





CONTENTS

Cast and Crew

5

Introduction (2020)

by Mike Hodges

6

*Now You See Me, Now You Don't:
Time, Crime, and Black Rainbow (2020)*

by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas

13

Letter from Stanley Kubrick (1989)

24

About the Restoration

26



CAST

ROSANNA ARQUETTE as Martha Travis

JASON ROBARDS as Walter Travis

TOM HULCE as Gary Wallace

CREW

Music Composed and Conducted by **JOHN SCOTT**

Cinematography by **GERRY FISHER, B.S.C.**

Edited by **MALCOLM COOKE**

Produced by **GEOFFREY HELMAN** and **JOHN QUESTED**

Written and Directed by **MIKE HODGES**

BLACK RAINBOW

by Mike Hodges

There's a metaphorical graveyard for burying lost movies and I'm grateful to Arrow for saving *Black Rainbow* from that fate. I was hoping to contribute a video interview for the launch of this Blu-ray. Sadly the 2020 pandemic prevented that. The least I could do is write for the accompanying booklet what I would have said had the interview gone ahead.

My travels around America informed the writing of my screenplay for *Black Rainbow*. These journeys began in New York followed by Phoenix City, Dallas, and Detroit. That was my first foreign assignment for Granada's investigative programme *World in Action*. The year was 1964. Six years later I made *Get Carter* which kicked off my career in the cinema. Over the next three decades I found myself criss-crossing the States searching for locations. At each stopover I'd buy the local newspaper. They have colourful names like *Bee*, *Bugle*, and *Globe*. Every town, large or small, has one. Over the years I began to notice a disturbing pattern in their reports of factory foremen and union officials beaten up or even murdered.



As often as not the victims turned out to be whistle-blowers on breaches of Health & Safety regulations. That was to become the first thread in my screenplay.

That 1964 assignment to Detroit was to interview the President of the United Auto Workers, Walter Reuther, and his brother Victor. Until then I was ignorant of the bloodbath surrounding the setting up of unions in America. The motor manufacturers even went so far as to employ hitmen. Both Walter and Victor were shot and seriously wounded in their own homes. In 1989 when I came to film *Black*

Rainbow in North Carolina it was a non-union state. The workers there had virtually no rights and no protection. All that blood was spilt for very little. But it was these breaches in health and safety that was to provide the second thread in the movie.



In my late teens and early twenties I saw every western movie that came to the small country town I grew up in. They represented a sense of freedom denied in my own country. England is mostly split into fields by hedgerows and dry walls in contrast to the vast open vistas and dramatic ranges I saw up there on the screen. Places like Monument Valley, a favourite location for one of America's greatest directors, John Ford. I marvelled, and still do, at its immensity and grandeur. But there was a downside that I slowly became aware of. America was the greatest polluter on the planet. Hence the black in *Black Rainbow*.

I'm unsure when I reached the idea of setting the narrative a decade earlier and wrapping it in a long flashback. Writing scripts, like everything in life, is the result of an evolutionary process. You try and reject numerous plot twists until you (hopefully) find the right one. Almost always outside events play a part. In my case I happened to see a documentary about Doris Stokes, a professional medium who toured Britain for many years. Suddenly the idea of a medium as the protagonist formed in my imagination. So I created Martha Travis and set her down

