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For more information about the film, the screenings, and the distribution, please contact Tom Mercer at (518) 489-1086 or filmsmerc@hotmai.com, or visit www.UncivilLiberties.com.

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Local Filmmaker's Political Movie Earns National
Distribution Deal and Premier at Albany Theater**
Week-long run at Madison Theater followed by national DVD release

Albany, NY – UNCIVIL LIBERTIES, a political thriller by local independent filmmaker Tom Mercer, will premiere on Friday, March 9 at the Madison Theater in Albany, with showings throughout the week of March 9-15. And on April 10, the film will be released to video stores and rental houses on DVD by national distributor Ariztical Entertainment.

The film explores the future consequences of unbridled government surveillance of private individuals and is filled with ethical ambiguity. Special premier events—such as a Q&A sessions with the cast, crew, and director and panel discussions about homeland security and civil liberties—will be held during the week-long run at the theater.

“We could not have picked a more stimulating political film to kick-off our new division: Interesting Films Different Perspectives,” said William Barrantes, VP of Acquisitions, Ariztical Entertainment. “UNCIVIL LIBERTIES has a point of view which is important for society to be talking about these days. We anticipate the film will be very successful.”



Mercer wrote the screenplay and directed the film. He enlisted the help of local actors from the Capital Region to star in the movie, including Kevin Craig West, Penny Perkins, Mark Musto, Tom Mahon and Yvonne Perry.

“We are thrilled to welcome the movie into our theater,” said Jay Pregent, manager of The Madison Theater. “I would put UNCIVIL LIBERTIES up against anything coming out of Hollywood these days.”

Mercer holds a Masters degree from Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and studied Politics at Ithaca College. After a 20-year career in public service, he launched a second career in independent filmmaking and screenwriting. Mercer co-founded and led a regional chapter of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), which has grown to more than 150 members. The feature film UNCIVIL LIBERTIES is Mercer's directorial debut.

For more information about the film, the screenings, and the distribution, please contact Tom Mercer at (518) 489-1086 or filmsmercer@hotmail.com, or visit www.UncivilLiberties.com.

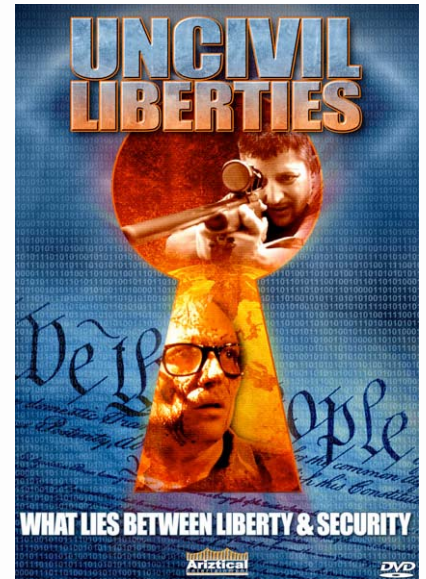
“Uncivil Liberties” SYNOPSIS

Set in the near future, UNCIVIL LIBERTIES shows a United States where the government resorts to heightened surveillance of its own citizens in the name of security, while domestic extremists boldly rebel and take up arms in resistance.

Political intrigue abounds in a complex upside-down world as militia assassin Mike Wilson unexpectedly decides to renounce the violence his assignment demands, and Homeland Security official Cynthia Porter purposely sabotages a government spying operation she helped create. Consequently, Mike and Cynthia must pay the price for betraying the organizations they had faithfully served.

Labeled a terrorist by the very people she used to work with, Cynthia faces a personal and professional crisis. Wilson is gunned down by a comrade-in-arms, although his new-found pacifism is passed onto fellow militia member Sam Norton. Now Norton is faced with foiling a terrorist plot to bomb Porter’s office and rescue her from zealous government agents.

Surprising twists and turns rivet the viewer in this politically charged thriller.

