GOD WITH A GUN: SOCIAL-POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF POST-APOCALYPTIC CINEMA

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*God with a Gun*: Social-Political Determinants of Post-Apocalyptic Cinema

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ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT

God with a Gun: Social-Political Determinants of Post-Apocalyptic Cinema
by
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This project report and my short film, God with a Gun, are a study of the post-apocalyptic film genre, and the social and political commentary contained therein. God with a Gun, a redemption story set in a typical post-apocalyptic film atmosphere, combines formulaic genre archetypes, with visual elements of traditional noir and experimental film. The story centers on a guilt-ridden protagonist who is consumed with committing violent retribution, after inadvertently aiding in the creation of a catastrophic viral epidemic. In addition, this project report analyzes Richard Matheson’s novel I Am Legend, and its influence on modern post-apocalyptic cinema.

Along with theoretical discussion and analysis of media such as 28 Days Later, The Omega Man, and related post-apocalyptic literature, this report addresses my efforts to employ a non-conventional storyline and presentation in developing God with a Gun. I will also explore the fiscal and creative challenges of producing a post-apocalyptic film that embraces an abstract visual and aural approach without compromising fundamental concepts of the genre.

The DVD of the film is available for viewing at the Media Center at Love Library.
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Maybe someday *I Am Legend* will be filmed as I wrote the book, but I doubt it.
—Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend*

Originally, I was driven to produce a loose adaptation of Richard Matheson’s novel, *I Am Legend*, as the foundation of analyzing the political determinants of post-apocalyptic cinema. My short film titled, *God with a Gun*, depicts a world after a global pandemic. According to author Charles P. Mitchell, “The genre of apocalyptic cinema is closely related to, yet distinct from, a similar genre primarily know as post-apocalyptic cinema, which concentrates on survivors of a catastrophic event struggling to reestablish a livable society.” The author further adds, “If this catastrophe occurs prior to the events depicted on the screen, the film is post-apocalyptic” (xi). A loose adaptation is defined as, “A film based on another medium (usually a work of literature) in which only a vague general resemblance exists between the two versions of the subject” (Giannetti 537). Matheson’s novel is filled with contemporaneous political and social commentary, and provides the basic blueprint for a short film that exemplifies the post-apocalyptic film genre. Filmmakers Danny Boyle (*28 Days Later*) and George Romero (*Night of the Living Dead*), and writers Stephen King and Dean Koontz, all were inspired by the themes and originality of *I Am Legend*. Attempts by other filmmakers to adapt this novel into a film resulted in uninspired direction and scripts that strayed considerably from the source material. Although producing a loose adaptation of Matheson’s novel presented complex narrative dilemmas, as well numerous fiscal and design challenges, I felt the process of creating this short film would be a rewarding experience.

At the outset of this project I questioned how I could produce a film loosely based on *I Am Legend* and other films from the post-apocalyptic film genre without drawing criticism about its originality. In addition, how can I utilize an abstract visual and story structure and still be congruent with the post-apocalyptic genre? And finally, how can I use contemporaneous social issues as a vehicle for generating conflict in the narrative?
This project report studies related films and literature to understand the principles and evolution of the post-apocalyptic narrative, and the methods used to incorporate social commentary into the storylines.

**STATEMENT OF SUB PROBLEMS**

Initially, the question loomed about the practicality of my non-linear approach to this story. Even though I am planning on utilizing an abstract story and visual structure with my film, how would the story be shaped to include current political and social commentary? Of primary importance was my ability to create an original loose adaptation of *I Am Legend* while still containing the necessary components of the post-apocalyptic genre. Upon creating this film, I was concerned with confusing the audience due to not adhering to the principles of the genre. Therefore, it would be imperative to identify and utilize the character and story elements that are consistent with post-apocalyptic cinema.

Of equal concern, with a loose adaptation of *I Am Legend*, design and aesthetic problems existed. What kind of visual and aural techniques could successfully convey my intended atmosphere and still create a unique experience? The aesthetic choices that I made with *God with a Gun* greatly impact the themes and overall atmosphere of the film.

In addition, practical issues existed in *God with a Gun*. The film takes place after a global pandemic wipes out most of civilization, and obtaining locations in the San Diego that represented urban decay or industrialization would prove difficult.

From its conception, it has been my belief that this project would provide the freedom to research and experiment with a variety of filmmaking techniques, post-apocalyptic genre themes, and approaches to attempt to create a short picture that is genuine to the post-apocalyptic film genre.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary goal is to make a loose adaptation of Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* by employing formulaic genre archetypes and contemporaneous social commentary to create a unique picture.

The secondary goal is to make a short film that illustrates how political and social movements can influence character and story clichés within the post-apocalyptic film genre.
The third goal is to successfully produce a short film with an abstract story and visual structure that adheres to the principles of post-apocalyptic cinema.

My final goal is create a short film that demonstrates my creative abilities as an aspiring filmmaker, and to create a film that others can learn from.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Apocalyptic Cinema:** A motion picture that depicts a credible threat to the continuing existence of humankind as a species or the existence of Earth as a planet capable of supporting human life (Mitchell xi).

**Broken Wall:** When an actor turns to the camera and starts talking to us, the Broken Wall technique can be seen (Vineyard 67).

**Chiaroscuro Lighting:** Hard, unfiltered light and rim light outline and reveal only a portion of the face to create a dramatic tension all its own (Silver, Ursini, and Duncan 16).

**Film Noir:** Film style and mood primarily associated with crime films that portray its principal characters in a nihilistic and existentialist world (Butler, Van Cleave, and Stirling 507).

**Post-Apocalyptic Cinema:** Closely related to, yet distinct from, Apocalyptic Cinema. Concentrates on survivors of a catastrophic event struggling to reestablish a livable society (Mitchell xi).

**DELIMITATIONS**

This project report does not cover the science fiction and horror genre’s influence on post-apocalyptic cinema; rather, it focuses on the application of social and political conflict within post-apocalyptic film and producing a short picture utilizing an abstract story and visual structure.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT**

Post-apocalyptic cinema has often reflected the political, ideological, and social issues of its time. From public anxieties during the cold-war era to the civil unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, it’s important to address how the popularity, regularity, and themes of post-apocalyptic cinema releases often coincide with times of war, economic turmoil, and social
upheaval. Similar to other film genres such as horror, the public’s perception and interest in post-apocalyptic material has continued to evolve over the past several decades. According to authors Brigid Cherry and Barry Keith Grant,

the ability of film to reflect contemporaneous political, social and cultural trends (predominantly attitudes or values held by a society or a group in a particular time and place) is particularly true of genre cinema. The collaborative nature of production (being the work of many individuals within an industrial system) means that cinema acts as a “barometer” reflecting the cultural climate. (169)

The authors further add, “It is not that any one film will necessarily reflect the cultural moment, but that the evolving conventions within a genre or the rising popularity and decline of particular genres can be seen as a reflection of changing cultural mores” (169). According to film professor Jamsheed Akrami from William Paterson University, “We live in angst-ridden times, and so the appeal of these movies is further amplified.” Akrami adds, “Most of us seem to seek mental relief by drowning ourselves in a sea of doom and gloom for a couple of hours. The experience can be some sort of catharsis” (qtd. in Harris)

With a growing number of post-apocalyptic films being produced by Hollywood, the cross-over success into television with AMC’s *The Walking Dead*, and the creation of post-apocalyptic themed video game content, post-apocalyptic cinema’s intrinsic worth as a indicator of contemporary social and political anxieties cannot be underestimated.

Post-apocalyptic media has become a cultural phenomenon and understanding why audiences relate to the social and political commentary, and archetypal genre clichés will add knowledge to the field. In addition, exploring how filmmakers can utilize an unconventional visual and story structure while adhering to specific genre conventions is important to understand as innovation and audience perceptions adapt over time.

*God with a Gun* is a hybrid of classic post-apocalyptic films of the 1970s and early 1980s, propelled through the use of contemporary social and political commentary. *God with a Gun* does not rely on excessive special effects or elaborate action sequences to drive the story but rather, expands upon the use of character and location as metaphor. The story, characters, and method of capturing the film are paramount in conveying the themes of overpopulation, isolation, division, alienation, and self-preservation to the viewer.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND FILMS

LITERATURE ON PROJECT TOPIC

The following text inspired the themes and social commentary explored in my film.

*I Am Legend*

Much like the film *The Omega Man, God with a Gun* is loosely based on Richard Matheson’s post-apocalyptic vampire novel *I Am Legend*. The story begins with protagonist Robert Neville as the only survivor of a global epidemic that has turned everyone into vampires. After surviving the plague, Robert’s sole purpose is to destroy all of the vampires before he is infected. The novel begins with Robert going through the mundane ritual of securing his home, and disposing of the bodies of the infected after their barrage of nighttime attacks. Due to the constant attacks and heckling by the infected, Roberts attempts to escape through large amounts of alcohol and listening to music to drown out the noise. Much like protagonist John McKay in *God with a Gun*, Robert’s psychological unease is paramount in the story.

Originally published in 1954, Matheson’s novel contains elements of racial inequality that are exemplified through story and the use of character. Last man on earth, Robert Neville is seen an average All-American who is tasked with eradicating the diseased vampire population who in turn see him as a threat. He is defiant and refuses to leave his home in the Los Angeles area community of Compton, despite his neighborhood being overrun by the infected. Later in the story, Robert is confronted by a group of half vampires who are using a serum to suppress the illness and are organizing a new society, thus making Neville’s pursuit of eliminating the infected more intriguing. In the end, Robert realizes that he has become the outlier, a symbol of the past and takes his own life so that the new society can move on. “Robert Neville looked out over the new people of the earth. He knew he did not belong to them; he knew that, like the vampires, he was anathema and black terror to be destroyed.”
The author further adds, “Full circle, he thought while final lethargy crept into his limbs. Full circle. A new terror born in death, a new superstition entering the unassailable fortress of forever” (Matheson 170).

