WHAT IS IT?



A feature film by Crispin Hellion Glover

Running Time: 72 minutes
Format: 35 mm
Year of Completion: 2005
www.crispinglover.com
(hi-res photos & press kit on site)

Tour Schedule:
October 20, 21, 22: Castro Theater, San Francisco
November 3, 4, 5: Northwest, Film Forum, Seattle
November 10, 11,12: Anthology Film Archives, New York
November 17, 18 ,19: Music Box Theater, Chicago
December 1, 2, 3: Clinton Street Theatre, Portland Oregon
December 8, 9, 10: Egyptian Theatre at the American Cinematheque, Hollywood

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Synopsis

Known for creating many memorable, incredibly quirky characters onscreen as an actor, Glover's first effort as a director will not disappoint fans of his offbeat sensibilities and eccentric taste. Featuring a cast largely comprised of actors with Down's Syndrome, the film is not about Down's Syndrome. Glover describes it as "Being the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are snails, salt, a pipe and how to get home as tormented by an hubristic racist inner psyche." In addition to writing and directing WHAT IS IT?, Glover also appears in the film as an actor in the role of "Dueling Demi-God Auteur and The young man's inner psyche." Actress Fairuza Balk voices one of the snails.

WHAT IS IT?
Cast & Crew Credits

Directed by
Crispin Hellion Glover

Screenplay
Crispin Hellion Glover

Cast

Michael Blevis
....
The young man

Rikky Wittman
....
The minstrel's nemesis

John Insinna
....
The young man's outer sanctum friend and inner santum choking victim

Kelly Swiderski
....
Inner sanctum concubine and outer sanctum snail collector

Lisa Fusco
....
The young man's fantasy girl

Crispin Glover
....
Dueling Demi-God Auteur and The young man's inner psyche

Fairuza Balk
....
Snail (voice)

Robin Adams
....
Inner sanctum concubine and outer sanctum girl who recognizes burning

Cheryl Brown
....

Outer Sanctum Mocking tormentor and walkie-talkie grabbing woman that cries
Later

Tom Carroll
....
Grave digger and mocking tormentor

Lynn Conley
....
The minstrel's concubine, mocking tormentor and ultimate outer sanctum
Victor

Zoryna Dreams
....
Monkey woman

Ivonna Earnest
....
Baby Elephant

Scott Farley
....
Floating cloud minstrel double

Mary P. Hayes
....
The young man's mother

Kiva
....
Monkey woman

Muffy
....
Monkey woman

Karin Odell
....
Monkey woman

Adam Parfrey
....
The minstrel

Carlos Richardson
....
The young man's alter ego

Steven C. Stewart
....
Dueling Demi-God Auteur and the young man's uber ego

Eric Yates
....
Inner sanctum Puppet show audience member and outer sanctum/inner sanctum victim

Crew

Produced by
Crispin Hellion Glover

....
Producer
Matt Devlen

....
Producer
Ryan Page

Co-producer
Michael Pallagi

Cinematography by
Wyatt Troll

Film Editing by
Crispin Glover

Casting by
Kim Davis

Art Direction by
Floyd Albee

Set Decoration by
Cindy Epping
Mike Hardy

Sound Department:

Crispin Glover
....
Sound Editor

Molly Fitzjarrald
....
Assistant sound editor

Erika Gieschen
....
Boom operator

Jonah Goldstein
....
Assistant sound editor

Tim Hays
....
Sound mixer

Erin Michael Rettig
....
Sound re-recording mixer

David Brothers
....
Sets

David Brothers
....
Special story advisor

Adam Parfrey
....
Special story advisor

Craig Eustis
....
Assistant technical editor

Damon Fecht
....
Consultant: Reel Revival, LLC

Shawn Paper
....
Special technical advisor

Shawn Paper
....
Story editing advisor

Aidan Stanford
....
Film color timer

Christopher Vogler
....
Special story advisor

WHAT IS IT?
Notes by Crispin Hellion Glover

I was approached by two young first time filmmaker writers to act in a film they had written. I had promised myself that the next first time filmmaker I worked with would be me. The script they sent me had some interesting things in it, but I felt like a major change was needed to to make it work. I told them I would be interested in being in it if I could direct it and do some re-writing. They said they wanted to hear what my ideas were. When I met with them I told them that if I directed it I would like to have a large majority of the characters be played by actors with Down's Syndrome. There were other things as well but, that was a big part of it. They felt that was OK and I went about re-writing it.

David Lynch got hold of the script and agreed to executive produce the film. I had some good actors that I knew would be right for some of the parts, that agreed to be in the film. Then I went to one of the larger corporate entities to see if I could get funding for the project. They initially seemed quite interested, but as time went on they finally said that they were concerned about the concept of having a majority of the characters be played by actors with Down's Syndrome.