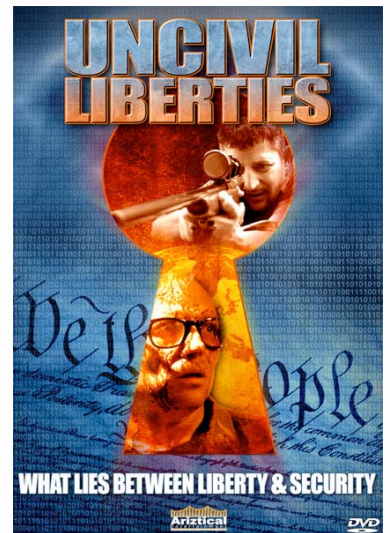


Uncivil Liberties | Written & Directed by Tom Mercer
Distributed by Ariztical Entertainment | In video stores April 10th
www.UncivilLiberties.com | www.Ariztical.com

**UNCIVIL LIBERTIES:
a timely political thriller about
domestic spying and terrorism.**

"I would put UNCIVIL LIBERTIES up against anything coming out of Hollywood today."

— **Jay Pregent, Manager of the
Madison Theater (Albany, NY)**



"UNCIVIL LIBERTIES is a future-is-now cautionary tale of a government computer system that tracks individuals that's gone awry and the consequences that follow. We've seen this film and think it has a lot to offer indie film lovers. UNCIVIL LIBERTIES is an eerily precognitive look at what very well could be our near future."

— **review from DVDSnapshot.com**

"This shot-on-video, 'ripped from the headlines,' Tom Clancy-like thriller could make an impression with modern-day militia buffs."

— **review from VideoBusiness.com**

"...a politically charge thriller about the intersections between a violent militia group and a morally-conflicted Homeland Security computer tech."

— **review from Peter Hanson, "Hollywood Periscope"**

"We could not have picked a more stimulating political film to kick-off our new division: Interesting Films Different Perspectives. UNCIVIL LIBERTIES has a point of view which is important for society to be talking about these days. We anticipate the film will be very successful."

— **William Barrantes, VP of Acquisitions,
Ariztical Entertainment**

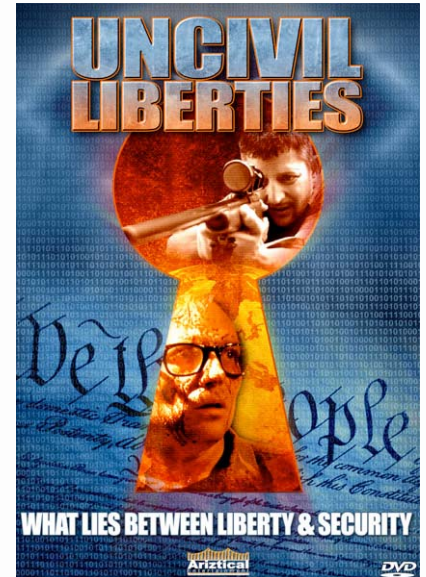


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Director's Statement

The government's "War on Terror" has been used to justify the curtailment of our civil liberties at home, as well as wage a war for oil abroad.

In my opinion, both the war and the suppression of civil liberties were actions our leaders were eager to take—and they cynically subverted the nation's emotional response to the 9/11 tragedy to further their own suspect political agendas.



My film, UNCIVIL LIBERTIES, explores the future consequences of unbridled government surveillance of private individuals. The movie is filled with ethical ambiguity, because I don't believe there are any black and white answers. Raising questions stimulates thinking better than giving answers does. Simplistic thinking—including righteous claims that good and evil are easily discernable—has gotten our country in a lot of trouble in recent years. I believe, and much of history points out, that the most dangerous people are the ones who claim to have all the answers.

