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## Interview with Thomas Newman of Bong of the Dead



Bong of the Dead

Thomas Newman is the director behind the stoner, zombie horror comedy Bong of the Dead. You're probably going, "don't you mean Evil Bong from Charles Band & Full Moon Entertainment?". No, not at all. Bong of the Dead is Newman's labor of love that finds two stoner friends traveling to danger zones that are inhabited with zombies so that they can collect zombie brain matter to use as fertilizer to help their weed grow at a rapid rate. Bong of the Dead is Thomas Newman's micro budget tribute that's best described as a cross between the George A. Romero's zombies and the Cheech and Chong humor / mentality of the 80's. Armed with a deep conviction in his project and \$5000, Thomas Newman set about making Bong of the Dead. Two

and a half years later, here he is speaking to us about the finished film. Here's what Thomas Newman had to say.

### So who is Thomas Newman and what are you all about?

I'm a very passionate filmmaker who loves movies and just wants to kick in the doors of Hollywood and start making some cool films! I love supporting indy films, because that's a level of film making where money is not always available and so you have to work harder and force yourself to be more creative and more devoted. You need to push yourself to limits until the creativity takes over and the end result is something unique and something that people will hopefully appreciate.

### Tell us your take on your film Bong of the Dead?

Bong of the Dead is kind of like "Cheech and Chong" or "Harold and Kumar" meets Shaun of the Dead with zombies. It's an action / comedy / horror adventure film that is appealing to a lot of people, because its stylistic and not just silly pot humor.

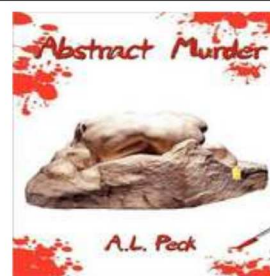
### How did Bong of the Dead come about? What was the inspiration?

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Thomas Newman

I have always wanted to get a film made as a calling card in hopes of getting to make more movies. The reason I decided to get down to business is, because I got really tired of sitting around with friends and talking about all the movies we "want" to make, but never actually did. Mike Fields, my close friend and co producer, was the one who said I should do a zombie film, because he already had hundreds of make-up pieces in his shed that could be used and would cut down on cost severely.



Bong of the Dead

It was no brainer so I took him up on it. He jumped on board as make-up and co-producer and the rest as they say is history.

**Then you went and invested \$5000 to make Bong of Dead. How did you manage to get the film made for only \$5K?**

The reason I was able to make it for only \$5000 is because I asked for a lot of favors from local talent

in Vancouver and proved to them that was worth working for. How I did that was by shooting a short three zombie sequence to place on Youtube as a means to send people to when I was sending out hundreds of emails a day. People would go and see what I did for "ZERO" dollars and immediately knew I could pull it off. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYVr55xC3oU>



Bong of the Dead

**Zombies and weed, what a good combo! What new innovative carnage have you given for your zombies to engage in?**

I know that the most important thing to zombie fans is the way in which the zombies are killed. This is something that I thought about for a while then decided to go completely crazy and do something that's

never been done before. I came up with two cool weapons and one was a pick up truck with 3 lawn mowers welded to the front of it as a battering mulching machine. This was a slight homage to Peter Jackson's "Brain Dead" or "Dead Alive". The second one, I went with was a suped up weed whacker which is a hand held mulching machine. The result was a very cool and bloody sequence in which I ended up using over 800 Gallons of blood !

**Are you going with fast or slow moving zombies?**

I'm a big fan of both zombies to be quite honest, but in my first film I wanted to keep it old school and go with the classic slow zombies. This was more for style and again paying homage to the godfather of all zombie films, George A Romero.

**Since weed plays its part in the film, how did you go about trying to create the slacker mentality**

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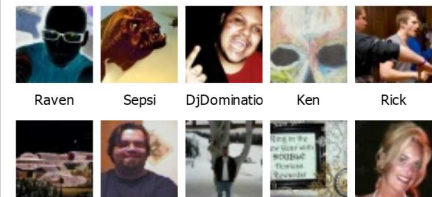
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Bong of the Dead

The truth is I smoke pot as well so I know about the different types of smokers out there. I, for one, am not a slacker pot smoker because if I were then I would still be talking about making a movie one day instead of actually making it. I'm one of those who when I do puff, I become more enhanced and alert and I have to create, so my mind starts spinning. I wanted a bit of the slacker dopey characteristics, but with more motivated characters instead.

Who wants to watch a movie with a couple of couch potatoes anyways? Edwin and Tommy are more of the motivated stoner types.