Similar to many films within the post-apocalyptic film genre, Matheson utilized his central character and the infected to explore the majority of the population’s belief system at the time. Comparable to the zombies who were used as a vehicle to explore social and political issues in film in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the vampires in *I Am Legend* were used to expose the irrational belief of what that is not understood in a minority must be controlled and destroyed. At a time when segregation was happening in the United States, Matheson was successful in using story and character as a means of social commentary.

In addition to themes of social and political anxieties of the time, or the human and in-human perspective in the story, Matheson’s novel is equally about the challenges of solitude and its psychological impact. While writing *I Am Legend*, Matheson would draw inspiration from his own life experiences to develop the themes of his work stating, “There were bad years. One of my anxieties is financial insecurity. My theme in those years was of a man, isolated and alone, and assaulted on all sides by everything you could imagine” (qtd. in Winter 42). The themes of isolation and loneliness are paramount in the post-apocalyptic film genre and directly inspired my character development in *God with a Gun*. McKay is challenged by his solitude and struggles to retain his sanity due to his isolation and the psychological torment he endures.

Inspired by Matheson, my intention was to dedicate a bulk of the running time of *God with a Gun* to character study and building suspense. I also wanted to follow the source material of the central character struggling to come to terms with the ruins of everything he once knew. In *I Am Legend*, Neville’s psychological disposition is a significant element in the story. His struggle with despair overwhelms the character with intensity and loneliness. The story accentuates that the protagonist is a normal, flawed man trying to deal with extraordinary circumstances.
When I began to develop the overall concept of *God with a Gun*, I struggled with deciding on what elements of the source material I should cull from *I Am Legend* and other genre films. However, in order to create a unique picture, I was driven to experiment with the narrative to explore social commentary. To understand more about the issues of adapting novels to film, I consulted Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo’s *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. According to the authors, “The question is—why not just tell a new story; why make the same story over and over again, if it’s going to be changed so radically?” The authors add,

whenever a conscious effort at reinterpretation is made, something seeps from the vessel into the contents, to color and flavor them. That what seeps from the vessel is the American myth, the way white Americans see themselves. Understandably, the view is a bit different each time the story is told. (84)

To be successful at a loose adaptation, the authors stress the importance of the adherence of tradition and “developing and using uniquely American symbols which still resonate today” (84). These philosophies inspired me to utilize the social commentary found in the source material to develop a framework of the contemporaneous social issues in *God with a Gun*. In addition, the authors’ philosophy on American symbolism inspired me to further develop the representation and metaphor of *God with a Gun* through the appearance of the protagonist to compressed urban landscape in which he exists.

My overall goal with this loose adaptation was to provide a modern interpretation of the conflict from *I Am Legend* and formulaic genre archetypes, to create themes that audiences can relate to.

*Doomsday Prophecies, Armageddon A to Z*

To learn more about how Hollywood uses the public’s fear and anxieties to develop content, I used *Doomsday Prophecies, Armageddon A to Z* by Jim and Barbara Willis to solidify the overall concept in my film. From the combination of apocalyptic themes such as oil depletion and world war that help create the environment in the *Mad Max* trilogy, to the disaster caused by scientific miscalculation in *28 Days Later*, Hollywood has used the public’s fear and paranoia to develop an endless stream of films. Beginning in the 1990s
when increasing news regarding HIV and the Ebola virus were making headlines, Hollywood responded by releasing films based on the public’s fear and anxieties related to these issues. "Humans have fought harmful bacteria and viruses ever since we discovered their role in sicknesses we experience. Although it seems unlikely that such a virus could completely eliminate the human race, the ‘Spanish flu’ of 1918 killed up to 50 million people.” In addition, to add to the problem, the public’s fear is stroked by the news media. “The statistics are troubling, especially when such respected news organizations as the BBC use words like ‘pandemic potential’ to describe the possibilities of viruses spreading rapidly throughout human populations” (Willis and Willis 321).

In addition to the concept of scientific miscalculation, elements of religious extremism are prevalent in the post-apocalyptic film genre. Themes of good versus evil dominate the overall story and set up an inevitable conflict between the protagonist and antagonist. In Matheson’s novel *I Am Legend* and films *The Omega Man*, the *Mad Max* trilogy, and *The Book of Eli*, often the protagonists are faced with biblical themed challenges and questions of faith in the story. Also the antagonists are often extremists who use religion as a method of control over their followers and are seeking to eliminate the protagonist. In *The Omega Man*, The Family believes the plague is a “punishment” and their survival is a rebirth, thus their actions represent realized eschatology. *Doomsday Prophecies: Armageddon A to Z* defines eschatology as “the purpose of the church is to help all people see that it is already among us and then to act accordingly on that information” (Willis and Willis 179).

Why are there so many post-apocalyptic films and related content being produced today? Hollywood realized a long time ago the possibilities that exist to exploit social and political anxieties were endless. Regardless of what is happening in the world, Hollywood will capitalize on the public’s fear and anxieties to sell more tickets. According to *Doomsday Prophecies: Armageddon A to Z*, “No one makes a movie unless it seems at least reasonably likely that significant numbers of people will pay money to see it. Hollywood obviously believes that our culture is interested in how the world will end, or there would not be so many films on the topic” (Willis and Willis 232).
A Guide to Apocalyptic Cinema

A Guide to Apocalyptic Cinema by Charles P. Mitchell provided a thorough account of the various sub categories that exist in this film genre. According to the author,

Apocalyptic films can be classified into seven specific categories: Religious or Supernatural; Celestial Collision; Solar or Orbital Disruption; Nuclear War and Radioactive Fallout; Germ Warfare or Pestilence; Alien Device or Invasion; and Scientific Miscalculation. An eighth category, Miscellaneous, is somewhat of a grab bag that is required to account for a few oddball titles outside these regular categories. A close examination of each grouping defines the unusual scope and breadth of the apocalyptic genre. (xi)

Based on the definitions in Mitchell’s book, God with a Gun belongs in the Religious and Scientific Miscalculation categories, because the protagonist deals with elements of religious extremism that challenge his survival as he is dealing with the aftermath of a global pandemic that has wiped out most of the world’s population. Overall, A Guide to Apocalyptic Cinema helped shape God with a Gun’s design concepts because it gave me a frame of reference for the appropriate antagonistic elements that would build conflict within a contemporary environment.

LITERATURE ON PROJECT STYLE

The following text inspired the visual approach to my film.

Alien Zone II

Alien Zone II by Annette Kuhn influenced my working metaphor and emotional image of isolation, depression, and alienation. During the conception of God with a Gun, I was concerned about keeping viewers interested in the story despite not using lots of special effects or flashy action set pieces. I was also worried that I could not create a convincing post-apocalyptic world in the film with the resources that I had available. However, Alien Zone II showed me the value of the “less-is-more” approach by stressing the fundamentals of well-placed special effects, symbolism, and a strong shooting script. I employed these methods in the empty city street sequences to focus more on compositions and object placement to help to develop my working metaphor. The author describes the importance of technology and special effects in popular film, “The stock scripts and relatively wooden performances of a science fiction cinema should not distract from the articulations of
meaning located in the mise-en-scène as well as in the state-of-the-art technological spectacle on display” (Bukatman 250)

**Film Noir**

To further develop the visual approach to my film, I was inspired by the *film noir* genre to develop a method to visually portray the image of isolation and alienation with the protagonist. When I began to develop *God with a Gun*, my overall scheme was to create an abstract visual style that was keyed to the emotional states of the characters. *Film Noir* by authors Alain Silver, James Ursini, and Paul Duncan provided details how noir filmmakers used chiaroscuro lighting, voice-over narration, and a compressed urban reality to enhance the emotions onscreen.

The book *Film Noir* illustrates how chiaroscuro lighting, camera techniques, and object placement was utilized within this genre to further abstract the visual presentation onscreen and to enhance the emotional aspects of the characters. In *God with a Gun*, I was inspired by this approach and utilized chiaroscuro lighting and *Broken Wall* techniques to enhance the tension onscreen during McKay’s fortified home sequences. The authors describe chiaroscuro lighting: “Shade and light play against each other not only in night exteriors but also in dim interiors shielded from daylight by curtains or Venetian blinds” (Silver, Ursini, and Duncan 16)

Voice-over narration was a popular device of *film noir*. According to the authors, voice-over narration “accomplished several purposes in *film noir*. First of all, it put the viewer into the mind of protagonist.” In addition, “it compelled the viewer to identify at least partly with the narrator, even when that narrator was deeply flawed, capable of criminal behavior or psychopathic rage” (Silver, Ursini, and Duncan 20). Following these principles, I employed a voice-over narration as vehicle to drive the plot and to display the internal conflict of the protagonist.

Science fiction films *La Jetée* and *Blade Runner* successfully utilized noir lighting techniques and voice-over narration to convey story, and thus demonstrated that you could employ the approaches in other genre films.
In addition to researching film genres such as science fiction, film noir, apocalyptic cinema, and post-apocalyptic cinema, researching production design was equally important. My role as the triumvirate director, director of photography, and production designer preoccupied me with the visual design of the film. Many of the themes and metaphors that are explored in the film are supported by the aesthetic choices made in locations and production design. To help with my research, I used *The Filmmaker’s Guide to Production Design* by Vincent LoBrutto. According to author LoBrutto, “A design metaphor takes an idea and translates it visually to communicate or comment upon the themes of the story. An object or an image is transformed from its common meaning and stands in for or symbolizes an aspect of the narrative, and thus adds poetic complexity to the story” (25). In addition to providing techniques on how to develop visual and design metaphors such as the compressed urban landscape and McKay’s fortified home, LoBrutto’s text provided me with pre-visualization and pre-production strategies that help me keep my production financially solvent. *The Filmmaker’s Guide to Production Design* proved to be a valuable resource by defining various design philosophies with examples in contemporary film that I could use to achieve my overall design concept in *God with a Gun*.

