

'The Mist' Stars Scribe Stephen King, Marcia Gay Harden in Supporting Role

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CHICAGO – It's just a twist of fate, of course. I know the CGI wizards at The Weinstein Co. can't command the weather in the real world, too. But – wow – what providence.



The mist in Chicago on Nov. 20, 2007.

Photo by Adam Fendelman, HollywoodChicago.com

Perhaps the mistiest day of the year in Chicago came this Monday, which is exactly one day after I screened "The Mist".

I snapped the unaltered, almost zero-visibility photo below directly out of my condo window from 25 stories above street level. To make matters even more eerie, apparently the same mist [blanketed Los Angeles](#) [16] on Monday. That's auspicious publicity if I've ever seen it.

Even before the real-world dusting, "The Mist" – which is based on a Stephen King novella and is directed by Frank Darabont ("The Shawshank Redemption," "The Green Mile") – already had a healthy hype machine.

While Darabont stayed true to much of King's story, he entirely ejected the master storyteller's ending out the window and rewrote it with one of his own.



Laurie Holden (second from left), Frances Sternhagen (middle), Thomas Jane (second from right) and Nathan Gamble (right) in "The Mist".

Image credit: IMDb

Certainly in a pickle because he wanted to support the film but also didn't necessarily want to admit someone else could write his ending better, King boldly [went on record](#) [17] about the new ending with these poignant words:

"It is the most shocking ending ever. There should be a law passed stating that anybody who reveals the last five minutes of this film should be hung from their neck until dead.

That said, you're flung into high hopes for a film that has such a hyped climax.

Back on Nov. 6, I joined a [conference call](#) [18] with Darabont, Marcia Gay Harden ("[Rails & Ties](#) [19]"), Thomas Jane ("The Punisher") and Chris Owen ("American Pie"). The call foreshadowed what I soon saw in the film: Gay Harden is its star.

While Jane is cast as the film's lead and devours the most screen time, he's neither Oscar-bound nor disappointing in his role as the paternal figure out to protect his young boy from the fiends in the mist.



Thomas Jane (left) and Marcia Gay Harden (right) in "The Mist".

Image credit: IMDb

While he kicks a little butt, you can't help but feel underwhelmed with his real-life powers coming from his jacked-up prowess in his days as The Punisher.

The relationship with Jane's wife is underdeveloped and the inclusion of Chris Owen attempted for him to mature beyond his "American Pie" stigma. His character proved to be fat that needn't be chewed.

A stable of strong supporting characters often makes a film whole, and when they're strongly fleshed out like in "The Mist," one may even eclipse a lead. Gay Harden took the cake on my phone call with her just as she steals the show in the film as a hysterical religious vessel.

I can appreciate King's devices in this story about a small town with folks who all know each other. He scribes plots you fear will lead you to the cliché but lusciously lead you somewhere surprising.



Director Frank Darabont filming "The Mist".

Image credit: IMDb

When a mist begins its diffusion from a nearby mountain and accumulates to shroud the town entirely, enigmatic creatures are veiled within.

As some materialize and begin filching their human victims through instruments you'd only glimpse in nightmares, you start to become bored at the imminent notion of the seven plagues.

Thankfully, the locusts rain down just to flirt with the concept and King doesn't take the route that has been much too traveled.

Gay Harden cunningly exploits the theme, though, and successfully systematizes half of the panicked people in the town's dinky grocery store, which serves as the film's primary filming location. You grow to hate her character but certainly remember her most.



Laurie Holden (left), Thomas Jane (middle) and Nathan Gamble in "The Mist".

Image credit: IMDb

Darabont is to be credited with the selection of an in-your-face filming technique that effectively conveys what's most important in this film to convey: panic. There's nothing more scary and evocative than human emotion as it's worn on a face.

"The Shawshank Redemption" (142 minutes, which is based on a short story by King) and "The Green Mile" (188 minutes, which is also based on a novel by King) (are we noticing a pattern?) both have a slower feel to them and are many more minutes in length.

"The Mist" trucks along at a decidedly swifter pace and ends after only 127 minutes.

While I certainly won't spoil the ending, I applaud Darabont for his new and conclusive vision. King's open-ended, ambiguous pinnacle doesn't work for me with this story whereas Darabont's bombshell fittingly calls it quits.

"The Mist" opened in theaters on Nov. 21, 2007.

By **Adam Fendelman**

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