



**WMD:
WEAPONS OF MASS DECEPTION**

Directed and Produced by
Danny Schechter
"The News Dissector"

Running Time: 98 Minutes

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INTRODUCTION: DANNY SCHECHTER ON THE MAKING AND MISSION OF WMD

Journalism is more than a job, it is a calling sometimes demanding a call to action. I have been a media maven all my life – from a summer camp newsletter (co-edited with CNN's Jeff Greenfield) in my teen years to an award-winning producer with CNN and ABC 20/20. The son of a published poet, writing, opining and reporting was in my bloodstream from an early age. My heroes were Edward R. Murrow and I.F. Stone, among others.

I started investigative reporting for Ramparts, *the* muckraking magazine of the 1960's, later becoming an on-air newscaster and "news dissector" for Boston's pioneering radio station WBCN for which I was acknowledged with a Nieman Fellowship in Journalism at Harvard. From there it was on to television, first in local news and programming and then the start-up at CNN, followed by eight years with ABC News 20/20. However, I grew dissatisfied with the infotainment values that took hold as news was dumbed down and lightened up.

I defected from the mainstream media in 1988 to become a 'network refugee,' co-founding Globalvision, an independent media company where I created TV series and made more than 15 documentaries. My first project played at the London Film Festival in 1968, where I was dubbed a "hero of downward mobility" for doing socially conscious shows on budgets that give a new meaning to "low overhead."

I joined the media with a desire to showcase the problems of the world and came to see that the media was often the problem. I decided to do something about it by forming **Mediachannel.org** in 2000, which has become the world's largest online media issues network. I write a 3000 word daily "dissection" on the news and views of the day at **Mediachannel.org/weblog**. I have written six books since 1997 including "The More You Watch The Less You Know" and "News Dissector" with two more on tap. My latest is "Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception: How the Media Failed to Cover the War on Iraq".

WMD is a response to what I saw while writing that last book. I "embedded" myself in front of my living room TV and comparing and contrasting coverage across the spectrum of print and television – here and abroad. After immersing myself in the wall-to-wall coverage, the comparison between our media and a state run media system was undeniable. It reminded me of that little dog that was the mascot for the RCA Victor for many years: "His Master's Voice."

Despite our many channels and choices, I saw few voices. There was a patriotic correctness on the airwaves and a uniformity of viewpoint that did more selling than telling about the war. I felt that we had moved into a post-journalism era where packaging and "militainment" prevailed. I heard only a few criticisms of the coverage, mostly about flaws on reporting by elite newspapers, even as 80% of the American people rely on TV for their news and impressions. Even as larger numbers of Americans and people around the world dissented, their views were rarely seen and heard.

The film WMD is my response to what I perceive as a media crisis and a crisis for democracy. When I began filming, I had no funding and had to get it going myself. I put

myself in the film not to “out Michael Moore Michael Moore” as *Vanity Fair* puts it, but to offer a personal witness from someone in the media trenches about the need for us to debate the media failure as earnestly as the intelligence failure that led us into the bloody and still unresolved Iraq war.

My hope is that WMD will spark debate and discourse about the proper role of the media in wartime. I hope it will encourage more journalists and media consumers to speak up and act out against the media system that went from being a “fourth estate” to the “fourth front” in CENTCOM Commander Tommy Franks' "top secret" war plan (top secret for us but not to those favored journalists to whom it was leaked).

American democracy was assailed by the invasion of Iraq. A response and a counter narrative are vital in the fight for more truth in media. WMD is my contribution to this profound challenge.

WMD is a call for an engagement with our media as an issue. It is also one journalist's cry for change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny Schechter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Danny Schechter
October 2004

Visit www.newsdissector.org/dissectorville for more information on my body of work.

ABOUT THE FILM

"Something of a comic masterpiece."

– Michael Wolf, VANITY FAIR

"Danny Schechter has been keeping close tabs on the media, and his resulting Weapons of Mass Deception is a vital nonpartisan treatise on the failures of modern journalism."