**THEMATICALLY AND STYLISTICALLY RELATED FILMS**

The following films inspired the visual and stylistic approach to my film.

**28 Days Later**

Perhaps one of the most influential post-apocalyptic genre films in past twenty years, Danny Boyle’s *28 Days Later* tells the story of how an accidental release of a highly contagious viral agent by a group of radical animal activists ignites a global pandemic. The film focuses on a small group of survivors struggling to deal with the ruinous aftermath while trying to escape from the ravages of the virus. Although *28 Days Later* shares a number of similarities to *God with a Gun*, I am going to focus on the visual approach, musical score, and political influences that helped shape my film. Per author Charles P. Mitchell’s definition of apocalyptic cinema, *28 Days Later* belongs in the Scientific Miscalculation category of the genre.
28 Days Later opens with a video collage of widespread civil unrest in England that effectively demonstrates the political climate in the film. While the authorities are preoccupied with the mass chaos on the streets, a radical animal rights group breaks into a government laboratory that has been inoculating chimpanzees with a militarized viral agent called the “Rage Virus.” In the film, the virus is highly contagious and can be transmitted by blood or saliva. Infection happens within moments of exposure and turns the infected into murderous “zombies” focused solely on killing all who are around them. After the subsequent release of the infected chimps by the group of unaware animal rights activist, the lab animals turn on their saviors and spread the virus. The laboratory scene, which is filled with social and political commentary, can be interpreted as a direct comment on the ignorance of ALF (Animal Liberation Front) or as a visual aphorism: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” In addition, by utilizing the location as metaphor approach, the laboratory sequence presents a conspiracy theorist’s ideal of a group of evil scientists manufacturing a virus in a secret government laboratory for nefarious purposes. This ideal is stylistically enhanced by unobtrusive production techniques such as chiaroscuro lighting and fly-on-the-wall camera techniques used during this scene. In addition, the virus itself is based off the concept that once infected, the virus releases subjugated feelings of uncontrollable anger in its host. According to director Danny Boyle, “imagine yourself in your worst moment of road-rage, and multiply that by a million, and that's what these people are like,” and more specifically “it’s actually part of us, you know, and all it’s doing I'm afraid is bringing out something terrible we are all capable of” (qtd. in Pure Rage: The Making of 28 Days Later). Through the infected in 28 Days Later, Boyle was successful in experimenting with the conventions and myths of the zombie. By making the infected stronger, faster, and seemingly more intelligent than their film predecessors, Boyle was successful in revitalizing the genre by reinterpreting these characters for contemporary audiences. Inspirational to development of God with a Gun, Boyle’s genre character exercise exemplifies that as long as you adhere to critical genre elements, there is room to experiment with the story structure and character to create something distinctive.

What makes post-apocalyptic films such as 28 Days Later strike a nerve with its audience? According to Jim and Barbara Willis, authors of Doomsday Prophecies: Armageddon A to Z, “What is so frightening today is that people travel so freely that
contagious diseases spread more rapidly than ever before.” The authors add, “No one knows where or when the next great plague will strike or what its cause will be” (322). Much like the apocalyptic fiction of the 1950s and 1960s, this fear is based on a somewhat plausible scenario, which drives *28 Days Later*, and many other post-apocalyptic films.

The struggle for survival is an overwhelming theme throughout post-apocalyptic cinema. Throughout *28 Days Later* and many other genre films, the concept of “survival of the fittest” is often demonstrated by the remnants of survivors being brutalized by predatory groups who have evolved to be better equipped to exist in the post-apocalyptic landscape. In *28 Days Later*, the infected appear to be faster than the survivors and are seemingly impervious to pain, which makes them extremely difficult to overcome.

For the opening deserted city sequence in *28 Days Later*, Boyle relied on a variety of well-crafted cinematography and carefully scouted locations, to enhance the visual metaphor of the film. Visually, the London scenes as a whole are a burnt out, desolate nightmare, effectively demonstrating the ruination of a crumbling civilization. Despite capturing these effective scenes, budgetary limitations and limited access to busy London city streets complicated production. Boyle described the process of capturing the empty city sequences; “we managed to close the street, albeit for only brief moments of time. We used multi-digital cameras, and we filmed for ninety seconds or two minutes where traffic was held back” (qtd. in *Pure Rage: The Making of 28 Days Later*). To improve efficiency during production, Boyle decided to use a Canon XL1 digital video camera to capture his film. Digital video provided Boyle with an affordable news documentary visual style that helped create a realistic world. Boyle’s decision to use video over film was inspirational. For my project, the decision was easy. Digital video provided financial advantages and a stylistic medium with a sense of visual immediacy not available with film.

In addition to the cinematography and production design, the sound design and music in *28 Days Later* is equally effective and inspirational to my film. To enhance the tension and feeling of isolation during the opening sequence in *28 Days Later*, the sound layers have been stripped down to a bare minimum. Combined with slight ambience, a light wind, and deserted street sounds, the resonance of the protagonist’s footsteps help illustrate the overall feeling of emptiness. The fundamental sound design in this scene effectively supports the atmosphere of desolation and isolation prior to transitioning into the song “East Hastings” by
Godspeed You! Black Emperor. The composition contains instrumental movements that complemented this scene by providing a melancholy experience without vocals. “East Hastings” is inspirational to my musical development in God with a Gun because it demonstrates how orchestral movements can effectively build tension and mood in a contemporary story setting.

Similar to Boyle, I worked with limited financial resources and had to rely on using real locations to use in my film. This lack of funding resulted in Boyle using his keen pre-production skills and creativity to meticulously plan his film. Unlike other important films within the genre, Boyle was successful in utilizing an unconventional approach to create 28 Days Later. The end result was a film that did not compromise the writer’s and director’s visions and created a new aspiring path for the genre. I find solace in the fact that Boyle was able to experiment with a variety of themes and production methods while producing his film independently.

THX 1138

While not necessarily a post-apocalyptic genre film, THX 1138 is highly influential to God with a Gun in terms of its visual approach, sound design, and production design. George Lucas’s first feature length film, THX 1138, depicts a dystopian future where all of humanity is controlled by a robotic police force that implements mandatory psychiatric drug use as a method of control. In THX 1138, the sound design, sound montage, location as metaphor, and the visual appearance of the protagonists are paramount in conveying story. THX 1138 brilliantly combines a voyeuristic film approach with a deeply layered sound design that helps convey story.

Similar to what I had experienced while filming in the outdoor street scenes in God with a Gun, “Lucas struggled to implement his ideas on a tight schedule that, at times, forced his crew to adopt guerrilla filmmaking tactics” (Hearn 38). Instead of shooting in the studio to create a fantasy world, Lucas employed locations throughout the San Francisco Bay area to create a realistic atmosphere to his film. For both financial and aesthetic purposes, Lucas chose the incomplete Bart rail system tunnels that connect San Francisco to Oakland as the main location of his film. Similar to the industrial areas of downtown San Diego that I used
in *God with a Gun*, the Bart rail tunnels provided a semi-controlled environment that acted as a bleak futuristic industrial backdrop, which helped shape the overall mood of the film.

From the use of voice-over sound effects to layered background sound elements, the sound design in *THX 1138* is highly influential to *God with a Gun*. Sound designer Walter Murch describes the creative process of creating unique sound design elements in *THX 1138*: “One of the things we thought of as a way of organizing our creativity on THX was something called ‘Cubistic Sound,’ in which each scene was a cube of sound and it would have a certain quality to it that was different from the next scene which was another cube that was slightly different from the scene before” (qtd. in *THX 1138*).

In addition to the sound design of *THX 1138*, I was inspired by Lucas’s experimentation to create original music. “In the early mornings and late evenings, Lucas and Murch would debate the evolving nature of the film. They wondered how experimental they could dare to make the events on screen. One of the most innovative ideas they developed was to try to give the soundtrack a separate, additional identity from the pictures” (Hearn 38). Murch also experimented with musical elements to create sound effects elements in *THX 1138*. “I would take the music and record it backwards or I would slow it down by four hundred percent and layer it so one piece of music would fade in from another piece of music. So I was treating music as I would different tonalities, room tones, or atmospheres as a sound effect” (qtd. in *THX 1138*) This experimentation led the composer to use Murch’s test recordings as the framework to develop the soundtrack for the film. Following Murch’s lead, I used similar experimentation with sound effects and music elements in *God with a Gun*. For the interior dialog sequences, I recorded guitar feedback and played music backwards to further illustrate the protagonist’s psychological descent. For the library sequence, I manipulated the frequency scale of the room tones, footsteps, and wind to create unique sounds.

George Lucas on the experimentation in *THX 1138*: “Walter Murch and I always like to call *THX 1138* a Cubist film, because what we tried to do was detach the images; the stories and the themes, and the sound and the images, were all slightly different views of the same thing, seen simultaneously” (qtd. in Hearn 38). With an unobtrusive camera style and brilliant sound design by Walter Murch, Lucas accomplished the realistic documentary look he originally conceptualized. The visual approach, minimal use of dialogue, and deeply
layered sound design in *THX 1138* inspired me to experiment with aural and visual concepts as a way to convey plot elements in *God with a Gun*.

