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Fantastic Fest 2013: Randy Moore, 'Escape from Tomorrow'

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on October 1, 2013 - 12:00pm in [Fantastic Fest](#)



Going to Disneyland as a child, I heard there were cameras in the bushes. My mom's best friend, a California native, said she had considered working there in her youth and heard that employees who didn't cooperate with the "Disney way" were immediately terminated. This knowledge (or hearsay) helped dissuade me years later from applying to the Disney College Program.

So when I heard that writer-director [Randy Moore](#) had shot his debut *Escape From Tomorrow* at both Disneyland and Walt Disney World, without requesting permission, I became intrigued: If there really are cameras in the parks bushes, why would Disney executives allow a film to be created on their soil that has such blatant disregard for the company's image?

There are no cameras in the park's bushes ... or is that what Disney wants us to think?

I think I've been listening to my roommate's Illuminati rants for too long.

From the film's poster, showing what appears to be Mickey Mouse's gloved hand dripping blood, to its tagline "Bad things happen everywhere" – Moore takes the mask off Disney's global influence, and exposes how the company's ideologies shape growth development stages and cultures. There's really no escape from the Happiest Place On Earth.

"It's a universally shared experience," Moore said about visiting a Disney park. "A right of passage for most Americans."

The Illinois native remembered his mother taking him to the Chicago O'Hare Airport as a child every summer, beginning when he was about three or four years old, to visit his dad in Orlando. Although his parents had divorced, Moore said he and his father had a "really wonderful time" together at nearby Disney World. It's only in retrospect that he began to view the park as a "weird, artificial world."

"The whole experience seems very surreal," Moore said.

Escape From Tomorrow follows a family on their last day of vacation at Disney World and Epcot. The father has to contend with being laid off, a nagging wife, a disobedient son and his growing interest in two young French girls. The impending breakdown leads to disturbing visions that culminate in unhappily-ever-after.

Filming for *Escape From Tomorrow* began in early 2010 and wrapped that fall. Moore's decision to shoot at both Disney parks was because of its unmatched visceral and colorful nature, despite the film being shot in black-and-white.

"It's pretty hard to duplicate that world," he said.

This "scary decision" was made even scarier by Disney's reputation for aggressively protecting its intellectual property rights, everything down to the font used for the film's poster.

Rumors said Moore and his crew had flown to South Korea to edit the film to prevent Disney from finding out. Moore debunked those rumors, saying that he went to the country four or five times for post-production work because of its cost effectiveness. Editing was performed in L.A.

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"In order to create it, I didn't think about legal action," Moore said about the secrecy behind the film.

The \$650,000 budget for *Escape From Tomorrow* almost tripled during the shoot, Moore said, adding that the cost of park tickets alone was expensive. Even when Moore was conducting research for the film, he and one of his children would pay admission to enter the park. His daughter even plays a character that's crushed in the film.

This was a year after the family's trip to Disney World, when Moore's wife, who was born in Kurdistan, found the park to be anything but pleasant. He said the family hasn't been back since.

Moore said the film's cast and crew was originally going to be him and some actor friends, but when it started to grow into something bigger, he used a small chunk of money from his grandparents to help fund the project, despite rumors to the contrary.

"I think the truth is always less sexy," he said.

What started as a writing exercise, has led to Sundance and Fantastic Fest acceptance. But Moore hasn't quite escaped Disney yet. And the film's success may depend on it. According to reports, the company hasn't commented on *Escape From Tomorrow*, only acknowledging that it exists.

The film has played in 25 cities so far and makes its VOD, iTunes and limited U.S. theatrical release beginning October 11, including Alamo Drafthouse Slaughter.