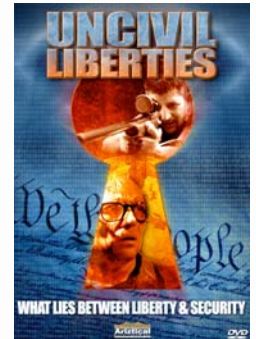
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The Making of “Uncivil Liberties”

Two months after 9/11, Tom Mercer began writing the short film that would eventually become the full-length feature UNCIVIL LIBERTIES. Dealing with the tensions between civil liberties and national security, UNCIVIL LIBERTIES is the original story of a domestic terrorist who is unable pull the trigger on his government mark, the creator of a citizen surveillance program. Mercer began filming this story in April 2002.



Initial response to the 30-minute “Face of the Enemy” was very positive. The short was picked up for European distribution by BritShorts of London after being featured at the Claremont-Ferrand Festival in France. In 2004, Mercer began production of the material that would turn “Face of the Enemy” into the full-length feature, UNCIVIL LIBERTIES. Over the next three years, Mercer directed a cast and crew of more than 100 people, organizing mini shoots of two and three days, usually over weekends, at one or two locations. Altogether about 35 day of shooting were accomplished during the three year period.

Editor Tony Grocki worked with Mercer to assemble scenes (in Final Cut Pro) as soon as they were shot. The three-year shooting schedule, dictated by financial and practical considerations, while drawn out also had its creative advantages. As scenes were edited together and the movie began taking shape, the scenes which weren’t yet filmed could be tweaked before shooting to better serve the larger whole. Also, scenes could be added or deleted from the script, since the shooting schedule unfolded gradually during the editing process.

The movie was shot on digital cameras (the Cannon XLI and XL2), and great care was taken to achieve a cinematic look. In particular, attention was given to lighting and post production treatments with specialized computer programs. The use of sophisticated camera moves—achieved with the use of high end equipment such as steady-cams, dollies, and cranes—also contributed to the resulting look of high production value. Moreover, creative use of licensed stock footage and special effects were used to make realistic explosions and bombings. High-end studio sound design and an original score round out the final DVD product which exhibits a quality belying the micro budget with which UNCIVIL LIBERTIES was produced.

As a first-time writer/director/producer, Mercer had to marshal all of his organizational and networking skills, calling on favors from fellow independent filmmakers and performing artists. The hard work paid off in late 2006, when Mercer landed a distribution deal with Ariztical Entertainment in California. Ariztical is releasing the UNCIVIL LIBERTIES DVD directly to national video chains on April 10th. The DVD is also available directly from Ariztical’s Web site, as well as Amazon.com and the film’s Web site, www.UncivilLiberties.com.



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Cast & Crew Bios

THOMAS MERCER

Writer – Director / Co-producer

Mercer holds a Masters degree from Rockefeller College in Public Affairs. He also studied film at Ithaca College while pursuing a degree in Politics. Following a 20-year career in public service, he launched a second career in independent filmmaking and screenwriting. During his career transition, he built a network of talented associates in the media arts. Mercer co-founded and led a regional chapter of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), which has grown to more than 150 members, the most active AIVF salon in the country.

Translating his public management experience to film producing, Mercer assembled a talented cast and crew to produce *Face of the Enemy*, a short film extracted from his feature script *Uncivil Liberties*. The full feature production of *Uncivil Liberties* is Mercer's directorial debut. Currently he is co-producing and is also one of the writers of *American General: Benedict Arnold*, a two-hour cinematic documentary slated for national television broadcast in 2008.



TONY GROCKI

Editor / Co-producer / “Sam Norton”

Grocki studied acting and drama as well as film at Hofstra University. He appears in films whenever he gets a break from his busy film/video editing schedule. He appeared in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* as the Stage Manager and as Dinny in *Dinny and the Witches* by William Gibson. Tony has 18 years experience working in the editing room on many feature films for noted directors such as Jim Jarmusch, Abel Ferrara, and Paul Schrader. He has edited numerous short films and features where his role also included that of Associate Producer.

