF A LARGER THAN LIFE*  
*SHOWMAN WHO CLIMBED HIS WAY UP THE HOLLYWOOD*  
*LADDER BY REINVENTING HIMSELF AS A MODERN P.T.*  
*BARNUM, ALL THE WHILE DRIVEN BY A FEAR OF*  
*FAILURE AND A LONGING TO BE RESPECTED AMONG HIS*  
*PEERS.*

### CONTACT INFO

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## SYNOPSIS

Throughout the 1950's and 60's, William Castle produced and directed a series of horror films marked by their outrageous audience participation gimmicks. Castle treated moviegoers to buzzing seats, flying skeletons, luminescent ghosts and life insurance policies – and they loved every minute of it. *Spine Tinger! The William Castle Story* is a documentary about the last great American showman. It is a rags to riches tale of a legend of exploitation and master of self-promotion, yet a man privately plagued by a fear of failure and a desperate desire to be respected among his peers.

Starting as a contract director for Columbia Pictures' notorious Harry Cohn, Castle would solidify his place as a brand name in horror in 1958 with *Macabre*. After mortgaging his house to make the film and haunted by the thought of audience indifference, Castle developed a surefire publicity stunt to attract a crowd. Every patron would be insured by Lloyd's of London in case of "death by fright." Although nobody collected, audiences flocked to the theaters and Castle knew he had something he could take to the bank. Soon, Castle would introduce "Emergo," a glowing skeleton that dangled above the audience for *The House On Haunted Hill*, "Percepto," buzzing seats that gave patrons a shock for *The Tinger*, special "Ghost Viewer" glasses for *13 Ghosts*, the "Coward's Corner" for *Homicidal*, and the "Punishment Poll" for *Mr. Sardonicus*. *Strait-Jacket* featured Joan Crawford as an axe murderess - a gimmick in and of itself. William Castle became a household name – an immensely popular master of ceremonies, with fan clubs and hoards of adoring fans at each town he visited. But despite his success, Castle craved the respect and accolades given to contemporaries like Alfred Hitchcock. He strived his whole career for a property that would prove his merit as an artist, which would finally come with his production of *Rosemary's Baby*.

Castle's films and ballyhoo hit a nerve during a more innocent time in America, before the Kennedy assassination, Vietnam, and Watergate desensitized a generation. It was a time where an audience free from cynicism could let themselves go and scream for their lives in a packed movie house. Castle carved a niche in a Hollywood before skyrocketing budgets, megaplexes, and corporate control sunk their teeth into the business. *Spine Tinger!* traces how an obscure director for hire reinvented himself as a pop-culture icon. From his first job as Bela Lugosi's assistant to butting heads with Robert Evans, this jaw-dropping tale is told through revealing interviews with daughter Terry Castle, John Waters, Joe Dante, Leonard Maltin, Roger Corman, John Badham, Diane Baker, Marcel Marceau, and many more. *Spine Tinger!* brings back those days when movies were pure fun and spine tingling excitement, when a producer could ride on a "smile and a shoeshine," and when ballyhoo was as American as apple pie. William Castle's story is an inspiration to dreamers everywhere, and this film is an affectionate portrait of the man and the showman.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Growing up in the 1970s, I was too young to have experienced firsthand the joys of William Castle and his gimmicks. I didn't become fully aware of Castle until I read John Waters' tribute article "Whatever Happened to Showmanship?" It was a revelation. I was delighted with this director's bravado and chutzpah. Not one to seek the limelight myself, I was fascinated by how a charismatic and ambitious contract director reinvented himself as a larger than life showman and created a persona known across the globe. Luckily, this burgeoning interest coincided with a revival of Castle's gimmicks at the Film Forum in New York City in the 1980s. The theater rigged up their own Percepto buzzers and invited an audience of hipsters to enjoy the festivities. When Vincent Price announced that the Tingler was loose in the theater, the buzzers went off and a group of jaded New Yorkers started screaming for their lives. I remembered what John Waters said in his essay. "How could film buffs be so slow in elevating this ultimate eccentric director-producer to cult status? Isn't it time for a documentary on his life?" I decided to take John's bait and make this film.