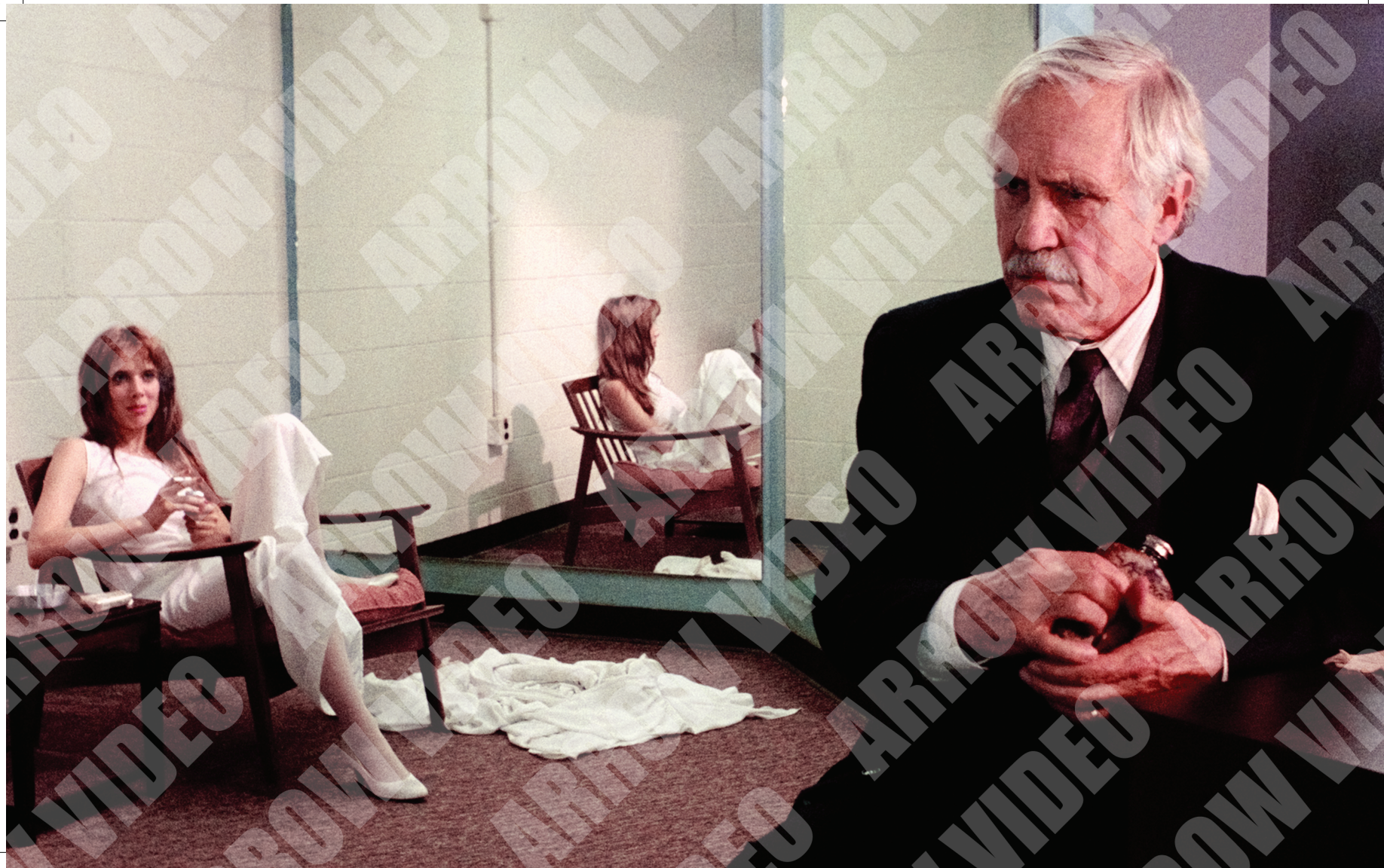
in America's Bible Belt. My thinking had now taken me into a world of metaphysics which, in turn, led me to quantum theory and spacetime where space and time are essentially the same. Martha time warps into the future. Instead of communicating with the dead she begins to see the horrors that await the living.

Quantum theory had fascinated me for decades. And still does. The theory had upended classical physics and revealed much that was, to put it mildly, puzzling. Particles entangled even over vast distances? And particles being in two places at the same time? As a long-time lapsed Roman Catholic I was well versed in alleged miraculous appearances like that of Padre Pio. He is said to have been seen in multiple places simultaneously. It's a phenomenon known as bilocation. But when this happens to Martha, maybe it's just an illusion generated in her father's mind by guilt, and in the assassin's by revenge?

Whichever, the world is definitely not what it seems.