JUSTIN MAINE

Director of Photography

Maine spent his younger years building a strong foundation in art, design, and photography. The still image was not enough, and he moved on to express his art through film and video. “A cinematographer is like a painter. Light and space are my paint—it’s just that my canvas moves and changes.” At age 29, Maine and two partners formed MagicWig Productions—a company specializing in events, video and film for Fortune 500 companies. The business has grown quickly and now nets over \$1.5M per year. Maine has several jobs at MagicWig including, Director, DP, and Post-Production Supervisor. Maine has worked as cinematographer on several short films and features of his own. Current projects include a feature documentary about sustainability in business as well as a short film called *Cold Winter's Rain*.



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PENNY PERKINS **“Cynthia Porter”**

Perkins is an educator and a creative writer. Acting has been a serious avocation for her since high school and college. She now applies her stagecraft to her work as a teacher and public presenter. She worked closely with writer /director Tom Mercer in shaping and developing the character of Cynthia Porter for *Uncivil Liberties*. A longtime member of Upstate Independents, she served as co-president from 2000 – 2002. She holds an MA in literary theory and creative writing from the University at Albany. Currently, she teaches at Russell Sage College in Troy, NY and ITT Technical Institute in Albany.

MARK MUSTO **“William Sutton”**

Musto is an accomplished actor with more than 50 film, theatrical, television, and voice-over credits including roles for TLC and HBO. In addition to his acting experience and training, he has a multitude of life experience with a look and background best suited to period, mob, police, detective, upscale, vampire, classic soap types, as well as numerous character types. Musto studied at the New York Film Academy at Universal Studios, CA in 2006.

YVONNE PERRY **“Pat Porter”**

Perry portrayed Rosanna Cabot on the CBS soap *As The World Turns* for five years (Soap Opera Award, 1993). Her credits also include appearances on *Guiding Light*, *Candid Camera*, *Silk Stalkings*, and the sit-com pilot *Dads*. Perry holds a BFA in Acting from Adelphi University, and an MA in Theatre History from the University at Albany. She teaches acting at Union College.

KEVIN CRAIG WEST **“Eric Walker”**

West is a director, producer, and professional union actor, who works in film, television, radio, and stage. Notable roles have been national commercials for Pep Boys and Adidas, roles in *For Love of the Game*, *Autumn in New York*, *Law and Order*, and *Law and Order: SVU*. West has also established his own production company, MoBetta Films. MoBetta's first film, *Project Mo(u)rning*, was nominated as one of the top five submissions to the San Francisco Black Independent Film Festival.

TOM MAHON **“James Swift”**

Mahon studied acting with Herbert Berghof at HB Studios and worked five years as a professional actor in New York City, gathering numerous credits on stage and TV, including day-time soaps. An entrepreneur, Mahon has also started a number of successful businesses. Mahon is currently reviving his acting career and has recently been cast in several independent films.



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Daily Gazette Archives

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Local filmmaker's political movie will premiere at Madison

Author(s): BILL BUELL

Gazette Reporter **Date:** February 19, 2007 **Section:** D: Life & Arts

Movies trying to make a political message seem to be in vogue these days, and that's just fine with Tom **Mercer**. **Mercer** is an independent filmmaker from the Albany area who has remained in the Capital Region to make his movies. His new flick, "Uncivil Liberties," will premiere locally on March 9 at the Madison Theatre in Albany, and be released on DVD throughout the country in April by Ariztical Entertainments, a national distributor. And another local filmmaker, Schenectady native Christopher Bishop, will premiere his new film at Proctor's Theatre late this month.

"[Ariztical is] launching a new division of political films and they wanted 'Uncivil Liberties' to be in the vanguard of that new division," said **Mercer** last week. "I'm very happy that they were interested."

Mercer directed the movie and wrote the screenplay, a story about "what lies between liberty and security," according to the trailer. **Mercer** recruited a number of Capital Region actors to play roles in the film, including Penny Perkins, Yvonne Perry, Kevin Craig West, Tom Mahon and Mark Musto.

"Our cast is almost entirely from the greater Capital Region, and they're all familiar faces people have seen at local theater companies or on television," said **Mercer**. "They've been on commercials, and some of them have recurring roles on soap operas made in New York City. It's a very good cast."