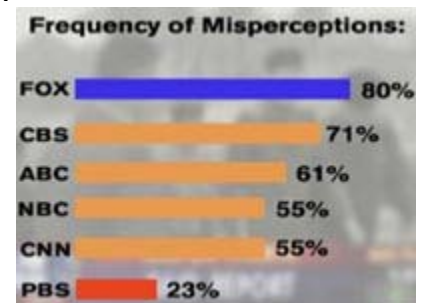
- Sandonn Fowler, Hamptons Film Festival

There were two wars going on in Iraq - one was fought with armies of soldiers, bombs and a fearsome military force. The other was fought alongside it with cameras, satellites, armies of journalists and propaganda techniques. One war was rationalized as an effort to find and disarm WMDs - Weapons of Mass Destruction; the other was carried out by even more powerful WMDs, Weapons of Mass Deception.

The TV networks in America considered their non-stop coverage their finest hour, pointing to the use of embedded journalists and new technologies that permitted viewers to see a war up close for the first time. But different countries saw different wars.

Why?

For those of us watching the coverage, the war was more of a spectacle, an around the clock global media marathon, pitting media outlets against each other in ways that distorted truth and raised as many questions about the methods of TV news, as the armed intervention it was covering-and in some cases-promoting.



WMD, a 100-minute non-fiction film, explores this story with the findings of a gutsy, media insider-turned-outsider, former network journalist, Danny Schechter, who is "the nation's longest practicing media critic" according to *Vanity Fair's* Michael Wolff. Schechter says he "self-embedded" himself in his living room to monitor media coverage, by fastidiously tracking the TV coverage on a daily basis. He wrote thousands of words daily about the coverage for Mediachannel.org, the world's largest online media issues network, and then collected his columns, blogs and articles in a recently published book, "Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception" (Prometheus Books). He has continued his one-man investigation with WMD, a two-hour, indie non-fiction film that asks the questions that his media colleagues refused to confront before, during and after the war. Featuring footage from inside Iraq, and inside the media, WMD tracks the media war through the Summer of 2004.

THE INTERVIEWS

Dima Abu Wardah anchor for Dubai Television

Johnathan Adelstein, FCC Commissioner

Mohammad Al Dourhri was Iraq's Ambassador to the United Nations. He was interviewed at the Arab Media Summit in Dubai.

Jihad Al Khazen, *Al Hayat* editor and former *Reuter's* correspondent

Khaled Al Maeena Saudi Arabian editor

Hafez Al-Mirazi, Al Jazeera , Washington Bureau Chief,

Jon Alpert, filmmaker and former contributor to NBC News

Mohammad Al Safaf was Saddam Hussein's Minister of Information

Eric Alterman, is a columnist for *The Nation* and the author of several books on media and politics.

Christiane Amanpour is a veteran international correspondent for CNN

William Arkin, news analyst for NBC News and writer on national security affairs

Peter Arnett - famed war correspondent and Pulitzer Prize winner for the AP in the Vietnam War. Became a global news personality with exclusive coverage from Baghdad during the first Gulf War. Was fired by CNN for reporting the "Operation Tailwind" story alleging US use of nerve gas in Vietnam (CNN later settled with his producers who sued alleging unfair treatment.) Hired by National Geographic to return to Baghdad. NBC used him as an on-air reporter. He was fired after giving an interview to Iraq TV. WMD reveals that he had been targeted by a right wing pressure group.

Ashleigh Banfield - MSNBC's up and coming news star has been compared to CNN's Christiane Amanpour. She reported from hot spots around the world and developed a following for thoughtful interviews and international reporting. After giving a speech at Kansas State University suggesting that the war coverage was sanitized she was reportedly "taken to the woodshed" by her bosses at NBC, chastised, and dropped by the network a year later.

Emily Bell, Media Guardian editor

Rym Brahimi, former CNN Baghdad correspondent

Paul Bremer, Chief of Coalition Provisional Authority

Tom Brokaw, anchor NBC News

John Burns was based in Baghdad for *The New York Times*.

George W Bush, President and Commander in Chief

Leslie Cagan is a veteran anti-war organizer and strategist.

Gwendolyn Cates, a photo-journalist was an Embed on assignment for *People Magazine*.

Jeff Chester, Director. *Center for Digital Media*

Victoria Clarke was the media advisor for the Pentagon who oversaw the Embed program,

Janine Di Giovanni was based in Baghdad for *The Times* of London.

Patrick Dillen, independent filmmaker

John Donovan is a correspondent for ABC's Nightline and has covered both wars in Iraq.