**Le Jetée**

*La Jetée* is a 1962 French science fiction short film directed by Chris Marker that is set amid a post-apocalyptic backdrop. Highly inspirational to director Terry Gilliam’s *12 Monkeys* and other post-apocalyptic films, *La Jetée* employs black and white still photos to tell the story of a post-nuclear war experiment in time travel. According to author Charles P. Mitchell’s definition of apocalyptic cinema, *La Jetée* contains story elements of the Nuclear War and Radioactive Fallout category of the apocalyptic film genre.

In terms of its visual structure and voice-over narration, *La Jetée* exemplifies the minimalist approach I was seeking with *God with a Gun* by artistically combining dissolves, chiaroscuro lighting, photographic leading lines, and aural effects to support the expressionistic atmosphere and narrative.

Similar to *God with a Gun*, *La Jetée* uses a non-conventional story structure. Author Simon Sellars describes story elements in *La Jetée*:

> Our memories haunt us eternally, morphing and evolving through time so that we are constantly revisiting them, triggering them, repressing them; time-travelling to the past, so to speak, and projecting them into the future; confronting and modifying past, present, future versions of ourselves, family, lovers. This, then, is the subject matter of *La Jetée*, a minimalist masterpiece affording us an all-too-rare glimpse at the paradoxes and complexities of perception and the subconscious.

*La Jetée* is a principal example of successfully utilizing an abstract visual and story structure with a post-apocalyptic narrative. In contrast to *The Omega Man*, *La Jetée* exemplifies that a director can be successful when focusing on story, character, and subtle visual effects to support emotional elements in a narrative. The author adds,

> *La Jetée’s* virtue is its immediate, haunting ability to evoke the emotions of love and desire; its use of photomontage poignantly conjures up the frozen moments that constitute memory. As the man remembers his past, and the woman, he relives it—never really sure if he is sent or if he is dreaming—one snapshot literally coming alive with his subjective colouring. (Sellars)
The Last Man on Earth

Despite several of Matheson’s works being adapted into film or television programming, “I Am Legend, perhaps his most singular work, has failed to garner a faithful transition.” (Richardson 197) Hammer films, known for producing stylized horror films in the 1960s, “bought the rights from Matheson in 1957 but the project died following the scripts rejection by British censors.” Eventually, “producer Robert Lippert purchased the rights and churned out a reprehensible adaptation christened The Last Man on Earth” (Richardson 197). The Last Man on Earth exemplifies Charles P. Mitchell’s definition of the Pestilence category of apocalyptic cinema because the story is set during the aftermath of a global pandemic.

The film “meticulously follows the book for the first three-quarters of the story, since Matheson himself was one of the screenwriters, using the pseudonym of Logan Swanson” (Mitchell 93). Later, Matheson would publicly denounce the film, stating, “It was poor . . . the film was released and disappeared as it should have done” (Richardson 197). Despite criticisms by the author, some critics view The Last Man on Earth as “one of the most unusual entries of post-apocalyptic cinema, combining elements of traditional gothic horror with science fiction” (Mitchell 93). Vincent Price, who played the main character in the film The Last Man on Earth, “agreed that the scenery of Rome made a very unconvincing Los Angeles, and that the production was very limited in its outdoor footage, which could have made the film more realistic” (Mitchell 95).

Despite poor reviews, The Last Man on Earth influenced my film in its approach of combining elements from various film genres to create something innovative. In addition, the voice-over narration that was employed in The Last Man on Earth was effective in using the vocal talents of Vincent Price, which helped develop the background and psychological temperament of the protagonist. Similar to God with a Gun, there are long periods without interaction with other characters, which make it necessary to utilize a voice-over to help convey story.

The Omega Man

The Omega Man, directed by Boris Sagal, was the second film adaptation of Matheson’s I am Legend. Per author Charles P. Mitchell’s definition of apocalyptic cinema,
*The Omega Man* is a combination of the Germ Warfare and Religious post-apocalyptic film categories because it contains story elements of a biological war and religious extremism.

*The Omega Man* centers on protagonist Robert Neville who in his previous life was a government scientist, working to stop the spread of a deadly biological agent that was released during a war between the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. Neville survives the global pandemic because he is able to inoculate himself with an experimental vaccine he created before succumbing to the disease. The plague turns all the victims who survived into disfigured nocturnal albinos who form cult referred to as “The Family.” The sole purpose of the cult is to destroy all remaining remnants of technological man.

In the film, Neville spends his days systematically hunting and eradicating members of The Family while his evening routine consists of living in his fortified downtown Los Angeles apartment while playing chess against a statue. Occasionally Neville will break his concentration to casually pick off cult members with a sniper rifle when they become an annoyance.

Within the post-apocalyptic film genre, the main character is often an “outlier, a symbol of the past” (Muir 139). Divisions based on physical characteristics are often implied, and an accord between the rival groups is never reached. For example, in the post-apocalyptic film *The Omega Man*, actor Charlton Heston embodies the stereotypical action film hero. Heston’s character is a god-like hero, built for strength. He’s an archetype of what makes Americans win. He is a flawed messiah, a symbol of both American virtue and American arrogance. Heston is seen in the film as a “right-wing ideologue,” a closet racist who refers to his enemy as vermin, non-humans to be exterminated with extreme prejudice. (Muir 138)

These characterizations directly inspired my development of the appearance and actions of John McKay. Author John Muir describes the protagonist in *The Omega Man*, “He is the perfect American Adam to work off some American guilt feelings or self-hatred on. The physical attraction and admiration one feels toward the beauty of strength as well as the moral revulsion one feels towards the ugliness of violence” (138).

Despite effectively utilizing the main character as a metaphor, *The Omega Man* fails to capture the overall allegorical focus of the source material and focuses on action sequences, 1960s era social commentary, and overt religious symbolism to convey story.
However, the failure of *The Omega Man* and other post-apocalyptic films exists within the presentation of the characters’ perspectives. Usually, these aspects of the story never transcend the source material and are rarely explored outside the confines of physical conflict or flashy special effects.

One of the more disturbing aspects of the film are the subtle undertones of racial discrimination that is used a tool to exploit the audiences’ prejudices and inspire fear of the antagonists. Charlton Heston is portrayed as the symbol of purity and power who uses his “genuine 160 proof Anglo-Saxon” blood to save a group of young survivors. The antagonists do not fare much better: “The infected are seen as vermin, an ugly reminder of American racial violence in the 1960s and 1970s, and the blood of the white man is seen as the legacy that will heal the future” (Muir 138). Elements of racism and homophobia can be found in some post-apocalyptic films in the late 1960s until the early 1980s. During this period, the antagonists are often minorities or display effeminate qualities which, combined with their hateful violence towards the remnants of civilized order, prey on the deep rooted cultural prejudice of the audience. For instance, consider Isaac Hayes’s pimp-like gang leader “The Duke” in *Escape from New York*, who drives around in a chandelier-equipped Cadillac using violence to control the population, or *The Road Warrior* villain “Wez” dragging his dog-collared boyfriend around on a chain while brutalizing innocent war survivors. In regards to *The Omega Man*, authors Ron Hogan and Peter Bogdanovich state:

> The family is a monolithic shadow to Neville, expressing deep seated technological and racial anxieties. Neville represents science, civilization, and order, whereas the Family eschews these artifacts of society in lieu of destruction, religion, and mass identity; the conflict stems from the inherent polarity, but the superficial differences belie the salient similarities. (200)

Hogan and Bogdanovich also state, “Neville is the symbol of white America, his shadows in the insidious influence of Matthias, Father of the family, and the blood stained vindication sought by Brother Zackary, whose remembrance of isolation now drives his hunger for unity” (204).

Influential to the overall design of the antagonist in *God with a Gun*, religious symbolism and fears of technology are prevalent in *The Omega Man*. “We mean to cancel the world you civilized people made,” Matthias tells Neville. “We will simply erase history from the time machinery and weapons threatened more than they offered. And when you die,
the last living reminder of hell will be gone.” The author adds, “The Family is an undead cult of realized eschatology. They believe that the kingdom has arrived, and that they must destroy all vestiges of the debased world that preceded it” (McKee).

*The Omega Man* and *God with a Gun* share similar themes in relation to religious symbolism. In *The Omega Man*, the ending sequence contains overt religious symbolism. When a spear impales Neville, he falls into a fountain forming a Christ-like pose, arms outstretched and head down, filling the fountain with his “pure” immune blood. After Neville’s death, the former medical student character finds Neville’s corpse, and fills a container of his blood to presumably use to cure the rest of the survivors. In *God with a Gun*, McKay is hung on a stake and eventually sacrificed by fire to eliminate the last symbol of technological man.

In terms of the visual design, early scenes in *The Omega Man* are effective in capturing the atmosphere of emptiness through the visual presentation of abandoned Los Angeles city streets. Adding to the realism of the film, the lifeless empty streets are littered with wrecked abandoned cars, corpses, trash, and apocalyptic graffiti which helps indicate civil unrest prior to the post-apocalyptic aftermath. Unlike *The Omega Man*, I mostly avoided using elements of squalor or destruction to convey story. Rather, I filmed in downtown San Diego early on Sunday mornings to capture abandoned streets, devoid of life, to invoke symbolism.

Critics of *The Omega Man* have stated:

There is nothing frightening or genuinely imaginative in the remake. Although an interesting film in many ways, *The Omega Man* is more traditional and predictable product. It strays too far from the original concept and seems reminiscent of a number of other films instead of being strikingly unique like *The Last Man on Earth*. (Mitchell 97)

Despite its many influences on my film, the filmmakers of *The Omega Man* missed many opportunities because much of the film’s symbolism isn’t explored beyond the moment it’s onscreen.
The Road Warrior

The Road Warrior directed by George Miller was instrumental in helping me develop the character archetypes, visual presentation, and music compositions in God with a Gun. In The Road Warrior, the past of the vengeful hero is established briefly in the opening sequence. Often, indeed, the initial sequences are not present in the film at all: the hero’s past in society, the harm done to him and his reputation as a gunfighter are described in dialogue rather than dramatized. In both sequels Max is deliberately mythologized through oral history, as their epilogues reveal descriptions which assume the rhetoric of prophetic discourse similar in tone to the revelatory biblical dreams and visions of the apocalypse. (Broderick 258)

Throughout the post-apocalyptic film genre, an epilogue establishes the background of the main characters and the pending disaster that brings the story to present day. Similar to The Road Warrior, flashbacks are used as reminders throughout God with a Gun to the time before the apocalypse.