It was decided that the best thing for me to do was to make a short film that would promote having a majority of the cast played by actors with Down's Syndrome to show it was a viable and doable idea. I wrote the script for WHAT IS IT? It was to be a short film of approximately ten minutes. I decided it would be best to comprise the entire cast of actors with Down's Syndrome.

Most of the film was shot on locations around my house, in my house, or on the set in SLC. One Graveyard was a location in Downey and one Graveyard was a set made with a backdrop in front of my house.

The original four days of shooting to make that short film were done and I set about editing. Within five months I had the first edit done and it came in at 85 minutes. That edit was too long, but I knew with the addition of more material it could be a good feature length film.
I put myself in to the film as a different antagonistic character than was in the original film. I also put Steven C Stewart, a man with a sever case of cerebral palsy, in the film. He had written a screenplay many years before, based on certain psychologies he had dealt with as a result his condition, throughout his life. It was a very different kind of film on many levels from What is it? But there were certain themes that somehow correlated, and I realized it would be good to make his film in to a sequel and make the original screenplay that I had been approached with, in to a part three. In many ways all three screenplays are very different form one another, yet they all deal with certain themes that compliment each other.

Six months after the initial shoot I shot three more days in LA with myself acting this time and all of the original cast. Six months after that I shot four more days in Salt Lake City with Steven C Stewart and myself on a set.

Then I worked on editing the film and showing various edits of it on video to audiences to get feedback. I did this for approximately a year and a half.

Something was still not quite right, so I got more cast together with some additional actors with Down's Syndrome and some of the original cast and shot one last day. This last day of shooting was very important and really helped tie everything together. I worked with the footage another six months or so and locked the picture approximately four years after starting it.

The film had been shot in 16 mm. Originally I was going to only strike a 16 mm print, as the concept was to tour art house theaters that would be able to project in 16 mm. The negative for the locked picture was stuck with a negative cutter at an optical house in New York because, as I

later found out, there was a mistake in the SMPTE time code that had been made when the film was initially put through telecine. With the amount of opticals I had in the film it made it virtually impossible to figure out. Plus the optical house that I paid to do most of the opticals was in their estimation, not being paid enough to really try to help solve the problem.

After waiting patiently for five years, during which time I slowly worked on the sound edit with interns, when that was done I went to the optical house discovered that they had become a digital house and were not being honest with me. I found a small company that had a new way of going out to 35 mm with a digital intermediate that was much more reasonably priced than when I first got estimates on the project, and suddenly it made sense financially to do it that way. It still took almost a year to get it all worked out digitally and then output to a 35 mm print. But after nine and a half years it was quite a relief to have finally accomplished a film that I am genuinely proud of.

For the original short film the most that was given in dollars was 2,000. Everything else was donated for that including some AGFA film stock. I financed the rest of the film with money I made from acting. The total process to getting to the point having it be a 35 mm film from the beginning cost me approximately 150,000 to 200,00 dollars.

The more you do by yourself the longer it will take. First time film makers should make a short film that takes them all the way through to whatever point their final film is going to be. This way every mistake one will inevitably make will be understood how to be avoided.

WHAT IS IT? was originally to be a short to promote making IT IS MINE, is now part one of a trilogy that includes It is fine! EVERTYHING IS FINE written by and starring Steven C. Stewart will be part two. IT IS MINE. Will be part three.

I started out going to art therapy groups that worked with people with Down's Syndrome. But it was very difficult in terms of scope and I ended up working with a casting person I knew named Kim Davis. She brought in many great people and we met with more groups and I finished casting what was to be the short film that way. When it turned in to a feature length film I added myself and Steven C Stewart so to make his film later in to a sequel. At the very end I went to another group entity called the applied behavioral analysis center and cast a lot of people from there. I believe two of the actors with Down's Syndrome had worked before. One of those two had worked a lot. Most of the actors had not worked in front of cameras before. Many people ask if it was difficult working with people with Down's Syndrome, but it was not. One of the most important things about working with actors whether they have Down's Syndrome or not is that they are enthusiastic. Every cast member was extremely enthusiastic and great to work with.

My technique in directed them sometimes depended on if the actor was particularly high functioning or not. Most of the actors I worked with were very high functioning and were able to memorize lines. Some of the actors were lower functioning and that was a bit different. But I always knew who I would be working with and they were always cast for a specific purpose so everyone always did exactly what was needed. I have used some of the same techniques I learned working with the actors with Down's Syndrome with actors that do not have Down's Syndrome, and it was helpful with the actors without Down's Syndrome, so ultimately I would say it is not too different.

