Written by Samuel Zimmerman
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Each year, a horror film fresh off a festival run marked of praise and hype threatens to shake the genre community to its very core, via either shocking imagery, savage brutality or sheer originality. Last spring, Pascal Laugier’s meditation on torture in the name of spiritual enlightenment, MARTYRS, was preceded by an onslaught of buzz proclaiming, “You won’t believe what you’re about to see.” Around the time that film finally saw Stateside DVD release, the next in line in extreme cinema began screening worldwide. Now, Tom Six’s THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE (FIRST SEQUENCE) is about to hit U.S. shores and must contend with a nation of non-festivalgoers who are begging for it to live up to its reputation.

Bringing the mad-doctor concept to a whole new level, THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE (beginning its limited release this Friday from IFC Films) focuses on Doctor Heiter (Dieter Laser), a surgeon with aspirations to create the eponymous “creature.” Consisting of three people stitched together at the mouth and anus, producing one digestive track, this will be his greatest achievement—and the worst nightmare for Lindsay (Ashley C. Williams), Jenny (Ashlynn Yennie) and Katsuro (Akihiro Kitamura), his captive test subjects.

From the beginning, Six knew THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE would cause a bit of a stir, as reactions to the very idea pegged him as sick and out of his mind. “When we were in preproduction, I made storyboard drawings—and then it already started,” he recalls. “When I showed them to actors and special effects makeup companies and such, everybody was like, ‘Oh, this is crazy, this is something insane,’ and many people didn’t want to work with me on this subject matter. But then I got a really cool team who loved the idea. In Germany and Holland, we did test screenings while we were editing the film, and there were people who walked out. A few ladies were angry with me because they felt I was unfriendly to women, so I knew it would cause a lot of commotion. And then we showed it at festivals, and of course those are where the horror and thriller and fantasy fans are, and they loved the movie. Finally, I had found the right setting for it.”

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