The America that William Castle made his films for was a country that prided itself on its regional differences - a far cry from today's fast food and big box landscape. Unlike today, when a film will open simultaneously on 3000 screens, Castle's pictures opened city by city. He traveled from place to place and each campaign was tailored for that particular area. It was as if the circus was coming to town and Castle was the jovial ringleader. I feel this fostered a sense of community and allowed folks to make the experience their own. Today's movie going is becoming increasingly solitary, and I hope this film reminds people of the joy of a shared experience, and how movies can encourage community and connectedness.

Today, the movie business is run by lawyers and accountants, driven by focus groups, obscenely high budgets, and a global distribution network that simply didn't exist in Castle's heyday. Show business today places the emphasis on the business, but oftentimes neglects the show. Castle didn't need a \$50 million dollar marketing budget to get his audience excited about his product. Through pure showmanship and the force of his own personality, he made audiences feel they were part of something truly unique that they would remember for the rest of their lives. As this film can attest, they're still talking about it today.

William Castle's life is profoundly American. He was an orphan growing up on the streets of New York City who through fast-talking, bravado, and genuine talent made his way to Hollywood and reinvented himself. He put himself on the line financially and emotionally for his films, and for that reason *Spine Tingler!* is a tribute to dreamers everywhere.



# SPINE TINGLER!

THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY

## PRINCIPAL CAST LIST

JOHN WATERS  
TERRY CASTLE  
JOHN LANDIS  
ROGER CORMAN  
JOE DANTE  
STUART GORDON  
LEONARD MALIN  
JOHN BADHAM  
DIANE BAKER  
MARCEL MARCEAU  
DARRYL HICKMAN  
JEANNOT SZWARC  
FORREST J ACKERMAN  
FRED OLEN RAY  
BUDD BOETTICHER  
JACQUELINE SCOTT  
ANNE HELM  
BOB BURNS  
PAMELA LINCOLN YERGEN  
DONALD F. GLUT  
HAWK KOCH  
MARILYN HILL NASH  
DAVID DEL VALLE  
STEVEN NORTH  
BOB THOMAS  
MICHAEL SCHLESINGER  
PAUL SAMMON  
STEVE BICKEL  
THOMAS PAGE  
NORMAN HOROWITZ  
WILLIAM IMMERMANN  
SIDNEY BALKIN  
RICHARD KAHN  
AND MORE...

ILLUSION-O!

EMERGO

PERCEPTO!



## FILMMAKER BIOS

### JEFFREY SCHWARZ (PRODUCER / DIRECTOR)



**JEFFREY SCHWARZ** is the President & CEO of Automat Pictures, a Los Angeles based entertainment company specializing in the production of narrative and documentary films, original television programming, DVD Added Value and studio EPKs (electronic press kits). Jeffrey launched Automat in the early days of the DVD format, realizing the potential for compelling documentary programming in the tried-and-true "behind the scenes" genre. Jeffrey has since contributed to the success of dozens of major studio releases, producing such documentaries as "You Can't Stop the Beat: The Long Journey of *Hairspray*," "No Day But Today: The Story of *Rent*," "Blonde Poison: The Making of *Basic Instinct*," "Inside of the Labyrinth: The Making of *The*

*Silence of the Lambs*," and "Mysteries of Love," profiling David Lynch's masterpiece *Blue Velvet*, and dozens more. Jeffrey's documentary, "People Like Us: Making *Philadelphia*," premiered at the 2003 San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. He was executive producer of "Whether You Like It Or Not: The Story of *Hedwig*," which has enjoyed a life beyond DVD at film festivals around the world.

In television, Schwarz brought "*Reservoir Dogs Revisited*," a celebration of Quentin Tarantino's classic, and "Still Swingin'," a retrospective on the indie favorite *Swingers*, to the Independent Film Channel, as well as several episodes of "HBO First Look." Most recently, Schwarz produced two original documentaries for the Encore Network, "Shooting the Police: Cops on Film" and "Hitchcocked!" Automat's first feature film, *Eating Out 2: Sloppy Seconds*, was produced in association with Ariztical Entertainment and received its theatrical premiere in 2006. He is currently in production on *Wrangler: Anatomy of an Icon*, a documentary portrait of 1970s porn legend Jack Wrangler, and in development on several feature films, including a biopic of notorious underground filmmaker George Kuchar.

A New York native, Jeffrey attended SUNY Purchase's Film Department, earning a BFA in Film. His senior thesis project was the documentary "Al Lewis In The Flesh," which profiled Al "Grampa" Lewis, octogenarian star of TV's *The Munsters*. This film observes the American pastime of celebrity adulation and led to Jeffrey's on-going interest in producing films about popular culture and Americana.