Something uncanny happened eight months after I'd finished shooting. I was still in post-production when I read this headline in *The Guardian* newspaper of September 4th, 1991: BLAST KILLS 24 AS FIRE RIPS THROUGH CAROLINA CHICKEN PLANT. It was filed by Associated Press from a small township called Hamlet in North Carolina. Hamlet? How could I forget that name? Early on in the movie Martha and her father check into a hotel. The hotel I chose was located in—yes—Hamlet. You can see the processing plant through the hotel's foyer window. It was right across the road. "Screaming workers pounded and kicked locked doors..." It was as if I, too, was in a time warp. I was back where it all began—reading the *Bee*, *Bugle*, and *Globe*.

MIKE HODGES
March, 2020





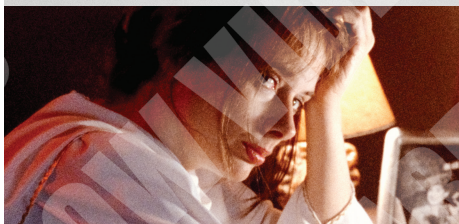
*Now You See Me, Now You Don't:
Time, Crime, and*

BLACK RAINBOW

by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas

“WHEREVER I AM IN THE UNITED STATES, I’m an avid reader of the local newspapers,” filmmaker Mike Hodges told Maxim Jakubowski in a lengthy interview about his career. “During my time in the Carolinas I read reports about workers who, having blown the whistle on breaches of safety, were beaten up and even murdered at the behest of the employers.” Hodges continued, “It wasn’t the first time I’d come across such stories; there seemed to be a pattern across the United States. Not surprisingly this fact attached itself to my urgent desire to tell a story about the impending ecological meltdown. This, in turn, coincided with my growing passion for quantum mechanics, the unravelling of mysteries previously considered to be the sole domain of religion.”

And lo, Hodges’ 1989 film *Black Rainbow* was born. Widely considered by both Hodges himself and his legions of admirers to be one of his finest films, it is up there, if not equal to, his better-known movies such as 1971’s *Get Carter* and 1987’s *A Prayer for the Dying*. But—like 1974’s *The Terminal Man* before it—disappointing distribution saw one of Hodges’ favourite of his own films largely buried from public view on its initial release.