In terms of the use of character, Max’s clothing, sawed off shotgun, and Ford Falcon Interceptor embodies elements of the post-apocalyptic anti-hero archetype that inspired the creation of John McKay. In addition, Max and McKay’s individualistic and vengeful behavior are driven by their past and fuel but elements of their characters indicate that they are open to opportunities of redemption.

The western film genre, and the old west ideal of life without boundaries, laws, and structure heavily influence The Road Warrior and many other post-apocalyptic films. According to film critic Tim Ryan,

In The Road Warrior, George Miller inverted the basic plotline of the Western classic Shane—instead of being unable to leave his violent past behind, Max (Mel Gibson) is a cold-blooded killer who finds he can’t escape his fundamental morality. In this post-apocalyptic, distinctly Australian action flick, tribal warfare has erupted in the wake of a worldwide fossil fuel shortage, and Max, who is haunted by the death of his wife and child, finds himself in the midst of a deadly conflict. As with any great Western, the environment is practically a character itself, and in The Road Warrior, the foreboding beauty of the desert is as evocative as anything this side of Monument Valley.

The Road Warrior and the recent post-apocalyptic film The Book of Eli directed by Albert and Allen Hughes are examples of films that can be characterized in the post-apocalyptic western subgenre. God with a Gun contains elements of this story tradition with
McKay as the vengeful killer who is haunted by his role in the global pandemic and the death of his wife. In addition, the compressed urban landscape that McKay and his adversaries exist is metaphorically significant in the film.

Ultimately, as cultural prejudices adapt with time, post-apocalyptic films evolved to the changing social and political climate. For example, the first two Mad Max films, developed shortly after the Oil Embargo of 1979 and during the height of the cold war; deal specifically with the aftermath of oil exhaustion and nuclear war. Escape from New York was written in the 1970s during a time of political skepticism towards the presidency and while New York City was notorious for violent crime, social upheaval, and urban decay. Beginning in the 2000s, zombies and elements of religious fundamentalism made a comeback in post-apocalypse cinema through films 28 Days Later, 28 Weeks Later, and The Book of Eli. These films and the themes that they explore exemplify Hollywood’s dedication to cater to the public’s ever-changing interests and concerns to increase profits.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

PRE-PRODUCTION

To create *God with a Gun*, much of the inspiration for my screenplay came from the films *The Omega Man* and *28 Days Later*. Both films were essentially about a manmade plague that destroys most of civilization on a global scale. In *The Omega Man*, the antagonist, a former news reporter named Mathias, uses his extremist religious doctrine to lead a post-apocalyptic band of mutants with the sole purpose of destroying the protagonist. In *God with a Gun*, the antagonist is a former Reverend of a religious extremist group that leads a group of outbreak victims with the sole purpose of destroying John McKay, the last reminder of technological man.

I began with the treatment to develop the social commentary and character arc. After fine tuning my treatment (Appendix A), I completed my first draft of the final screenplay (Appendix B).

Inspired by *I Am Legend*, John McKay in *God with a Gun* was designed to be normal, flawed man trying to deal with extraordinary circumstances. I utilized these themes but was also inspired by the protagonist in *The Omega Man*, which symbolizes American arrogance, naïveté, and power. McKay illustrates these notions by his appearance, his revulsion towards the infected, and his actions advocate a refusal of engagement in the film. Overall, the protagonist in my film embodies a stereotypical action movie hero. His trench coat, designer sunglasses, and physical prowess were designed to symbolize his self-image.

In developing characteristics of the infected, rather than follow *I Am Legend* and utilize vampires, the cult members in *The Omega Man* would be used as my starting point. The infected would essentially represent a group of senseless minions ready to follow Ashbury’s extreme religious doctrine. Muir describes the plague survivors in *The Omega Man*, “The infected were virtually unseen in the film. The infected appeared as a metaphor and are quickly eradicated by the main character, who saw them as parasites that were standing in the way of his survival” (138). In *God with a Gun*, I felt that it would be
beneficial to follow these sensibilities and to dehumanize these characters for use as a metaphor.

When I began scouting locations, I investigated dilapidated industrial and urban areas to help create the illusion of the decay of civilization in a post-apocalyptic world. Location would be paramount in conveying the overall atmosphere and background of my film. Since I was working with limited funds and time constraints, extensive location scouting was vital to contrast the minimalist interior footage and production design that I used. Objects and locations on screen were carefully chosen to emphasize the psychological disposition of the characters or atmosphere of the scene.

*28 Days Later* influenced my conceptual designs and location decisions by demonstrating the effectiveness of using real locations rather than relying solely on sets. Boyle utilized well-known, outdoor locations for his opening sequence in *28 Days Later*, which enhanced the overall production values, and created a sense of realism not obtainable in a studio environment.

Before the initial filming of my project, I carefully investigated locations that didn’t pose time constraints and supported the atmosphere of the film. First I viewed locations online and eventually I visited and photographed locations to help create a visual storyboard. I used this visual storyboard to determine the feasibility of using the locations for production and for the aesthetic quality.

After scouting of the industrial areas located in National City and Chula Vista, I decided the industrial areas and business district of downtown San Diego would be ideal locations for my film. Most of these areas are virtually dormant on early weekend mornings and contained some dilapidated buildings and industrialization. Similar to films *28 Days Later* and *THX 1138*, the industrialization and lack of urban reconstruction complemented my narrative by helping illustrate a decayed post-apocalyptic civilization. In addition, by utilizing a plan to establish camera and lighting locations, I was able to improve the efficiency and the visual potential of the downtown San Diego portion of production. My overall production design concept was to create a world that complemented the visual atmosphere, subject matter, and the psychological condition of the characters in the film.

During McKay’s fortified home sequences, I relied on use-centered design philosophies to illustrate McKay’s singular focus to eliminate the infected. Therefore, the
placement and accessibility of weapons would be vital to McKay’s survival. Inspired by Vincent LoBrutto’s book *The Filmmaker’s Guide to Production Design*, I utilized use-centered design in McKay’s home as a metaphor and to be consistent with my overall aesthetic in *God with a Gun*. During these scenes, modern conveniences, creature comforts, and aesthetics were secondary to the accessibility of firearms and ammunition. Combined with chiaroscuro lighting and sound design techniques, this design practice helped demonstrate the mental condition of the protagonist and to demonstrate his constant psychological besiege.

Prior to production, I studied various art and film genres such as apocalyptic cinema, post-apocalyptic cinema, and science fiction. Genre films such as *28 Days Later* or *The Omega Man* typically have various visual indicators of a society in ruins such as wrecked cars, damaged buildings, apocalyptic or religious graffiti, and empty streets filled with trash and rotting corpses. After considering various approaches, I decided that the best setting for my story would be a combination of a compressed urban reality, visually reminiscent of science fiction film *Blade Runner* and post-apocalyptic genre films. Similar to *Blade Runner*, leading lines, abstract camera angles, high contrast footage, compressed depth of field, and voyeuristic camera techniques would be utilized to illustrate the atmosphere of the scene. Also visual elements in *God with a Gun* would consist of the interplay of balanced and unbalanced elements and their placement.

Since I was planning on shooting with a two camera mixed media setup consisting of a 16mm film camera and a video camera, I asked fellow graduate student Gary Teng to assist as the backup camera operator and a small group of undergraduates to assist as needed to capture the footage that was eventually used as the trailer I included with my thesis proposal. After my thesis committee approved the project, I brought on additional students to help with filming and to act as extras.

During preproduction of *God with a Gun*, I was working on another student film where Rob Jenkins was playing the lead. Due to his age, height, and overall size, I felt that Jenkins physically embodied both Charleton Heston’s character of Neville in *The Omega Man* and John McKay in *God with a Gun*. Also Jenkins was a consummate professional on set, which I felt was important due to the amount of experimentation and spontaneity I was planning. For the antagonist in *God with a Gun*, I was looking for an older actor who would
be a contemporary version of “Mathius” in *The Omega Man* played by actor Anthony Zerbe. After struggling to find an actor that met these criteria, I was introduced to Rob’s father Jim, who I felt would be an interesting casting to play the antagonist in the film. Jim’s background consisted of some stage acting experience and vocal performance work. Also, standing at about 6’ 3”, Jim’s physically embodied my ideal of Reverend Ashbury as being a ominous presence.

Keeping costs low during production was paramount; therefore, I developed a budget to track all costs and expenses related to the production (Appendix C).

**PRODUCTION**

We barely got into some of the locations. Sometimes we’d only have about two hours to shoot in a particular place. There were a lot of things that made it feel like a street film—we would get in there, get shots before the police came, and then run away as fast as we could.

—George Lucas on the making of *THX 1138*

During production, I experimented with a variety of color filters in individual segments of the film to enhance key elements of a scene or location. Color was used to identify the main characters’ persona and later psychological health. The color gamut in my film was heavily influenced by the visual representation of the gritty real world backdrop of *28 Days Later* and the futuristic *film noir* landscape of *Blade Runner*. Due to adopting guerrilla filmmaking techniques during production, scenes were often captured using available light thus requiring additional color correction during post-production. Overall, the lighting was a combination of natural light for outdoor day scenes and harsh *film noir* inspired chiaroscuro lighting for nighttime and indoor scenes.