Greg Dyke was forced to resign from his leadership of the BBC in the aftermath of the *Hutton Report* which faulted BBC coverage of the findings of a British weapons scientist David Kelly. The substance of many of his concerns about war reporting were later verified.

Michael Elliott is an editor of *Time Magazine*

Curtis Ellis is a radio journalist.

Canadian Journalists **Matthew Fisher, Patrick Graham and Patrick Brown** interviewed for CBC's "Deadline Iraq" program

Sam Gardiner, retired Air Force Colonel

Amy Goodman hosts the "Democracy Now" a radio and TV program,

David Halberstam and **Seymour Hersh** both won Pulitzer prizes for their coverage of the Vietnam War. *The New York Times* removed Halberstam from Vietnam for coverage deemed critical. Hersh exposed the My-Lai massacre and later the prison torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Bill Hemmer host CNN America morning program'

Maurice Hinchey, Member of Congress, New York

Voice of **Rene Horne**, South African Broadcasting

Yousef Ibrahim a retired veteran Middle East correspondent for *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. Interviewed at the Arab Media Summit in Dubai

Lena Jafusi, Professor of Media Studies, United Arab Emirates

Nicholas Johnson, former FCC Commissioner

Riz Kahn, former CNN International anchor

John Kamfnee, The New Statesman and Producer, BBC News

Greg Kelly was an Embed for Fox News. (His boss, John Moody, refused to be interviewed for WMD)

Ted Koppel - ABC Nightline anchor, was embedded during the "War for Iraqi Freedom," Afterwards he told former NBC correspondent Marvin Kalb that "live coverage of a war is not journalism" at a seminar of the Shorenstein Center of Harvard University. His remarks were broadcast on CSPAN.

Later, Koppel would be criticized by Sinclair Broadcasting for broadcasting the names of American soldiers killed in Iraq.

Marc Levin is a documentary and motion picture director

Jake Lynch reports for BBC in England. He also is part of a team that promotes peace journalism and hold seminars for journalists

John (Rick) MacArthur is the publisher of *Harpers Magazine* and the author of "The Second Front," the definitive study of the role of the media in the first Gulf War.

David Marr of Media Watch Australia, in a critique of war coverage by Fox News -- a feisty media program shown on Australian television.

Stephen Marshall. Guerilla News Network

Clive Myrie was an embed with BBC News

Samia Nakhoul, *Reuters* and anchor of Abu Dhabi TV, wounded in attack on Palestine Hotel.

Bill O'Reilly is the controversial anchor of "The O'Reilly Factor" on Fox News Channel. O' Reilly was also one of the first television journalists to acknowledge that he was wrong in his coverage of WMD's.

PR guru **John Rendon** was a Pentagon media strategist who refused to be interviewed. He spoke at the UN's *World Electronic Media Forum* in Geneva, Switzerland.

Harvey Rice, reporter, *Houston Chronicle*

Tom Ricks. Military Reporter, *Washington Post*

Max Robbins is editor of *Broadcasting and Cable*

Nic Robertson, chief international correspondent CNN

Donald Rumsfeld is the US Defense Secretary

Scott Rutter is a highly decorated military commander in the Iraq War who spoke at a symposium at Seton Hall University.

Jeremy Scahill reported from Iraq for *Democracy Now*

Jeff Schneider Vice President, ABC News

Neil Shapiro, President NBC News

Sandy Socolow, former Executive Producer, CBS *Evening News with Walter Cronkite.*

John Stauber wrote *Weapons of Mass Deception* on the selling of the Iraq War with Sheldon Rempton. (Danny Schechter's book on the war has a similar, but different name: *Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception*)

Armin Stauth, reporter ARD Germany

Jon Stewart is the anchor of *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Prize winning South African leader of the fight against apartheid, called the Iraq war, "evil".

Dominique de Villepin was the foreign Minister of France who led the opposition to the US preemptive war strategy at the UN Security Council. Danny Schechter talked with him on the eve of war. He is now Interior Minister.

"**War Cry**" is the peace activist shown in a protest at Ground Zero in New York. She and her camera crew were attacked physically by some of the men challenging her in this excerpt from a documentary she made about the confrontation.

Ian Williams is a UN Based international journalist and author of "Iraq Evil". He has spoken at many anti-war mobilizations.