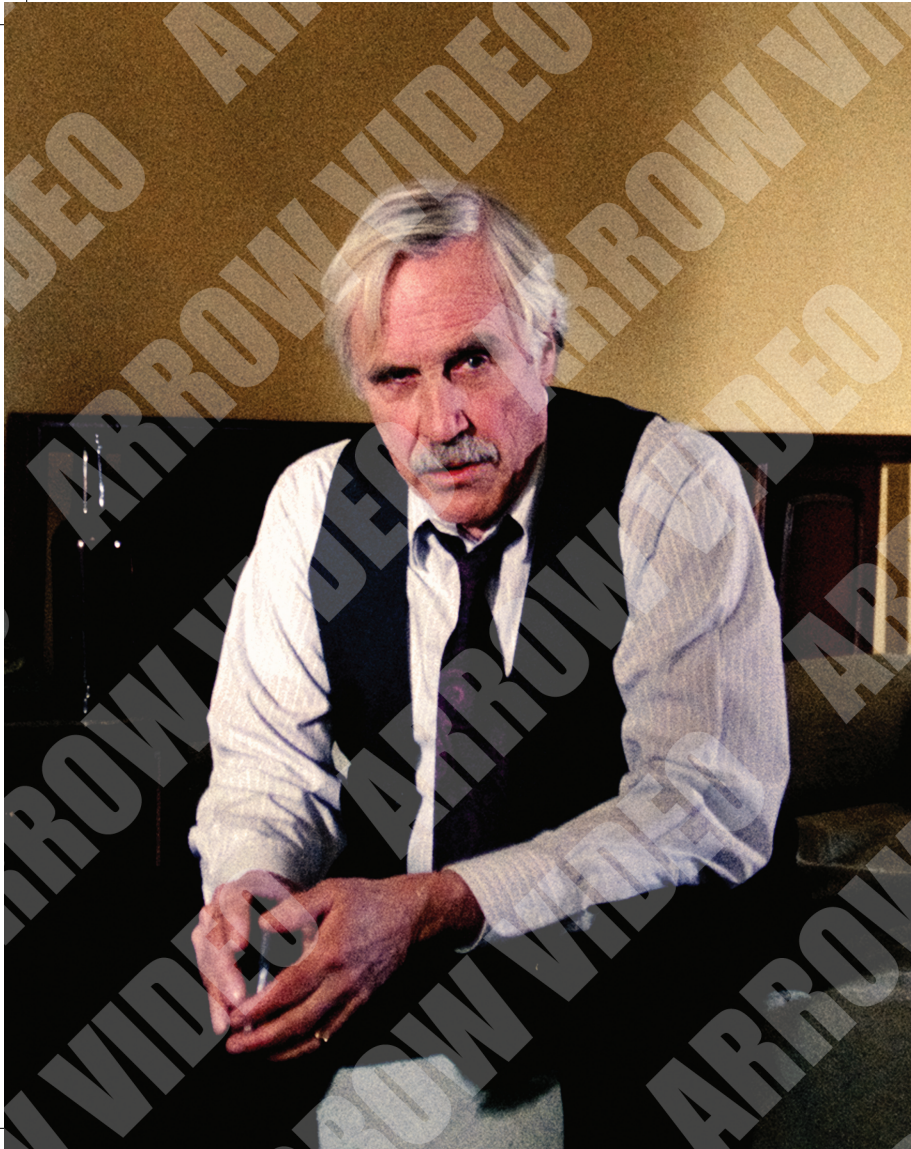


Inspired by these questions of faith, industry, and the environment to write the film’s screenplay, at the point of its conception the project was not anchored financially and he effectively wrote it on spec. But destiny would work in Hodges’ favour when Hodges’ agent discovered

that *Black Rainbow*’s future production company, Goldcrest Films, were looking for a contemporary version of Richard Brooks’ extraordinary 1960 classic, *Elmer Gantry*. Hodges’ script couldn’t have been more perfect.

Like this earlier film, *Black Rainbow* too is about a cynical flimflammer who sees money to be made in the exploitation of desperate people’s need for proof of a greater power. But while there are certainly points of common interest between the two films, *Black Rainbow* was very much sparked by Hodges’ own interests. “Back in





England I'd watched a stage medium by the name of Doris Stokes at work, becoming fascinated by the theatricality of her performance and the desire of her audience for confirmation of an afterlife," Hodges told Jakubowski. "Somehow all these elements became welded together in my mind and I wrote *Black Rainbow*."

Marked by the breathtaking imagery of stalwart cinematographer Gerry Fisher, while perhaps not classically beautiful, it is hard to deny that every frame of *Black Rainbow* is a painting in terms of light, colour, and composition. The stylistic qualities of the film add the texture to what Hodges privileges as the heart of his film at the intersection of these questions of faith with more ecological concerns. In an interview in Steven Davies' 2002 book *Get Carter and Beyond*, Hodges noted "the genesis of the piece was odd. I had wanted to write, quite simply, about the way we're fucking the planet. Only fools can't see that what we're doing is not only crassly ignorant and arrogant, but unnecessary. I desperately wanted to write about that."



One need only look towards the tumbling decay of the dead-end Southern industrial towns across whose terrain the film's action is set to identify precisely how Hodges sought to bring his themes to life. The backdrop to *Black Rainbow* is a veritable ghost town of dysfunctional industrialism, where workplace accidents, unsafe conditions, and good old-fashioned corruption are just a part of life.