I truly do look back upon it with fondness. They are genuinely interesting people to work with. I will often be asked why I chose to work with people with Down's Syndrome. I would say there are quite a few reasons but the one of the most important is that when I look in to the face of someone that has Down's Syndrome I see the history of someone who has genuinely lived outside of the culture. When peopling an entire film with actors that innately have that quality it affects the world of the film. As far as interpersonal experiences the most interesting element that people who do not work with or know people that have Down's Syndrome may not realize how perceptive they are about certain things. People with Down's Syndrome often do not develop a certain social mask that most people develop. This can be both interesting as actors on film and

in real life it can often take one in to a certain emotional sensibility that can be ultra perceptive. It really is an interesting thing to be around.

It was recommended to me to look at Wyatt Troll's reel. He was excellent. When I shot additional footage his friends Scott Hendrickson was able to shoot who was also great to work with and in SLC I had several different people behind the camera. I also personally shot certain things with my Bolex that I have had since I was eighteen.

I had a story board artist illustrate the whole short film. I made an animation of it in Adobe Premiere. Even though the film became a feature the most basic part of the protagonist's story are still innate from the short film, and the story board sequences are quite exact in comparison to the story board animation.

When I turned it into a feature I had shot the whole short film of on AGVA film stock. This will be that last film every released that has AGVA film stock as its original source, because they stopped making it. I shot the rest with Kodak. I knew the film would have different looks because it was being shot with different film stocks, different cameras, and on both locations and sets. But I also wanted to the film to have different hierarchies so I was aware that the different looks and textures could mean certain things in those various hierarchies.

There is an organic quality to much Wagner being that he wrote in the post Beethoven Romantic era and the structure was played with vastly. Often his music was used when scenes were changing. I put his music in very late, but it helped immensely. Often the film goes beyond the realm of that which is considered good and evil. Some of the music pieces reflect that.

The sets were extremely important in the film. Originally as a short film, virtually everything was shot as a daylight exterior. When turning it in to a feature film there were some new sets built to create new realms for new characters to inhabit. The largest and most elaborate set designed by David Brothers was influenced by several things. One was a photograph of an old UFA set. After we had shot the film and I was editing I was watching Fritz Lang's SIEGFRIED and Siegfried came under a tree on a horse and I realized there is the image that set was inspired from. It looks quite different in WHAT IS IT? But if one looks at a front on still it would be apparent. Also there is a musical from the forties that has people flying around on clouds that was very beautiful and David Brothers had seen it also, so we talked about it and incorporated that in to it. He was watching a film on video I believe called THE MOLE PEOPLE, where people came out of the earth, and that was incorporated for the monkey women that seemed to live inside of those.

The original short film was mostly daylight exterior and the characters were dressed in straight forward and standard style clothing and wore no makeup. Once it was turned in to a feature film I wanted every character to have a strong look in certain new realms that were introduced along with a new antagonist that was played by myself.

All of the new characters were shot in an interior or on a set and they wore more elaborate style costumes and sometimes makeup. The new things that were filmed were purposefully to have a different realm or feeling to them.

Critical Acclaim for WHAT IS IT?

Winner!
Best narrative film. Ann Arbor Film Festival 2005

Winner!
Maverick Award The Method Fest Film Festival 2005

"Scenes with naked women in elephant masks, Shirley Temple, Glover being lowered deus-ex-machina style into a Maxfield Parrish scene...It's like Fellini on psychedelics -- wildly creative but completely twisted."
-- Jane Ganahl, San Francisco Examiner

"Possibly the most bizarre, uncompromising movie ever made by a major Hollywood name."
-- Gilbert Garcia, Phoenix New Times

"Crispin Glover... America's Best Psychotic energy."
-- Richard Lacayo, Time Magazine

"What Is It? is an outre, bewildering, unnerving, surreal, blackly comic film. It is brilliant in its sensitivity and humanity and infantile in its excess."
-- Darius James, Spin

“Crispin Glover is weird and wonderful... Crazy in a Good Way."
-- Joel Stein, Time Magazine

Veteran Actor Crispin Glover to Tour
His Debut Effort as a Feature Film Director: WHAT IS IT?