Although the movie will be released locally at the Madison and run through March 15, it will not be seen in theaters throughout the country.

"You always dream about a theatrical release, but when you do that

you're looking at a 35 millimeter print going to all these theaters," said **Mercer**. "Distributors are investing a lot of money in theatrical releases. So a lot of smaller independents are going directly to DVD. Even some of the bigger Hollywood films are going directly to DVD because that's where the bigger money is. The home is the best marketplace."

Finding distributor

Finding a national distributor required a lot of legwork on **Mercer's** part.

"Usually what an independent filmmaker does is enter his film in a lot of film festivals hoping it gets discovered," said **Mercer**. "You hope the screeners like it and will contract it for distribution. What I did was use an Internet marketing approach. I contacted many of the distributors by e-mail, telling them that I have this very topical film, and that they might be interested in looking at my trailer. If they were, they should contact me and I would send them a rough-cut screener."

"I looked at all the distributors who seemed likely to be interested in smaller-scale films for niche audiences, and of the 30 e-mails I sent out, 10 requested a screener," said **Mercer**. "I was very happy that 10 of them wanted to see it, and from those 10, I got into serious discussions about distributing with three of them. Then I did my homework, looked at those three really closely, and I picked Ariztical Entertainments."

Mercer started working on "Uncivil Liberties" five years ago.

"There are some advantages to slow and steady," said **Mercer**, who filmed in downtown Albany and Jay Street in Schenectady as well as other parts of the Capital Region. "We did a lot on the weekends when our cast was available, and when you're working with a small budget, you raise a little money and do a lot of editing as you go along. The film had a chance to evolve a little bit, find itself and grow. You're still tied to a script, but we had plenty of time to change things if we felt we needed to."

The movie is set in a fictitious city and involves an agent for Homeland Security who becomes troubled by the organization's assault on civil liberties.

"I left state government after 20 years to pursue something more creative," said **Mercer**, a Saratoga Springs native and Ithaca College alumnus who now lives in Slingerlands, just west of Albany. "I wanted to make movies that would have an impact politically and

socially, and I can do more of that making movies than working for the state."

The movie is not rated, but **Mercer** feels it is appropriate for all ages.

"There's no nudity and no expansive violence," he said. "It would probably be a PG."

Mercer is currently working on a documentary he hopes to complete soon on American Revolution hero-turned traitor Benedict Arnold. He previously did a short documentary on the Battles of Saratoga that is used at the visitor center at the Saratoga National Historical Park in Stillwater.

Proctor's premiere

Before **Mercer**'s movie lights up the screen at the Madison Theatre, Bishop will have his work on display with a premiere of "Corruption" on Sunday at 1 p.m. at Proctor's Theatre.

Produced by Crown of Thorns Productions, the film chronicles the life of a mafia hitman who begins to have second thoughts about his occupation. Bishop, who wrote and directed the movie, is co-producer along with Mary Shinnars and Crown of Thorns Productions.

The film has been rated NC-17, meaning no one under 18 will be admitted without a parent or guardian. The film includes graphic violence, sexual situations and explicit language.

Reach Gazette reporter Bill Buell at 395-3190 or bbuell@dailygazette.com.

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Hollywood Periscope

CAPRICIOUSLY DECIDING WHAT'S INTERESTING IN MOVIES SINCE 2006

Friday, September 08, 2006

In Freedom's Name



From the outing of Valerie Plame to the degradation of inmates at Abu Ghraib, the list of worrisome Bush administration moves taken in the name of "protecting freedom" grows longer every passing day. Think illicit phone taps, the incarceration of suspects in Guantanamo Bay without due process, or this week's revelation of long-rumored secret CIA prisons. For those on the left, watching the American government adopt one draconian intelligence technique after another has made for a harrowing five years since 9/11.