Bong of the Dead

**The whole smoking weed & getting high vibe best represents Gen X. How did you go about representing Gen X'ers with this film?**

Quite honestly, I gave it no thought what so ever. My goal was to make a film that represents my vision and makes it fun and entertaining for all audiences whether you smoke pot or not. I've had test audiences who smoke and don't and both types of audiences said they loved the film, because it was entertaining. I

targeted pot smokers and zombie fans mainly because I know that those crowds are similar in a way. I'm a zombie fan who smokes pot as well so maybe I was just making a movie for me that a lot of other people happened to like.



Bong of the Dead

**Gotta ask it, but what are your views on weed and if it should be legalized?**

To be totally brutally honest with you, I think religion needs to be illegal, because more death and more bullshi\* has come from that then weed. Lets face it, those who know the truth about pot and how the government lies about it know that its simply prohibition and that's it. Alcohol is far worse for you and can cause far more issues then pot does. I was recently at the 420 walk promoting my movie and I was talking with a police officer about the walk and why they don't bust people as they openly advertise, smoke and sell pot in the streets right in front of them. His answer, "It's not the dope smokers that cause the issues during these gatherings, it's the drinkers". I think if it's legalized then we can benefit from all its uses and get out of debt as a country!

**Since there's a lot of comedy in Bong of the Dead, how did you go about making sure there was enough horror elements in the film?**

I think the way to make sure that the film is well balanced and has good timing is to make sure the script is tight. I spent many months writing and rewriting the script before I knew it was ready to go to camera. I also had others read it and got their feedback on its flow.

**And in regards to the comedy, what was your take in approaching the comedy?**

Comedy is the hardest thing to write because everyone's sense of humor is different. Other parts of the world, also, have different a sense of humor. The way I got away from it



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2001 Maniacs: Field of Screams

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28 Weeks Later

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Aaah Zombies

**Film Reviews: L-Z**

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Lake Mungo

Lake Placid

Lamp

Land of the Dead

Last Breath

Last Exorcism

Last House on the Left (1972)

Last House on the Left (2009)



Bong of the Dead

is, by not saying that Bong Of The Dead is a comedy. It's actually an action adventure horror with comedy. Everyone experiences fear the same way, which is why horror is still the number one genre selling.

**After the film was done filming, I've heard Bong of the Dead spent two years in post production. Why so long?**

The day I wrapped up on set I went into my basement and for the next 2.5 years I worked literally around the clock pulling 20 hour days everyday creating and editing the film. I stopped working a regular job so Bong became my full time job except it was a seven-day a week and every waking moment type of commitment. Having taken 2.5 years is actually incredibly reasonable given the circumstances. I had to take on multiple roles in order to make this film see the light of day. I had to learn new software that I had never used before. I single handily composited over 368 shots to date. That was done one shot at a time and one single frame at a time. The opening credit sequence alone took me 3 months to animate.



Thomas Newman

**Since we've talked about your struggles in making this film, what was your favorite memory or part about making Bong of the Dead?**

The best part of the process was getting distribution! Now I know the world will see what I've been trying to prove for so long. If you stick to your guns and pursue your dreams then nothing will

stop you.

**Why should people looking forward in anticipation of Bong of the Dead?**

I think people should watch BOTD in order to see what you can do if you set your mind to it. Bong is not just a piece of entertainment, but it's a piece of proof that anything is possible. I know that's corny shit but its true! I've had people trying to stop me from making this film from my very first day of the shoot right up until I finally finished it! I took all the negativity and used it as fuel to drive my passion further towards my goals. If you're passionate about something, then prove it to yourself by not giving up. That's how I did it and that's how Ill always do it. I hope people keep in mind that the movie they are about to watch was shot on only one camera (Sony A1-U) in 15 days and for only \$5000 by one guy in his basement.

**What's next for you?**

Currently I'm writing the sequel to Bong OF The Dead. Its called BOTD2 – Rise of the Necroteks. It's a crazy cool concept I've had for a while since I made the first one so I decided to go for it. I've also been talking with Tommy Chong to get him and Cheech Marin as a cameo in my next movie so lets see how that pans out. Would be cool! Im also writing a book about my peeks and Valleys as a struggling filmmaker trying to make it. The book is aptly titled "How to Make a Movie for \$5000 and Get GLOBAL Distribution". I know there's a need for the type of information I'm planning on sharing, because heck I had to walk it myself in order to know how.

**Any final comments?**



Thomas Newman (center)

Dare to dream!

18

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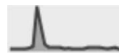
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