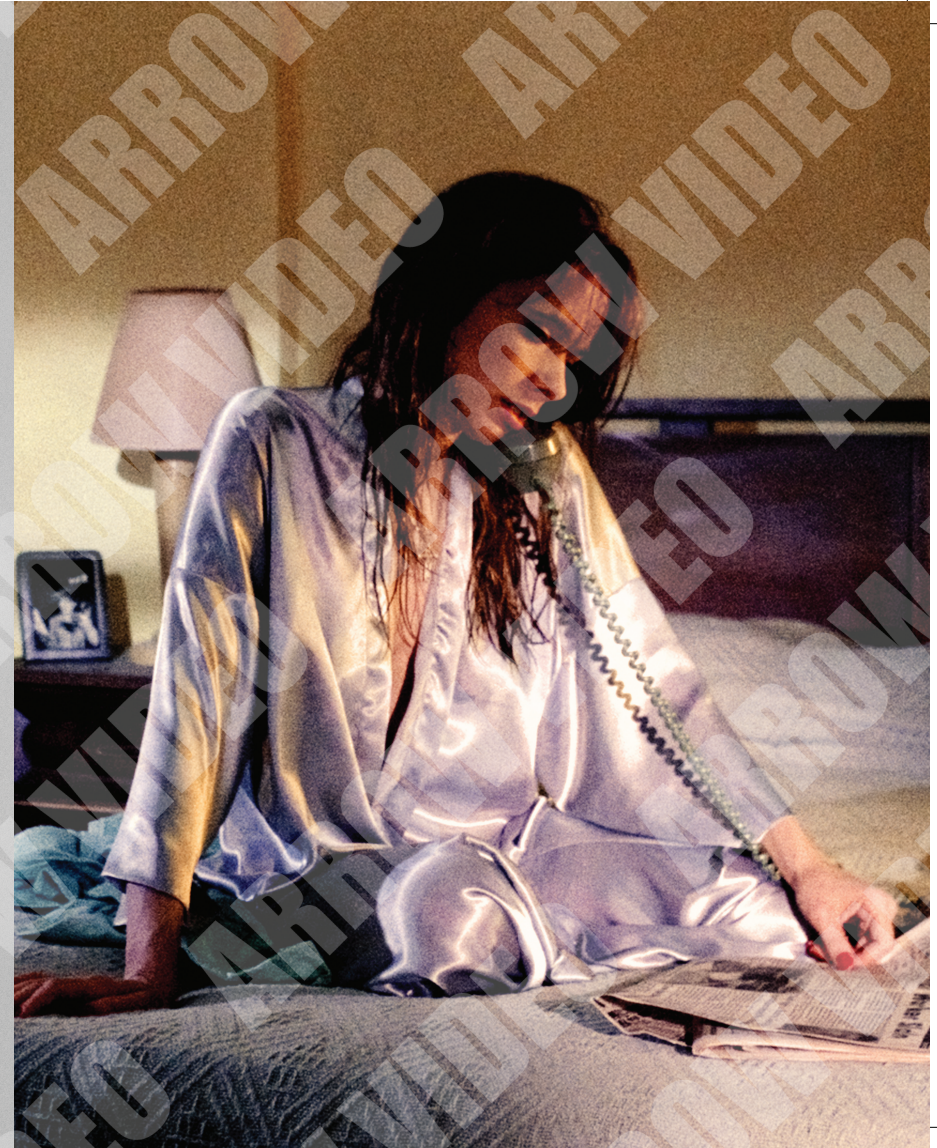
It is in this world that Hodges builds his story about Martha Travis (Rosanna Arquette), a young clairvoyant who travels around small, decrepit, industrial towns in the south in a travelling sideshow visiting Pentecostal churches to bring together people of faith with what they believe is their departed loved ones. Her alcoholic father Walter (Jason Robards) is burnt out and barely functional, squandering the little cash they make on his indulgent lifestyle and exploiting his daughter just as they together seemingly exploit their emotionally needy audiences.

At first, at least: as Hodges himself describes it, Martha experiences a sudden dramatic shift in her abilities where “instead of connecting with those on ‘the other side,’ she suffers a time slippage and begins to predict deaths before they happen: she turns from medium into prophet and a threat to one employer in particular.” It is this latter narrative twist that sees the introduction of a journalist and a hired assassin, and the film’s action kicks off in earnest.

If there is one seed, one kernel that lies at the heart of *Black Rainbow*, it is that Arquette’s Martha fundamentally has a problem with *time*. At first, it seems merely mechanical as she fiddles with a wristwatch that seemingly refuses to not run fast. In what for herself is clearly a less than ideal situation, some part of her—some inner vision—finds her able to mirror this tendency when (to her surprise as much as anyone’s) the one-time possibly fake clairvoyant is suddenly able to see into the future and reveal the horrors that lie in wait for her audience members.