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### FILMMAKER BIOS

#### PHILIP HARRISON (CO-EDITOR)



**PHILIP HARRISON** has collaborated as editor with Jeffrey Schwarz on the documentaries "No Day But Today: The Story of Rent" and "Never Sleep Again: The Making of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*." He has also edited the narrative feature films *Bam Bam and Celeste*, which premiered at the 2005 Toronto Film Festival, and *Die Mommie, Die!* winner of a special jury prize for best performance at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival. He co-edited *The Politics of Fur*, named Best North American Feature at Outfest 2002, as well as Kelly Reichard's short film "Ode," which was presented at the 1999 Venice Film Festival.

Previously, Philip collaborated as assistant and associate editor on such films as Ang Lee's *Ride with the Devil*, Mary Harron's *American Psycho*, and David Duchovny's *House of D*. Philip recently participated as editor at the 2006 Sundance Director's Lab. He is a graduate of the SUNY Purchase Film Department.

#### MICHAEL "THE MILLIONAIRE" CUDAHY (COMPOSER)



**MICHAEL "THE MILLIONAIRE" CUDAHY** hails from the frozen wastes of New England. He paid his dues with Matador recording artists Christmas, but made his real mark as the leader of the avatars of modern music, Combustible Edison. The Mil's tenure with CE included a national and international tour (including the opening slot for Bryan Ferry's 1995 tour), three CDs with Seattle's Sub Pop label and a string of TV and radio appearances. CE's music appeared in "Sex and The City", Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Mercedes-Benz television ads. CE composed and performed the original score for Quentin

Tarantino's anthology comedy *Four Rooms*. The Millionaire's recent projects include a stint as musical director for the Velvet Hammer Burlesque, leading a 13-piece Bollywood orchestra, recording as one half of the electronic duo SuperCasanova, and performing DJ duties at LuxuriaMusic.com and The Standard hotel. The Millionaire is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Berklee College of Music for Film Scoring. He also has the dubious distinction of having set the record for the largest amount of "winnings" (\$52,440.00!) ever racked up by a non-winner on "Jeopardy."





## FILMMAKER BIOS

### **GRANT NELLESSEN (GRAPHIC DESIGN)**



**GRANT NELLESSEN** grew up in central Illinois, and after several years of working as a graphic designer, he earned a degree in Film and Video from Columbia College in Chicago, and then moved to Los Angeles and the American Film Institute, where he studied film title design and animation. While at the AFI, he wrote and directed the animated short, "IDOL," which played at such film festivals as Outfest in Los Angeles, and the Frameline Festival in San Francisco. Grant has worked as a title designer since 2001, contributing to such films as *Dreamgirls*, *Flightplan*, *The Covenant*, *Final Destination 3*, and *Die Mommie Die!* He also designs graphics for trailers and television, and regularly contributes title design and motion graphics work for DVD supplementary material produced by Automat Pictures. He lives in Los Angeles with his dog, Radar.



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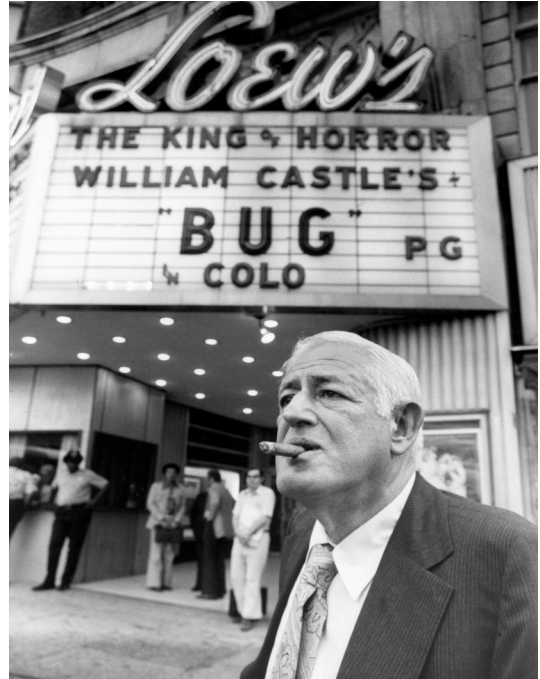


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