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Aug. 31, 2010 | 8:21 a.m.

Adam Green: "I don't want to be singled out and have them mad at me or something because they're a tough organization...."

New York writer **Michael Giltz** digs deep into the looming unrated release "Hatchet II," which arrives in theaters after a major MPAA squabble and plenty of splatter.



The movie "**Hatchet II**" will be unrated when it hits the top 20 or so markets on Oct. 1 via **Dark Sky** and the AMC chain, making it perhaps the widest released unrated horror film since **George Romero's** landmark "**Dawn Of The Dead**" opened in the U.S. in 1979.

That's made "Hatchet II" an instant *cause celebre* among horror fans tired of denuded fright flicks, the latest flashpoint in the endless debate over the MPAA rating system and -- some say -- an ironic victim of the MPAA's desire to look tough on violence.

For director **Adam Green**, whose original "Hatchet" grossed \$3 million on DVD, the moment is exhilarating.

"This is a great opportunity for [fans] to go see something that they'd never normally gotten to

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see in a theater and I think that's very exciting," says Green. He spoke by cell from Leicester Square in London on Thursday night while "Hatchet II" made its world premiere during **Frightfest**, the largest horror film festival in the world.



While distancing himself from online headlines like the one on **Cinematical**, he's thrilled by the comments of people like **Steve "Uncle Creepy" Barton**, the editor-in-chief of horror site **DreadCentral**. Barton urges people to make a statement by buying tickets to the film even if they don't even live near one of the cities where it's showing.

"Would you pay 10 bucks to make a statement that you support unrated releases in theaters?" Barton **asked readers**. "It's a lot to ask, but you know what? I would and I will. This release could very well be an opportunity to change the game as we know it and have begrudgingly accepted it."

But in some ways, Green is as nervous as the audience watching his movie. And not in a fun way. "I'm scared though," Green admitted. "I don't want to be singled out and have them mad at me or something because they're a tough organization...."

MPAA ratings controversies aren't unusual and neither are unrated films -- especially in the art-house world. The MPAA came under fire for slapping an R on the acclaimed documentary "**The Tillman Story**" strictly for numerous uses of the F-word, including the dying comment of football star and battlefield symbol **Pat Tillman**. And one of the biggest foreign language hits of the year is the unrated "**Girl With The Dragon Tattoo**," which has hit \$12.5 million at the U.S. box office.

Like many filmmakers, Green submitted a cut with some ideas of where he might trim to appease the MPAA board.

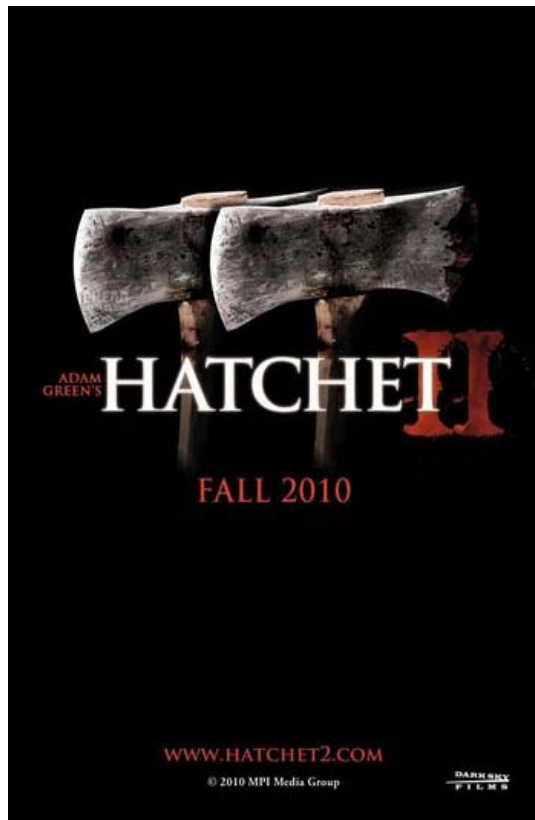
"We submitted a version," says Green. "We cut a minute out of it and then we

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submitted it again. Then they came back being very specific saying, ‘These are things we have a problem with and you just can’t do that.’”

Kirby Dick, the Oscar-nominated filmmaker who made “**This Film Is Not Yet Rated**,” an expose of the MPAA, laughs when he hears this description.

“That’s a great quote. ‘*You just can’t do that.*’ See, they have no standards to refer to,” explains Dick, whose most recent film is “**Outrage**.” “If they said, ‘Look, we have very specific standards and these standards apply to all films, whether they’re studio or non-studio,’ then that might be an appropriate rating. Maybe you can disagree with their standards but at least they have something to reference to. They have *nothing* to reference to.”

Green was braced for the worst and ready to go straight to DVD in order to protect the film after his experience with the MPAA the first time around.

“Hatchet I’ had no effects in it, it had no drug use, it had very little swearing,” says Green. “Nobody even smoked a cigarette. And they came after it like it was the devil. Now with this one, none of their problems were for sexual content. Their problems were all for the level of violence.”

That, of course, is the exact opposite of the usual complaints about the MPAA, which historically is far more lenient about violence than sex in major studio releases. Is that an indicator that something else is afoot?

“Again, I haven’t seen the film, so I can’t say,” says Dick. “But it does raise the question. This is a non-studio film. [The MPAA is] always somewhat vulnerable to criticism that they are perhaps not rating violence harshly enough. There’s no question that that’s the case. Is it possible that they’re now selecting a non-studio film to come down hard on so that it looks like they’re actually doing their job so maybe the next studio film they can let slide?”

Barton of Dread Central believes the MPAA likes to make an example of horror films, which often come from smaller, independent studios and are less “respectable.”

“You look at movies like ‘**Inglorious Basterds**’ and movies like ‘**The Expendables**,’” says Barton. “They are way, way more violent than the original ‘Hatchet’ was. What makes it OK for them to say, ‘Hey, well you can put this out there but this silly movie that’s meant purely for fun in a tongue-in-cheek manner, that has to get cut to shreds because it’s a horror movie?’”

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Green believes if his film had been released by a major studio that Hatchet II would have sailed through easily.

“I think this movie should have gotten an R with some appropriate trims,” says the 35-year-old filmmaker. “But it is extreme and I think it probably is one of the more gory movies out there. However, it’s all in good fun and nobody’s going to walk out of this feeling like their eyes got raped or they’re disturbed or having nightmares or anything. They’re just going to laugh. That’s why it’s so fun. If we had taken that stuff out, it’s like telling a joke without the punch line.”

Green has no desire to be seen as battling the board.

“I don’t want to start a fight with the MPAA,” he says. “We’re just choosing to go a different route. If the movie is successful and the fans show up, it could change the way horror movies are released and I think it’s time for that. I’m not purposely trying to lead a revolution. I’m just trying to do my thing.”

He adds finally: “The movies I’m making are not disturbing; they’re not messed-up. There’s nothing different about them than what else is out there. So if they don’t want to play, I just won’t play with them.”

–Michael Giltz

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