Glover to appear in person with the screenings and his LIVE dramatic presentation of his "Big Slide Show" plus Booksigning

Hollywood - Veteran actor Crispin Hellion Glover, who has appeared in over 30 films, including RIVER'S EDGE, CHARLIE'S ANGELS, THE DOORS, WILLARD, DEAD MAN, BACK TO THE FUTURE, WHAT'S EATING GLIBERT GRAPE, WILD AT HEART, THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT the upcoming BEOWULF, THE WIZARD OF GORE, and BOB BAILEY'S DISCO BALLS will tour his debut feature film as a director, WHAT IS IT? with an in person tour, this Fall. Glover's appearances in San Francisco, Seattle, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles will include a q & a after the film screening and a presentation of his "Big Slide Show" which features illustration and commentary from eight of his books, followed by a signing of his books RAT CATCHING, OAK MOT, and What it is, and how it is done. WHAT IS IT? premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and won Best Narrative Film at the 2005 Ann Arbor Film Festival. In the same year Mr. Glover was awarded the prestigious Maverick Award from the Method Fest which was presented to him by esteemed film director Werner Herzog.

Known for creating many memorable, incredibly quirky characters onscreen as an actor, Glover's first effort as a director will not disappoint fans of his offbeat sensibilities and eccentric taste. Featuring a cast largely comprised of actors with Down's Syndrome, the film is not about Down's Syndrome. Glover describes it as "Being the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are snails, salt, a pipe and how to get home as tormented by an hubristic racist inner psyche." In addition to writing and directing WHAT IS IT?, Glover also appears in the film as an actor in the role of "Dueling Demi-God Auteur and The young man's inner psyche." Fairuza Balk voices one of the snails.

WHAT IS IT? is part one of a trilogy. Parts two, IT IS FINE EVERYTHING IS FINE...! is currently in post-production. On part two, Glover collaborated with Utah writer-actor Steven C. Stewart, who also appears in WHAT IS IT? Stewart passed away from complications from cerebral palsy in 2001.

The soundtrack makes use of Wagner and Bartok excerpts to ironic effect, as well as tracks by late Church of Satan high priest Anton LaVey, Charles Manson and a country track by Klassic Klan recording artist Johnny Rebel.

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Glover's books are re-workings of 20 books from the 1800's into new books that utilize some of the original words and illustrations with adding original words and illustrations.

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December 8, 9, 10: Egyptian Theatre at the American Cinematheque, Hollywood

Crispin Glover is available in person or on the phone for interview. Theatrical press screenings will be held in each city.

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Format: 35 mm
Year of Completion: 2005

Official website with hi-res downloadable photos:
www.crispinglover.com

For more information please contact:
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RESUME

ACTING

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR FILMED
My Tutor	George Bowers	1982
Racing With the Moon	Richard Benjamin	1983
The Orkly Kid	Trent Harris	1983
Teachers	Arthur Hiller	1984
Back to the Future	Robert Zemeckis	1984-85
At Close Range	James Foley	1985
River's Edge	Tim Hunter	1986
Twister	Michael Almereyda	1988
Where the Heart Is	John Boorman	1989
Wild At Heart	David Lynch	1989
The Doors	Oliver Stone	1989
Rubin and Ed	Trent Harris	1990
Little Noises	Jane Spencer	1990
30 Door Key	Jersey Skolimoski	1990
Hotel Room	David Lynch	1992
Even Cowgirls Get The Blues	Gus Van Sant	1992
What's Eating Gilbert Grape?	Lasse Halstrom	1992
Crime And Punishment	Joseph Goldman	1993
Chasers	Dennis Hopper	1993
Dead Man	Jim Jarmusch	1994
What is it?	Crispin Hellion Glover	1995-2005
The People Vs. Larry Flynt	Milos Foremna	1996
Nurse Betty	Neil LaBute	1998
Bartleby	Jonathan Parker	2000
Charlie's Angels	Mc G	2000
Fast Sofa	Salome Breziner	2000
Like Mike	John Schultz	2002
Willard	Glenn Morgan	2002
Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle	Mc G	2002
Red Light Runners	Nick Egan	2003
Drop Dead Sexy	Michael Philip	2004
Simon Says	William Dear	2005
Beowulf	Robert Zemeckis	2005
The Wizard of Gore	Jeremy Kasten	2006
Bob Bailey's Disco Balls	Jason Friedberg & Aaron Seltzer	2006

BOOKS PUBLISHED

BOOK TITLE	PUBLISHING COMPANY	1ST PRINT YEAR
Rat Catching	Volcanic Eruptions	1988
Oak Mot	Volcanic Eruptions	1991
Concrete Inspection	Volcanic Eruptions	1992
What it is, and how it is done.	Volcanic Eruptions	1995

RECORDING

ALBUM TITLE	RECORD COMPANY	YEAR RELEASED
The Big Problem does not equall The Solution. The Solution = Let It Be.	Restless Records	1989

DIRECTING

TITLE	COMPANY	YEAR FILMED	YEAR COMPLETED
What is it?	Volcanic Eruptions	1995-1998	2005
It is Fine. Everything is Fine!	Volcanic Eruptions	2001	Currently being edited