During production, most of the footage was captured using a hybrid approach. To complement the low lighting, I employed a combination of a Krasnogorsk-3 16mm film camera and a Panasonic DVX-100 camera. Originally I decided to capture all of the interior footage scenes with the DVX-100 to present a feeling of immediacy, or reality. In addition, I initially planned on capturing all of the exterior and action sequences using 16mm film to create a gritty dreamlike world. After viewing dailies, I decided to abandon this approach because I felt that the DVX-100 footage was superior in low-light situations and was much more economical given the amount of experimentation in the overall production. To be
consistent, I attempted to shoot the empty city street footage on overcast mornings to add to the bleak atmosphere of the film. The DVX-100 proved to be more appropriate for the early morning sequences due to the portability and cost of blank media.

Lastly, I employed visual techniques such as shooting handheld out of necessity to create the illusion of movement and that the protagonist was being watched. Along with the implementation of droning synthesizer audio elements used to invoke unease, I believe that the combination of handheld and static camera footage helped create the unrefined approach I originally conceived during pre-production.

**POST-PRODUCTION**

After I began editing my film, I felt that it was necessary to add some footage representing social upheaval to complement the narrative in the film. Initially, I researched available royalty-free stock footage; however, due to financial constraints I opted to explore creating this scene in post-production. Despite this limitation, I captured footage of a crowded San Francisco city street and combined it with a riot sound montage and layered image effects to create the illusion of civil unrest. Fundamentally, I felt that it would advantageous to employ a less-is-more approach in regards to relying on heavily visual effects.

Similar to *THX 1138*, I would utilize sound collages to help create the abstract presentation I had originally designed during pre-production. Just as a visual association can introduce a new idea or interpretation, my sound design elements were important in constructing the concepts on-screen. During preliminary filming, I used a boom operator to capture production sound and to reinforce the sound mix. In post-production I blended the organic street sounds, industrial noises, and the ambience of a deserted urban city to buttress the visuals on-screen. I also combined industrial diegetic resonance with indistinct crowd noises and meta-diegetic sound to externalize the psychological composition of the main character and the internal world in which he exists. Following Murch’s work in *THX 1138*, I experimented with loudness, reverberation, and pitch by using audio software programs and MIDI hardware devices to manipulate the vocal characteristics of the actors and to create abstract sound collages. In addition to this work, I researched practices of manipulating the rhythm, fidelity, proximity, and timing of the sound to affect the way it was presented.
onscreen. With varied success, the sound clips expand on the tone of the film and help convey emotional points within the story. During the interior footage scenes I further employed this technique to illustrate the protagonist’s internal dialog and psychological decent.

Inspired by the droning mechanical voice-overs and audio clips throughout *THX 1138*, I experimented using an online dialect translation program to record dialog in various languages with a microphone placed near the computer speakers to create a distant abstract sound. I employed this method of recording with pre-existing sound effects for further manipulation. In addition, during sound spotting sessions I experimented with a variety of analog and digital audio recording devices to capture unique sound effects.

In *God with a Gun*, McKay is consumed by internal dialog of self-doubt and fear of the unknown in his head. Throughout the flashback sequences, I sampled recorded dialog with a Korg Kaoss Pad to create echo effects and fragments of conversation to further illustrate McKay’s psychological descent.

For the musical compositions in *God with a Gun*, I researched a variety of works by contemporary composers for inspiration to create original music for my project. Early in pre-production I contemplated using organic street sounds as my primary source of music. However, after preliminary testing, I decided to combine these elements with traditional instrumental music to create an equally original and effective musical score. Similar to my film, and throughout *THX 1138*, synthesized clips are used to illustrate the detached psychological makeup of the protagonist, and to enhance dramatic elements. Combined with Foley effects and visuals, I used the synthesized music clips to help suggest a new interpretation of the visuals and to further illustrate the psychological atmosphere of the characters. Essentially, much like *THX 1138*, the film score in *God with a Gun* is an experiment of combining non-compositional sound elements and traditional instruments to create abstract musical compositions. The music in *God with a Gun* complements the visuals by paralleling the protagonist’s internal dialogue and supporting the climatic moments in the film.

Overall, the soundtrack in *God with a Gun* was directly inspired by the musical work of God Speed! You Black Emperor from the film *28 Days Later* and surreal DJ super-group Unkle. The first movement in the main theme is droning and detached, related to the
protagonist’s endless pursuit of the infected. However, when the main theme is reintroduced, it contains a monotonous rhythm that symbolizes the protagonist’s repetitive pursuit of the infected. The third movement builds to a crescendo complementing the sped up reality of the protagonist’s altered state. Finally, the main theme reappears at the conclusion of the film, subdued as a music bed under the final monologue. Performed using false harmonics, the score symbolizes the various falsehoods of both the antagonist’s and protagonist’s plights and McKay’s failed quest.

The greater part of the voice-over narration is a surreal internal monologue designed to act as an incongruous juxtaposition on-screen. In addition, the first-person narrations often used in the film noir genre inspired me to employ this narrative device to reinforce McKay's psychological decent. Rather than convey his continual observations of the events on-screen, McKay reflects on his past and his singular goal to eliminate the infected. The tone of the narration was inspired by Val Kilmer’s vocal performance in the Oliver Stone film, The Doors. I employed this approach in order to buttress the detached atmosphere of the film.

Experimenting with the visual and sound design helped me capture the tone of Matheson’s novel. However, I learned that some of the more rudimentary scenes (such as the empty street sequence) were equally successful in conveying the story, compared to the more complex visual scenes such the church sequence. In addition, during postproduction, I found that the combination of complex and rudimentary scenes were more complementary if divided evenly throughout the film.

The final scene in my film and in The Omega Man, is an auto de fe for the protagonists. In both films, a public procession is held to watch the protagonist be burned to death for his crimes against society. This is used both as a symbol of the end of humanity and as the genesis of a new race.

The DVD of the film is available for viewing at the Media Center at Love Library.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

THE END ISN’T NIGH

Why are cultural prejudices a mechanism in this genre? What are the prevailing social and political ideas that frame post-apocalyptic films? Through my research and completed film God with a Gun, I have concluded that similar to other film genres, post-apocalyptic films are a product of their time. Genre films Last Man on Earth and The Omega Man were released during the 1960s and early 1970s, at the height of the civil rights era, and the filmmakers used story and character as a vehicle for exploring current themes of cultural prejudices and the loss of racial identity. As I previously mentioned, these ideas were utilized as a tool to exploit the audience’s prejudices and inspire fear of the antagonists. According to authors Ron Hogan and Peter Bogdanovich, The Omega Man

... takes place in Los Angeles, the true landscape is the collective unconscious; white viewers are satisfied that, although Neville has fallen, his precious blood—“genuine 160 proof Anglo-Saxon”—is left to cure the population, to purify and leave the freakishness of the Family to rot as an antiquated anomaly. (205)

Although I chose a variety of films within this era to conduct my research, I found that The Omega Man and the novel I Am Legend contained the most overt themes of the fear of the unknown and unfamiliar.

How could I produce a film loosely based on I Am Legend and other films from the post-apocalyptic film genre without drawing criticism about its originality? As with every film release, criticism would be inevitable; however, post-apocalyptic films are successful when they adapt to the time in which they were developed and adhere to the fundamental story archetypes contained within the genre. As exemplified by recent genre films 28 Days Later and The Book of Eli, the filmmakers utilized character to present new story techniques. From the fast and unpredictable infected in 28 Days Later to the blind protagonist who journeys across the surreal desolate landscape in The Book of Eli, these ideas invigorated the genre and presented a new direction for filmmakers to explore. The challenge I faced in God with a Gun was to adhere to the principles of the genre while adapting these sensibilities to
create something original. I decided to base my main characters off genre stereotypes and to base the conflict on the growing religious fundamentalist movement and anti-science bias. In addition, I felt that by employing an abstract visual and story approach, it would present the material in a unique way from its film predecessors.

How can I utilize an abstract visual and story structure and still be congruent with the post-apocalyptic genre? All of the films within the post-apocalyptic film category vary in story structure and visual approach but are related due to being set in a world after a global disaster. In addition, these films share themes of the existence of a pre-apocalyptic civilization, and the stories often focus on the psychology of the survivors struggling to deal with their plight. The setting is usually in a non-technological world where only scattered fragments of technology or civilization remain. Also, many films in this genre use character and the landscape in which they exist to explore political and social commentary. If the filmmaker adheres to these critical classifying elements of post-apocalyptic cinema, the visual and story structure the filmmaker employs will not affect its place in this film category.

Through my research I have determined that similar to the movement to explore contemporaneous political and social commentary in post-apocalyptic cinema, filmmakers who employ non-conventional techniques such as an abstract visual and story structure are supporting the genre as a vehicle for artistic innovation much as it was during the late 1960s and early 1970s. For this genre to remain relevant, filmmakers will need to continue to experiment with themes and character while adapting to complexities of their audience's interests.

How can I use contemporaneous social issues as a vehicle for generating conflict in the narrative? And how would the story be shaped to include current political and social commentary? *God with a Gun* is driven by post-apocalyptic archetypes to explore the rift between religion and science. In 2004, while I was writing the screenplay for *God with a Gun*, 9/11 was only a few years past, and the country had seen a resurgence of conservatism and religious ideology in politics. During this period, interest in the religion versus science debate grew; from the government ban on stem cell research to the push for teaching creationism over evolution, this conflict became a center of public discourse and media focus. In *God with a Gun*, I explored ideas of scientific miscalculation and religious
extremism through McKay’s involvement in the development of the virus and by the antagonist using realized eschatology to justify the cleansing of the old world to eliminate McKay, the last symbol of technological man. Essentially, I used character, location, and religious symbolism to shape the conflict and to question the ideologies presented onscreen.

