

NECROMENTIA (DIRECTOR'S NOTES)

I have a LONG backstory on my directing process of Necromentia, something that I feel will give viewers a totally different experience watching it the second time round. I have kept it VERY quiet as revealing it during production might make me look a little bit NUTS. Here is the full story, do you think I should incorporate it into my interviews?

NECROMENTIA REDUX

Eventually, when you get to see Necromentia, here are some hidden tidbits in the film that some of you might care to know, some of you might not care to know. No spoilers in this note so you get to watch it and enjoy it even without these notes. This note is strictly for those who are interested in my directing process.

I have kept a big secret about my planning for Necromentia from the cast and crew because during production, I felt that each one should focus more on their fields of specialties and the details are monitored by me. Of course, this is tough as very much of my decisions on set are based on the following facts and because of the level of secrecy, trust in me as a director is an extremely important issue. After reading my notes, some of you may agree that these details are well... not needed to get the job done, but it did provide me with something deeper that made this movie more personal to me.

If you even have the patience or interest to read all the way, it'll give you a clearer idea on why the movie was called 'Necromentia', a word that I made up.

But here it is, what went on in my head while I was planning and directing Necromentia.

In essence, Necromentia is structured around storytelling, using the science of dementia as the spine of it's structure. By using dementia and the characteristics of it, I used it to plot out the movie and hopefully gave it a feel of what it's like to watch a movie, completely unaware you are being guided through the steps of dementia. But by sub-consciously creating a pacing that mimics one of dementia characteristics, I hope people can get a glimpse of the timeline of dementia somewhere in the gut on your stomach, more than the thoughts in your head.

Necromentia is divided into three parts, Hagen's Story, Travis' Story and Morbius' Story and how each story relates to each other in different time lines. While the bare observer may approach it as an Act 1, 2 and 3 of the movie, which in turn, each Story can be divided into sub Acts 1, 2 and 3 (which gives a total of 3 Acts and 9 Sub-Acts). Necromentia really went deeper than that.

But how it was REALLY divided was using the model of Creutzfeldt-Jakob's Disease (CJD), a rare dementia that was first discovered by German Neurologist Hans Gerhard

Creutzfeldt and Alfons Maria Jakob in the 1920s. Notice that the medical instruments used in the movie (seen in the trailer) were also 1920s era.

CJD is a degenerative neurological disorder that is very rare and incurable to this date. It only affects one in every million people every year, so don't worry, chances of you having it is rare. On a whole, CJD can be divided into three main categories: Sporadic (sCJD), Variant (vCJD) and Familial (fCJD). I assigned each main character traits of this category. Hagen was assigned Variant, Travis Sporadic and Morbius Familial. The structure of each character story modeled closely in the case of each trait. Hagen was assigned Variant because it was actually first discovered in 1996. The later the trait appears on the CJD charts, the later the timeline the character appeared.

The movie is plotted backwards as well. No, it's NOT like Nolan's memento. But one has to understand that it is crucial for it, because CJD, as mentioned before, is a degenerative disease, which means that dementia is a disease that is going backwards. And like the movie, different stages of CJD started appearing co-relating to different incidence and stages of the movie. Here are the symptoms of CJD.. when you watch the movie, pay close attention to how the movie is plotted the same way:

- Memory Loss (Hagen doesn't know where he is at)
- Personality Changes (Look at how Hagen changes)
- Jerky Movements (myoclonus) (Elizabeth's Corpse)
- rigid posture (Choronzon)
- Hallucinations (Thomas and Mr. Skinny)
- coordinating dysfunction (ataxia) (Thomas)
- Balance (Red Room)
- changes in gait (Travis on Ketamine)
- seizures (Travis)
- speech impairment (Morbius)

Another interesting tidbit... and this question has been asked on set many times: What time and date did this movie take place in? The answer is 'I DON'T KNOW'. But there is also a reason for that. Especially in the later stages of the condition of CJD, affected persons may be disoriented in time (not knowing what day of the week, day of the month, or even what year it is), in place (not knowing where they are), and in person (not knowing who they are or others around them). Watch the movie carefully as no reference is made on time, place and sometimes characters do not even know each other exist. Notice that when there is a sign that TELLS the location of the place, it is hidden from the character's line of sight and the character is completely unaware of it. No reference is made to time except '11 months ago' earlier in the movie and it is up to the audience to decipher (with a clear mind) the timeline of the movie when the characters themselves cannot.

One great thing to watch out for is when the movie finally comes to the 'explanation' part of the story, watch how I incorporate the elements of the genesis of the CJD into it as well. Here is a quote of the genesis of it

"Cannibalism has also been implicated as a transmission mechanism for abnormal prions, causing the disease known as kuru, found primarily among women and children of the Fore tribe in Papua New Guinea. While the men of the tribe ate the body of the deceased and were not affected, the women and children ate the brain and contracted the disease from infected brain tissue. "

Now let's go into EVEN further details of Necromentia if I have not bored you with facts that I (have claimed) is not necessary to enjoy the movie. But if you really want to get in my head while I was directing the movie, read on.

CJD (let's use it to represent the whole movie) is a disease which is caused by prions. Prion is merely an infectious agent that is composed of protein. Here are how the prions break down the actual movie in itself. I assigned one Prion to each character trait in the movie

Hagen – Kuru

It is characterized by truncal ataxia, preceded by headaches, joint pains and shaking of the limbs, with progression to death over approximately 18 months for the most susceptible victims. Timeline for Hagen is 18 months in the movie. Pay attention to how many times Hagen's head hurts or joints hurt or shaking of limbs. This is cleverly hidden (IMO) in the movie using fear, blood and pain.

Travis – Fatal familial insomnia (FFI)

It is characterized by insoluble protein that causes plaques containing aggregates of PrPsc to develop in the thalamus, a region of the brain responsible for regulation of sleep. This first results in insomnia, and then progresses to more serious problems over time. Notice that Travis does not sleep in the movie, only knocked out from drugs. But even then, he is awake in his dreams and never goes to sleep. This really helps that the actor, Chad Grimes, himself did not sleep during the making of the movie. Note when people in the movie are asleep, what Travis is doing. Note what happens to his mental condition over time due to lack of sleep.

Morbius – Gerstmann–Sträussler–Schei

nker syndrome (GSS)

Symptoms start with slowly developing dysarthria (difficulty speaking) and cerebellar ataxia (unsteadiness) and then the progressive dementia becomes more evident. Ok, this cannot be made any clearer. Morbius is a mute in this movie, and watch how it directly relates to a progressive dementia.

Below you can see a chart that I have used that co-relates to everything I have just talked about. However, this chart was given to the actors and I used a color code

instead of words for the actors to guide them through the acting process. Instead of telling them what it represents, I merely guided them using subtext related to the story while in my head, I kept all the facts and science of it to make sure it stays constant. The actors only need to know about their characters and what they know in the movie, it is my job to put everything in the jar. The jar.. is known as Necromentia.

So there you have it. Because the movie was surrounded by death and dementia, I called it Necromentia. It was a made up word that provided me with a better understanding of each element of the film I was directing and also reminded me that each frame, each actor moving had a reason and where it all came from. After I made the movie, I mentioned to Bleiberg Entertainment that I really did not need to call it Necromentia as it was just something for me. But they liked the name, so that's how it stayed.