Michael Wolff, media columnist, *Vanity Fair*

Robert Young Pelton was originally hired by ABC News to accompany a special-forces unit from Afghanistan into Iraq. When they failed to connect, he "embedded" himself into the press corps at a hotel in Jordan and later reported from Iraq as a unilateral journalist.

Gary Younge, correspondent for *The Guardian*

THE DIRECTOR

DANNY SCHECHTER

“The News Dissector”

Investigative Journalist / Producer / Director



A television producer and independent filmmaker who also writes and speaks about media issues, Danny Schechter is director/writer of the new film **“WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception”** and author of **“Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception: How the Media Failed to Cover the Iraq War”** (Prometheus Books). He is the executive editor and blogger-in-chief of Mediachannel.org, the world’s largest online media issues network. Schechter is also co-founder and the executive producer of Globalvision, a New York-based film and television production company now in its 16th year. He exec-produced the series **“South Africa Now”** and co-produced **“Rights & Wrongs: Human Rights Television.”** For his film work, Schechter received the Society of Professional Journalists’ 2001 Award for Excellence in Documentary Journalism.

Specializing in investigative reporting and programming about the interface between human rights, journalism, popular music and society, Schechter began his career as news director, principal newscaster and “News Dissector” at WBCN, Boston’s leading rock music radio station. Hailed as a radio innovator, he won many industry honors, including two Major Armstrong Awards. His television-producing career was launched with the syndicated *Joe Oteri Show*, which won the New England Emmy and a NAPTE IRIS award in 1979. In 1980, he created and produced the nation’s first live late-night entertainment-oriented TV show, ***Five All Night, Live All Night*** for WCVB in Boston.

Schechter left Boston to join the Atlanta staff of CNN before becoming a producer for ABC’s 20/20. Producing 50 segments for ABC, Schechter won two national Emmys and was nominated or two others. Schechter has reported from 49 countries, lectured at schools and universities worldwide and was an adjunct professor at Columbia University in its Graduate School of Journalism. Schechter’s writing has appeared in leading newspapers and magazines including *The Nation*, *Newsday*, *Boston Globe*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Media Studies Journal*, *Detroit Free Press* and *The Village Voice*.

He has produced and directed many TV specials and documentary films, including **“Counting on Democracy”** about the electoral fiasco in Florida narrated by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee; the post 9-11 film **“We Are Family”** (2002) shown at the Sundance Film Festival; **“Nkosi: A Voice of Africa’s AIDS Orphans”** (2001) narrated by Danny Glover; and **“A Hero for All: Nelson Mandela’s Farewell”** (1999). He is also the author of several books including **“Media Wars: News At A Time of Terror”** (Rowman & Littlefield); **“The More You Watch, The Less You Know”** (Seven Stories Press) and **“News Dissector: Passions, Pieces and Polemics”** (Akashic Books and Electron Press).

A Cornell University graduate, Schechter received his master’s degree from the London School of Economics, an honorary doctorate from Fitchburg College and was a Neiman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard, where he also taught in 1969. After college, he became a full time civil rights worker, then communications director of the Northern Student Movement, eventually working as a community organizer in a Saul Alinsky-style *War on Poverty* program. Moving from the streets to the suites, Schechter served as an assistant to the Mayor of Detroit in 1966 on a Ford Foundation grant.

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Licensed courtesy of Daemon Records

"I Need To Know"

Performed and written by Stephan Smith

Published by Stephan Smith Publishing

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MediaChannel is concerned with the political, cultural and social impacts of the media, large and small. MediaChannel exists to provide information and diverse perspectives and inspire debate, collaboration, action and citizen engagement.

Cinema Libre Studio is an international entertainment company dedicated to creating quality films with global appeal. We have created a haven for filmmakers with views, offering one-stop shopping for production, co-production, distribution, marketing and post-production services with headquarters in Los Angeles and representation offices in Paris, London, Munich, Rome, Madrid and Tokyo.

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Cinema Libre Distribution is currently handling distribution activities for: OUTFOXED, UNCOVERED, UNCONSTITUTIONAL, UNPRECEDENTED and recently acquired David O. Russell's political doc "SOLDIERS PAY". The 35-minute film will run in select theaters in conjunction with "UNCOVERED".

<http://www.cinematlibrestudio.com/>