Bookended by an investigation by journalist Gary Wallace (Tom Hulce) as he seeks to track down the adult Martha, the film’s central action is told largely in flashback; time, again, refuses to be stable. The film opens as Gary traces an older Martha to an isolated house on the outskirts of a small Southern town in what is revealed to be a moment of great importance to him, potentially marking what has clearly been a very long search. But as the film concludes, his victory was ultimately short-lived as the photographs he took of Martha failed to capture her presence: she does not appear in the images. What he saw with his eyes failed to manifest on camera, and instead there was nothing but an empty, clearly abandoned, run-down shack, far from the tidy but basic home he witnessed in person.

All of these factors feed into Hodges’ fascination in *Black Rainbow* with what he described to Tony Williams in an interview at *Senses of Cinema* as “the man-made concept of ‘time.’” For Martha—and, ultimately, for Gary too—time is slippery, malleable, elastic. It can fold in on itself and expand, move us back and forward between the here and now and the future and the present like pieces on a ‘Snakes and Ladders’ board. At the end of the film, it is implied that through the trauma and sadness and emptiness that marked her life with her father (the story of which





makes up the bulk of the film's action) she has, in some way, defeated time itself. She can utilize its cracks for her own benefit, rather than in the service of others.

Now a key figure at the forefront of the #MeToo movement, it is Arquette's position as a vocal activist against sexual harassment and assault that grants us the ability to retrospectively rethink Martha's relationship to time. Speaking in January 2020 at a press conference for Time's Up™—an activist movement formed in Hollywood in early 2018 to fight for the rights of women working in the entertainment, advertising, health care, and tech industries—Arquette delivered a powerful speech:

Time's up on sexual harassment in all work places. Time's up on empty apologies without consequences. And time's up on the pervasive culture of silence that has enabled abusers like [Harvey] Weinstein. These abusers that make it unsafe for women to go to work every morning, to take a business meeting, or even to report a crime without retaliation.

Famously going on the record in her allegations of sexual harassment against one-time all-powerful Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein and the devastating effect it had on her career in exposés by both Ronan Farrow at *The New Yorker* and Jodi Kantor and Rachel Abrams at *The New York Times* in October 2017, Arquette thus played a crucial part in not only bringing the industry Goliath to his knees. These explosive articles, of course, also triggered a highly publicised international reckoning of sexual violence and harassment that would soon be referred to broadly as “MeToo,” bringing the label first coined by American civil rights activist Tarana Burke in 2006 to mainstream international discourse.

It's hard to watch *Black Rainbow* and not hear echoes of the “difficult woman” label applied to Arquette and so many other women who claimed to find themselves in similar positions with Weinstein, destroying their careers. Accusations in the film of Martha being a “witch” when she spoke her own truth and warned of the impending catastrophes that lie ahead for those who sought her guidance provide

further evidence of this parallel. Both Martha and Rosanna Arquette speak across time from centre stage to hold controlling men accountable for abuses of power. With their voices repressed for far too long, used as instruments to make money for the corrupted male forces that hold the power to make or break their respective careers, both Martha and Rosanna Arquette take centre stage and discover the power of speaking up, and of speaking out.

But Harvey Weinstein's legacy is imprinted upon *Black Rainbow* in other ways. It was Weinstein's distribution company Miramax that oversaw its dismal US release which saw the film almost immediately vanish into thin air until it eventually hit the home entertainment market (despite going very well in Japan, Palace Films saw the film meet a similar fate in the United Kingdom). Regardless, Hodges saw *Black Rainbow* as a transitional film that would form the bridge between his earlier movies and his later masterpieces, his final two feature films *Croupier* (1998) and *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* (2003). Although the more supernatural aspects of *Black Rainbow* suggest a different thematic trajectory of films such as these, at their core

they all share a fascination with the same fundamental questions: of how the past, the present, and the future intersect, and of the looming and seemingly inescapable presence of corruption (be it in others, ourselves, or both).