Much like any other film, I started with an outline, and adjusted the script to focus solely on the critical story elements necessary to create a convincing genre film. Focusing on the story arc, character, plot elements, and essential design components allowed me to invest more time honing the overall conflict in the film rather than consume resources developing complex special effects sequences that do not complement the narrative.

What kind of visual and aural techniques could successfully convey my intended atmosphere and still create a unique experience? I found that utilizing sound design and musical elements as the primary source of my abstract presentation allowed me to employ a more straightforward approach to the visuals and still create a unique presentation. I combined traditional and non-traditional musical elements to strengthen the narrative but also to help create an abstract presentation. Recorded sound effects were played backwards or manipulated to imply psychological distress. I also decided to create sound collages with recorded human voices in a variety of languages to further illustrate the scope of the catastrophe and to help create a sense of chaos on-screen. Initially, the recurring music theme in *God with a Gun* was used to illustrate the protagonist’s goal to eliminate the infected but ends in false harmonics. The purpose was to display the failure of McKay’s quest and to present the falsehoods of both ideologies. When I began to develop the visuals and musical components of my film, I was driven to explore how abstract I could go. It really intrigued me to see how I could make music from sound effects, midi keyboards, drum machines, and guitar feedback rather than rely on standard musical compositions. I think these experiments helped develop the narrative while presenting the material in a unique way.

Although I used a variety of directional lighting and camera techniques combined with handheld camera footage, I decided to rely on a less-is-more approach with the visuals throughout the film. During initial testing, I concluded that I could be more effective by manipulating the tension on-screen through pace of the editing and the timing of transitions. Pace deepened the experience by balancing the characters experience on-screen. In addition,
experimenting with the speed and duration of the transitions between scenes helped create a more abstract presentation by manipulating time and space.

Despite the post-apocalyptic film genre becoming increasingly cliché, the public’s interest has endured. Recent genre film *The Book of Eli* was a box office success and AMC’s *Walking Dead* continues to elicit high ratings, while organized “Zombie Walks” across the globe have been growing in popularity for use in social activism. With the global financial crisis, fears of nuclear proliferation, and the continuing threat of terrorism, there is plenty of fodder for socially relevant storylines in the post-apocalyptic genre. And the recent announcement of two more *Mad Max* films scheduled for production next year ensures Hollywood will be producing films that depict the end for a long time.

**FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

If you have perfection, there is nowhere to go. With perfection there is no communication. You have nothing to access. The disasters are what bring life and allow us to connect.

—Malcolm McLaren, Founder of the Sex Pistols

Subsequent to working on the film for over a year, I feel I never truly achieved what I had originally designed. After taking time to carefully examine the breadth of the project, I reached the following conclusion: If I were to start the process over, I would have further developed the back-story of the main character, would follow the source material more closely, allocate more time to casting, and spend more time researching available financial resources.

Having to leave out elements of the original source material, such as the transformation of the infected and the fire pit scene, took away from the cohesiveness of the story. In addition, scheduling conflicts and budgetary constraints caused me to eliminate another significant scene, which showed McKay developing viral agents in a government laboratory. This scene would have illuminated McKay’s involvement in the military apparatus that was partially responsible for the viral outbreak, and further explain his remorse and strong hatred for the infected.

My original screenplay contained more graphic violence and complex stunts. For example, the scene in which John McKay flees to a vehicle to find that it has been disabled by the infected was changed dramatically just days before the shoot. Originally, the group of assailants destroyed the exterior of the vehicle with the protagonist trapped inside.
Logistically this was difficult to produce, and after preliminary tests I decided to discard the scene altogether because of permit and safety issues. I feel strongly that this scene would have enhanced the sense of urgency and foreboding in the last act. Instead, I chose to create this scene in a much more subdued fashion by having McKay chased from the library to find his vehicle disabled and is eventually captured by a group of assailants. Overall, this scene was developed to illustrate that the infected were organizing under the antagonist’s leadership.

Budgetary constraints prevented me from securing permits to adequately adorn the empty city streets with debris and fake corpses. My second option was to utilize digital effects in order to fully realize the post-pandemic world I was creating. Initial tests were promising, but due to time constraints I decided not to include any composite sequences in the final version of the film.

Post-production became one of the most complex challenges of the entire production. During the course of logging and editing footage, I experienced technical glitches, which deleted months of edited footage. These losses forced me to conduct the editing of the film in a different sequence than planned. During these editing sessions, I found myself changing my approach to the film, leaning towards an angle that was more fragmented and abstract in nature, and less linear.

Despite these deficiencies, the film is densely layered with ideas and themes that help create an intriguing narrative. *God with a Gun* became a collection of scientific, religious, and political commentary connected through a series of moving images and surreal dialog. Much of the dialog of the protagonist and antagonist throughout the film is influenced by religious and scientific fundamentalism, which helped illustrate the conflict in the story.

The theoretical and production experiences that I encountered over the course of this program enabled me to draw upon these experiences and use them in my work. The various stylistic approaches used; the hours spent editing, rewriting, and designing; and the impediments that I encountered strengthened my production skills. I truly feel that I was successful in creating a film that one can access, analyze, and learn from.
WORKS CITED


La Jetée. Dir. Chris Marker. Criterion Collection, 1962. DVD.

The Last Man on Earth. Dir. Sidney Salkow. Associated Producers, 1964. DVD.


28 Days Later. Dir. Danny Boyle. Film Four, 2002. DVD.


TREATMENT

John McKay, a man in his mid to late 30s is sitting at a workbench loading a gun thinking about his past, his present, and his future.

John spends his days now walking through silent streets with scattered litter, searching for anyone alive. While John is walking he stops to stare at a blinking streetlight and begins to have a daydream about the past.

A group of people standing around a man vomiting on the street and others watching a TV broadcast of an Evangelist through a department store window.

John wakes from the daydream. The sound of the wind reminds him of his existence. He continues walking. John is walking down the street unaware that the infected are watching him. While John is walking he notices human forms running away.

A phone begins to ring from across the street. John spins around to look at the phone booth, hesitates, and walks slowly towards it. The phone stops ringing before John reaches it . . . He has a conversation with a person on the phone.

John pauses . . . and slowly puts the phone back. John begins to walk over to an abandoned vehicle. John manages to rip the door open. The car doesn’t turnover. John ditches the car and runs frantically up the street.

As John runs up his street, he can faintly hear the infected call out his name. John runs up his driveway and reaches the front door. While scrambling to get his keys, a group of the infected is running towards him.
John lunges towards the door, slamming it shut. After securing the front door, John enters the living room, puts on a CD to drown out their incessant heckling, pours himself a drink, and melts into the couch. John walks into the bathroom, pauses, and stares into the mirror.

The heckling disturbs John and resembles the voices in his head. He reaches over to grab the remote from his coffee table to increase the volume. The heckling keeps John up all night.

The next morning, John walks over to an abandoned vehicle with some water and oil. John drives the car down the street towards the University.

John parks the car on an empty street on the school campus, grabs his gear and heads towards the library in search of the infected.

As John opens the heavy doors of the library, it feels completely empty. Occasionally John could hear the sound of the wind outside. When he couldn’t hear the wind, an ambient sound came from outside.

His eyes began moving from book to book. After passing by “Chemistry,” “Engineering,” he eventually stumbled upon some general books on science. That was what he was looking for. He grabbed some books on anatomy, physiology, and bacteriology and headed over to a table.

John checks his wristwatch. John quickly gathered up his books and stuffed them into his backpack. He then hears a large amount of footsteps rushing towards him. He then runs down the steps for the main entrance.

After John returned to the car, to find that it wouldn’t turn over. He opened the hood.

John quickly jumped back in the car to grab his gun; a group of the infected had surrounded his car. John quickly slammed the door and reaches for his gun. The infected tear the car apart.
Two of the infected jump on top causing the roof to cave down. John spins around in the car towards the hood; he fires his gun through the window, which knocks the infected off the hood. The infected break through the driver side window showering John with glass. Realizing the immobile car is a death trap; John jumps out hurling bullets in various directions.

As John is preoccupied with the infected in front of him, one of the infected on the roof of the car jumps on top of John knocking him and his weapon to the ground.

John attempts to grab the crossbow on the ground, but is overpowered by the large group. The infected pin John to the ground and repeatedly beat him into submission.

Disoriented and suffering from his wounds, John loses sense of time and space. Surrounded by a group of scientists, wearing lab coat, John combines chemical agents in a beaker labeled “Solanum.” John uses his teeth to pull a belt tight around his arm. John injects himself with an experimental vaccine.

While tied to a post, John witnesses the infected gathering around a large bonfire. John can see a large figure in the middle of the group. The large figure walks towards him. John recognizes the large man as the evangelists from television.

John and Ashbury argue about the cause of the virus and John ultimately succumbs to the realization of his involvement. A group of the infected drags John towards the fire.
FADE IN:

INT: GARAGE-DAY

SLOW ZOOM INTO A SILHOUETTE OF A MAN IN HIS MID TO LATE 30S SITING AT A WORK BENCH.

JOHN (V.O.)

My name is JOHN MCKAY. I was born thirty-four years ago in Des Moines, Iowa. I had a wife Joan and a daughter Grace. After telling you this you will know who I was. What I was about. What I tried to do. (withdraws) I think I killed eight last night.

CUT TO CU: MAN’S HANDS LOADING A COLT .45.

DISSOLVE TO EXT: EMPTY CITY STREETS-DAY

JOHN Walking through silent streets with scattered LITTER and CARS parked, empty and dead. John looks at his watch. It reads 10:30 AM.