Count Tom Mercer among those deeply concerned by the ascension of the Surveillance State. "It looks to me like the current administration is using the 9/11 attacks and their 'War in Terror' declaration in its wake to justify curtailment of our civil liberties at home and wage a war for oil abroad," he says. "Both were things they were itching to do, and they cynically subverted the nation's emotional response to the 9/11 tragedy to further their sinister political agenda."

Mercer's more than just another lefty crying foul. Putting his money where his mouth is, the Albany, New York-based indie filmmaker has spent the last several years crafting "UnCivil Liberties," a politically charged thriller about the intersections between a violent militia group and a morally conflicted Homeland Security computer tech. Set in the near future, the feature imagines an America

poised to begin spying on all of its citizens.

"UnCivil Liberties" had an unusual genesis. Mercer, 54, became a full-time filmmaker several years ago after a long career in state government. In 2001, he wrote a short script about divisions within a militia group as an exercise for a program at the Digital Film Farm, an educational facility near Albany. Titled "Face of the Enemy," the short was selected from several entries for production as a Film Farm calling card.

Taping on the digital short began in April 2002, with Film Farm proprietor John Holser in the director's chair. "During the first phase, I didn't feel confident that I was ready to direct," Mercer says. "So I apprenticed myself to a more experienced director for that first phase. Pretty soon my own directorial choices started coming to the surface, but I had to stifle them. There can only be one director, so I deferred to John's choices. But I discovered that I had a strong sense of vision for the film that was not entirely congruent with John's. I was feeling stifled."

Mercer's growing ambitions were emboldened by what he saw in the raw footage.

Photographed by Albany-area video professional Justin Maine on a comparatively lavish scale, the early shots were striking for their professionalism and dimension. And by culling talent from an area in which few films are made, Mercer gathered a team of enthusiastic performers and technicians willing to work long hours in exchange for experience and exposure.

"Face of the Enemy" concerns Wilson (Glen Allen), a militia sniper ordered to kill Homeland Security computer tech Cynthia Porter (Penny Perkins). Wilson chokes at the crucial moment, so his peers in the insurrectionist group create a kangaroo court and try him for treason against their cause. "People should look one another in the eye before they start killing for causes," Wilson says in a line that reflects the earnest tone of Mercer's screenwriting. Before completing the short, Mercer decided to transform "Face of the Enemy" into the second act of a full-length digital feature titled "UnCivil Liberties." He also decided to step in as director. Mercer shot the remainder of the movie in bits and pieces, finally wrapping in June of last year.

In the final version of "UnCivil Liberties," the first act focuses on Norton (Tony Grocki), the militia member who recruits his friend Wilson for the fateful assignment, and the third act focuses on Porter's decision to subvert a crucial Homeland Security program. Woven into the feature story are subplots including the ramp-up to a bombing planned by the militia group in collusion with an Islamic terror cell.

"It is very ambiguous by design," Mercer says. "I don't believe there are any black-and-white answers. Instead I raise questions. Simplistic thinking -- that good and evil are easily discernable -- has gotten our country in a lot of trouble in recent years. Raising questions stimulates thinking better than giving answers does. The most dangerous people are the ones with all the answers."

In an eerie coincidence, changes in the political climate paralleled the story elements that Mercer added to the original narrative. "The whole domestic surveillance thing became a bigger issue in the so-called 'War on Terror,' and so as the story grew out of the original short, the idea of domestic surveillance gone out of control came to the fore," Mercer says.

Though "UnCivil Liberties" tackles material extrapolated from current events, Mercer's other film projects are rooted in history. One of his earliest ventures was executive-producing a regional documentary called "The Battles of Saratoga" (2003), and he's been prepping an even more ambitious project simultaneous with his efforts on "UnCivil Liberties."

"I'm also working as writer-producer on a major documentary for national broadcast on Benedict Arnold," Mercer says, noting that he's interested in challenging subjects whether they're present-day or drawn from the past. "Arnold's story cuts the myths of our country's founding -- the myth that American people rose up as one to overthrow royal tyranny and established democracy. It's not that simple. It's not that black and white."