And, of course, questions of fate. Whether it be in the complex, circular,

narrative structures or an indefinable sense of inevitability on the behalf of his always-fascinating protagonists, something about the inescapability of destiny also hovers tantalizingly above the surface of Hodges' most intriguing films. Blurring the story of *Black Rainbow* itself with its production history, Hodges said in the film's press kit at the time that "the whole film was like a bizarre dream. It was as if it had to be made, like I was on some pre-ordained quest. It sounds daft but it's the truth." While films like *Croupier*, *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*, *Get Carter*, and perhaps even *Pulp* offer complex explorations of masculinity sugar-coated with all



the trimmings of familiar generic frameworks, *Black Rainbow* both adheres to this tendency (in the case of Gary to some degree and of course Walter most directly) but, at the same time, also subverts it, reframing it through not just a central woman character—Martha—but through a broader vision of a universe that in metaphysical terms is even less stable or coherent.

It is in this way that *Black Rainbow* marks a significant entry into Hodges' filmography. A transitional film, yes, but also something much more, it simultaneously sits in curious tension with his other key works while at the same time standing tall on its own as a unique and independent creation. "I set out to create a world of my own imagination," Hodges continued, describing the artistic drive propelling *Black Rainbow*. "Ideally one takes an audience by the hand and leads them somewhere they've never been before." While *Black Rainbow* stylistically and thematically contains all the hallmarks of Hodges' finest work—or at least, offers a variation on some familiar themes—it is its status as an extraordinary exercise in world-building in and of itself that grants the film its enduring power, its continuing allure, and its unceasing ability to confound, fascinate, and enthrall.

Alexandra Heller-Nicholas is a film critic, author, academic, and programmer from Melbourne, Australia.



“Paranormal thrillers are popular but...”

Letter from Stanley Kubrick

Mike Hodges and Stanley Kubrick frequently spoke and, prior to the release of *Black Rainbow*, Kubrick sent the following letter to Hodges with his thoughts on the film, specifically concerning the film's marketing.

Reprinted with permission.

September 10, 1989

Dear Mike,

Sorry to be so long getting back to you. I liked "Black Rainbow" a lot and I hope you have a great success with it.

As far as ideas for selling it, I'm afraid I've not got very much to offer yet. Paranormal thrillers are popular but the problem is how to get people to believe this one is something special and better than all the others.

I think you should try to get a great advance quote from an important critic, if it's good enough, make it the key ad copy.

At the same time, try to develop a strong and stylish piece of artwork. It would be worth sitting down at a Steenbeck and selecting frames you like, making prints from them and trying them in ad layouts. *

Unfortunately, nothing suggested itself to me on one viewing but you can't pick stills properly without looking at the moments you think are interesting, one frame at a time.

The actors are great and for the more discerning audience contribute to a sense of quality about the film.

Sorry I can't be more helpful but creating a good campaign is almost as elusive and difficult as making a good film.

Good luck.

Best Regards,

Stanley Kubrick

* If you find a good ~~image~~ image but it doesn't work as a photograph, someone like Philip Castle might be useful.

ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Black Rainbow has been restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with 5.1 and stereo sound.

The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 4K resolution at Goldcrest Films. Colour grading and restoration was completed in 2K resolution at Silver Salt Restoration, London. The audio mixes were supplied by Goldcrest Films.

This restoration has been approved by director Mike Hodges. All original materials have been made available by Goldcrest Films.

Silver Salt Restoration: **Anthony Badger, Mark Bonnici, Lisa Copson, Simon Edwards, Ray King, Tom Wiltshire**

Goldcrest Films: **Andy Jeyes, Timothy Jones, Rob Farris**

Many thanks to **Mike Hodges** for his generous participation on this project.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Francesco Simeoni**

Executive Producer **Kevin Lambert**

Technical Producer **James White**

Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**

QC **Alan Simmons**

Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **Engine House Media Services**

Artist **Nathanael Marsh**

Design **Scott Saslow**

Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Eric Bernstein, David Cairns, Sam Deighann, Kat Ellinger, Goldcrest Films, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, Mike Hodges, Andy Jeyes, Marc Morris, Anthony Nield, Jonathon Perchal, Patty Tapanes, and David Taylor



FCD2041 / AV285