CUT TO EXT: ALLEY-DAY

LITTER blowing in the wind reveals a ROTTING CORPSE lying on ground in an ALLEY.
AS JOHN STARES AT A FLASHING STREET LIGHT HE BEGINS TO HAVE A FLASHBACK OF EVENTS A FEW YEARS EARLIER.

DISSOLVE TO STREET FOOTAGE:

JOHN (V.O.)
I remember when it all started. Where I was...

CUT TO EXT-FLASHBACK SEQUENCE-QUICK CUTS-BLURRY-DAY/NIGHT

A group of PEOPLE standing around a man VOMITING on the street.

CUT TO: ARCHIVAL RIOT SCENES COLLAGE-DAY

JOHN (V.O. continued)
Civil disturbances began without provocation.
Unknown to the public it was a level 2 outbreak of the Solanum virus.

DISSOLVE TO POV OF JOHN WATCHING TV:

EVANGELIST (TV)
The message is clear my children. The foundation is crumbling… Only the chosen few will survive this purification process. Suspicion propagates buoyancy. The scientific community feels that the world can be manipulated in a test tube. They think that they have all of the answers…. …Well my children, everything we’ve experienced mocks their theories.

DISSOLVE TO CHURCH INT:
EVANGELIST (continued)
Judgment is upon us. Embrace purification or you will pay for your sins. Morality cannot be observed under a microscope. The sweet blood, the divine wine…. this is the key to our salvation. With blind eyes you will only see your end….

DISSOLVE TO THE MASS FUNERAL PYRES:

JOHN (V.O. continued)
I remember the FIRES. BODIES rolling down into the ashes. Generations extinguished by the flames. The pungent stench filled the streets. ( Withdraws) The fires were always burning.

CUT TO-JOHN STANDING ON A STREET CORNER.

JOHN wakes from the daydream. The sound of the wind reminds him of his existence. He continues walking.

JOHN (V.O. continued)
The radio went silent, and then lights went off. Once again I found myself alone… My wife had abandoned me to join a group of religious extremists led by a fanatic named Ashbury.
(Pauses)
Joan never understood my work, my passion. After Joan turned, exterminating them gave me a purpose... I found her the hardest one to kill.

EXT: CITY STREETS- SURVEILLANCE-FOOTAGE-DAY

JOHN is walking down the street unaware that the infected are watching him.

HUMAN FORMS RUN BY THE FOREGROUND.
JOHN
(Yelling)
Why are you running from me?

John’s voice echoes across the city block.

A PAYPHONE begins to ring from across the street.

John spins around to look at the phone booth, hesitates, and walks slowly towards it.

The phone stops ringing before John reaches it…

Just after John turns around, the phone rings.

This time he picks it up.

CALLER
Hello John McKay.

JOHN
Who is this?

The disfigured mouth of the caller is revealed.

CALLER
You know who this is, McKay… We have been tracking you for a very long time.
Don’t you think it’s time that you stop running from us? … Stop Running McKay.
We control all the pieces now. Your wife understood us…. Its time you did too.
John pauses… and slowly puts the phone back. John begins to walk over to an abandoned vehicle.

John manages to rip the door open. The car doesn’t turnover.

John ditches the car and runs frantically up the street.

SDFX: JOHN BREATHING HEAVILY

CUT TO EXT-DUSK: BLURRED FIGURES CHASING JOHN.

CUT TO EXT: FORTIFIED HOUSE-DUSK

As JOHN runs up his street, he can faintly hear THE INFECTED call out his name.

John runs up his driveway and reaches the front door.

While scrambling to get his KEYS, a group of THE INFECTED is running towards him.

John lunges towards the door, slamming it shut.

INT: JOHNS HOUSE-NIGHT

After securing the front door. JOHN enters the LIVING ROOM, puts on a CD to drown out their incessant heckling, pours himself a drink, and melts into the couch.

John walks into the bathroom, pauses, and stares into the mirror.

JOHN

I am running out of time…
John then grabs a towel to clean his wounds and walks back into the kitchen.

John looks at his bare SUPPLY SHELF.

John walks back into the LIVING ROOM and sits on the COUCH.

SDFX: THE INFECTED HECKLING

The heckling disturbs John. He reaches over to grab the REMOTE from his COFFEE TABLE to increase the volume.

The heckling torments John. The heckling resembles voices inside his head.

All night they heckled him, threw stones at his house, and challenged him to come outside.

JOHN
I would sound proof my house if he ever had the time. Come to think of it I would hunt and kill all of them if I had enough time…right? (Withdraws) This will never end.

EXT: HOUSE-EARLY MORNING

John walks over to an ABANDONED VEHICLE with some WATER and OIL.

INT: LAB FLASHBACK-DAY

JOHN (V.O.)
I made several attempts to create a vaccine to protect the unaffected and stabilize those succumbing to the disease. There had to be an answer. I found something.
JOHN working in a LAB mixing CHEMICALS.

JOHN (V.O. continued)
There had to be an answer. The virus did not render Ashbury and a few others brainless.

CUT TO INT: CAR-DAY

JOHN drives the CAR down the street towards the University.

EXT: ABANDONED LIBRARY.

JOHN parks the CAR on an empty street on the UNIVERSITY CAMPUS and heads towards the library.

JOHN opens the heavy doors of the LIBRARY.

INT-LIBRARY-DAY

The LIBRARY felt eerily empty. On the 3rd floor, the sound of his footsteps echoed across the library.

Occasionally John could hear the sound of the wind outside. When he couldn’t hear the wind, an ambient sound came from outside.

JOHN pauses for a second to look around the silent room.

JOHN walks down the book filled aisles.

His eyes began moving from book to book. After passing by “Chemistry,” “Engineering,” he eventually stumbled upon some general books on “Medicine.” That was what he was looking
for. He grabbed some books on anatomy, physiology, and bacteriology and headed over to a table.

HOURS passed; Intermittently, JOHN would check his wristwatch. JOHN quickly gathered up his BOOKS and stuffed them into his BACKPACK.

He ran down the steps for the main entrance.

After JOHN returned to the CAR, to find that it wouldn’t turn over. He opened the hood.

JOHN quickly jumped back in the CAR to grab his GUN; groups of THE INFECTED have surrounded him.

John quickly slammed the door and grabs his gun.

THE INFECTED tear the CAR apart.

Two of them jump on top causing the roof to cave down. John spins around in the car towards the hood; he fires his gun through the window, which knocks the infected off the hood.

The infected break through the driver side window showering John with glass.

John turns towards the driver side window and fires, striking the infected on its head.

Realizing the immobile car is a death trap; John jumps out hurling bullets in various directions.

As John is preoccupied, the infected on the roof of the car jumps on top of John knocking him and his weapon to the ground.
John attempts to grab the crossbow on the ground, but is overpowered by the large group of vampires.

The vampires pin John to the ground and repeatedly beat him into submission.

CUT TO: VISUAL HALLUCINATIONS

Disoriented and suffering from his wounds, John loses sense of time and space.

DISSOLVE TO FLASHBACK FOOTAGE:

Surrounded by a group of SCIENTISTS, wearing LAB COAT, John combines chemical agents in a beaker labeled “Solanum.”

CUT TO BLURRED IMAGERY-DAY

JOHN uses his teeth to pull a BELT tight around his arm. John injects himself with an experimental vaccine.

DISSOLVE TO: BEACH-NIGHT

While tied to a post, JOHN witnesses THE INFECTED gathering around a BONFIRE.

John can see a large figure in the middle of the group.

The large figure walks towards him. John recognizes the large man as the evangelists from television.

ASHBURY

The last man on earth, humanity’s reluctant defender…
ASHBURY leans towards John.

ASHBURY (Continued)

You have been inadequately trying to compensate for your fatal mistake, not to salvage the remains of your society but solely to assuage your own guilt. What did you tell your wife when she became ill with the virus? Did you admit your remorse to her, McKay?

John looks up at Ashbury.

ASHBURY (Continued)

You symbolize the moral degradation that destroyed the world. You are all that is left of technological man. A relic McKay, a relic of a race whose culpability made its lofty pedestal collapse. The television will no longer tell us to celebrate life with a diet cola. We warned you of judgment. Do you deny that your own guilt is tearing you apart? Do you deny your hatred for us?

JOHN

Why don’t you stop with all of this fundamentalist crap and realize what you have actually become; the end result of a plague, a bunch of genetically altered freaks.

ASHBURY

Look around you, McKay. You’re the freak, the outlier, a symbol of the past. You hate us only because we represent a genesis of a new civilization. One that has no place for moral decrepitude and gluttony. (pauses) You have chosen to pay for the excesses of man, McKay, all alone. Celebrity criminals’ bastard child, you represent the plasticity, and the decay of the corpses that plagued our world. You, alone, will pay for these crimes.

JOHN

Fear drives your hatred of man. Can you deny that?
ASHBURY
Your world has crumbled. At times McKay, you scared us more than death. Your end will erase all memory of the past.

Ashbury walks away towards the bonfire.

ASHBURY
McKay should be punished for the crimes against our brothers and sisters. McKay should confront the realities of his lurid past and learn to embrace his destiny.
(Pauses) Burn him my brothers.

JOHN (V.O.)
Looking through the crowd of the infected, I was the outlier, a symbol of the past. No longer the normal one; after the outbreak I made all of the decisions. I controlled all of the chess pieces. The fear I saw in their faces made me realize this. (Withdraws) I became a god - A God with a Gun.

A group of THE INFECTED drags John towards the fire.

FADE OUT:
APPENDIX C

BUDGET SUMMARY
## APPENDIX C

### BUDGET SUMMARY

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|     | Contingency 10%                         | $175         |
|     | Grand Total                             | $1,925       |