One reason Mercer's able to push buttons with his work is that he's not answerable to studio hierarchy. He's become quite adept at grassroots financing, approaching local investors and obtaining government grants so he can make the pictures he wants to make. For "UnCivil Liberties," he pulled together an impressive \$250,000. "It was financed with a combination of contributions and loans," Mercer says. "Contributions came in the form of both cash and in-kind. Key crew positions were paid. They were supported with a group of experienced volunteers. In numbers, probably a quarter of the crew members were paid. Cast members worked for the opportunity to showcase their talent, add material to their reel. A few of the leading actors will participate in the back-end profits."

Another important aspect of the production was the involvement of Upstate Independents, an Albany-based collective of amateur and professional filmmakers. Mercer co-founded the group in the mid-'90s, and he continues to draw support and talent from the organization's 150 members. "We can do things that Hollywood insiders would consider impossible simply because we don't know any better," Mercer says. "We can take on controversial topics. We don't have to be as cautious. We can do more with less resources. We can think outside the box. Perhaps we can take more pleasure in a project that is not strictly a business proposition. We can make it a quest."

Several members of Upstate Independents pursued the quest of "UnCivil Liberties" alongside Mercer. Tony Grocki, a former New York City editorial assistant with credits including "Miller's Crossing" (1990) and "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai" (1999), served as the film's editor and leading man. Penny Perkins, an Albany graphic designer and novelist, consulted on story and editing matters while also playing Cynthia Porter. Even Holser, the project's original

director, met Mercer through Upstate Independents. "Our network of independent filmmakers was the source of inspiration that I could tackle such a large project with limited resources so far from Hollywood," Mercer says. "Almost everyone involved in the project has some connection to UI."

As the movie gets closer to reaching a mass audience (a direct-to-video deal is in the works with a national distributor), Mercer reflects on his four-year transformation from the writer-producer of a topical short to the writer-producer-director of a topical feature. "I think the strongest element is the story itself, and the way it explores the triumph of private conscience over community values," he says. "Wilson turns against the values of his community when he recognizes Cynthia's humanity in the crosshairs of his rifle, Norton overcomes community values, and Cynthia's conscience triumphs. The consequences of these separate acts of conscience are all different. Life is like that."

For more information, visit www.uncivilliberties.com.

posted by Peter Hanson at 10:41 AM

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About Me





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Ariztical Entertainment Presents
A Mercer Films & Digital Productions, LLC Production
Penny Perkins Tony Grocki Mark Musto
Glenn Allen Yvonne Perry Tom Mahon
Music by Bryan Cady & Chad Lenig
Edited by Tony Grocki
Produced by Tony Grocki & Thomas Mercer
Written & Directed by Thomas Mercer




UNCIVIL LIBERTIES

DVD Features:
Behind the Scenes Extra
& Eating Out 2, Stray Cats,
The Bridge Game Trailers

Set in the near future, where the government (in the name of security) resorts to heightened surveillance of it's own citizens, and extremists boldly rebel and take up arms in resistance.

Political intrigue abounds in a complex upside down world as militia assassin Mike Wilson secretly decides to renounce the violence his job demands, and Homeland Security Official Cynthia Porter purposely sabotages a government spying operation. Consequently, both must now face paying the price for betraying the organizations they had faithfully served. Wilson is soon gunned down by a comrade-in-arms, although his pacifism is quickly passed to fellow militia member Sam Norton. Now Norton is suddenly faced with foiling a terrorist plot to bomb Porter's office and rescue her from the pursuit of zealous government agents. Surprising twists and turns rivet the viewer in this politically charged thriller.

visit us on-line
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NOT RATED

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package design: galleryworks.com

For more information about the film, the screenings, and the distribution, please contact Tom Mercer at (518) 489-1086 or filmsmercer@hotmail.com, or visit www.UncivilLiberties.com or www.Ariztical.com.