

## Review of Seccession Path– short film to be made full length in New England

By **Boston Film Industry Examiner**, Richard Murphy  
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Captain Hornblower conducts a strategic retreat

Seccession Path is a movie skillfully made by the team of John Hartman and “Zee” Zarbock. The term bang for the buck gets new meaning as they had a budget of under \$2,000. Though it is obvious they did not have the special effects and sophisticated equipment of a major studio, they did a credible job utilizing what they had access to.

Maximilien Robespierre was responsible for tens of thousands of deaths during the French Revolution, yet he had resigned as a criminal judge to avoid giving out a death sentence during the Ancien Regime. Such is life’s ironies. Doctor David Hornblower did not feel he had a steady enough hand for field surgery so he joined the Confederate infantry to deal death directly.

Captain” David Hornblower, it is safe to say, had a bit more of a talent for self reflection than the man known in France as “The Incorruptible.”

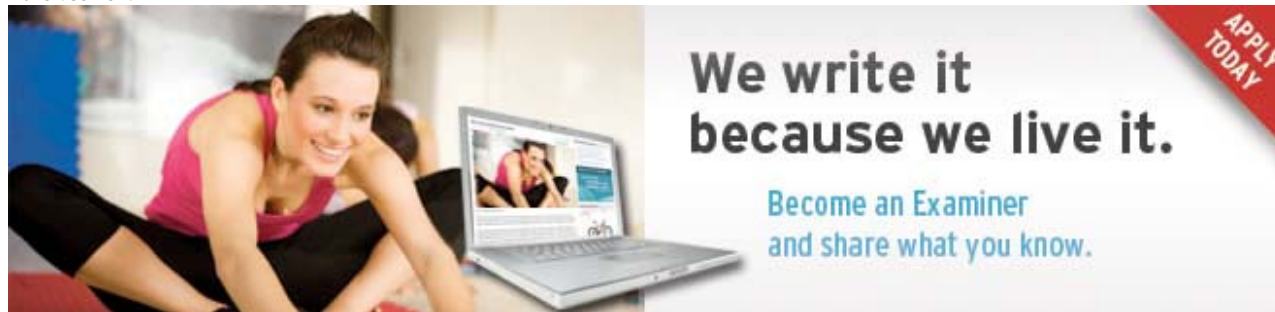
The movie begins with the First Battle of Kinston in December of 1862. The Union expeditionary force based on the coast in New Bern has moved inland. The Confederates, utilizing fabian strategy, attack when it is opportune, delay where they can and retreat as they must. The Yanks, superior in men and materiel, go as far as they dare. They have not yet learned the live off the land, scorched earth methods of Billy Sherman.

As this is a John Hartman film. war is not the answer. I’m sorry to have used that bumper sticker, but it kinda fits. War is the environment here, but John, who plays Hornblower, maybe thinks there is something more than the war at play.

The captain had led his men at Kinston and

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from the movies action, had handled them competently. He is called to headquarters by a superior officer as his conduct away from the battle has been problematic. He has been partaking of debauchery and arrives for his tête-à-tête hungover.

In the interview, his superior brings up the subject of sedition. Seditious is rarely considered a mere peccadillo as are his other faults. It appears our man has been giving voice to his war is not the answer thoughts in public.

From a managerial standpoint, one would not suggest that the meeting went well for Hornblower. A contrite yes sir, no sir attitude would be called for. The Captain is showing signs of not quite being there. He comes in smelling of the night before. The superior officer thinks he is being mocked, though Hornblower says it is “not with intent, Sir.” In the midst of his meeting, he seems to swoon and fixate on a picture of Christ attached to the wall.

He is given a choice to either return to the medical corp or go on an espionage mission through the swamp to spy on the Federals. Citing the fact that his surgery was not at the level of, say, Dr. Christiaan Barnard, he opts for the swamp.

The Captain sets out with a scout named Kyle. During

a rest, Hornblower is asked by his subordinate his thoughts on the war. In a flash forward, he had given vent to Kyle of a some pacific thoughts so you know something had been brewing. They march to the location of the construction site of the CSS Neuse. The Neuse was being built to be part of an expedition to drive the Bluecoats out of New Bern.

The Captain and Kyle grab a guide from the shipbuilding detail and proceed toward the swamp. While walking along, Hornblower hears a train go by, not that there are any trains in the swamp.

As they march, they come upon a detachment of Yanks and engage in a standoff. Capt. Hornblower tries to calm the showdown by treating the enemy’s wounded man. The others, still at arms, are disturbed by a deer wandering and a shot is fired. In the melee all are dispatched except the Captain who is severely wounded.

A Union deserter comes upon him with intent to loot the unconscious officer. Hornblower comes to, and stealthily draws his gun. The deserter offers to treat his wounds if he will let him go. Hornblower agrees if the deserter will remove the blade he had been stabbed with. The captain passes out and the reb takes his stuff and reads his orders. The deserter hears the same non-existent train and is taken aback. When Hornblower again wakes they

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struggle and the deserter shoots.

He finds himself back in the office struggling with his superior. Has the trip to the swamp been an hallucination or post traumatic stress syndrome. Maybe it was a conversion experience, for as he struggles he is still fixated on the picture of Christ. Regaining composure, he asks forgiveness and requests reassignment to the medical corps.

The problem with Secession Path is you have a lot of questions after it is done. A half hour is not enough time to tie up all the odds and ends.

The DVD not only has the movie, but another segment called Guerrilla Film Secession's Path. It is filled with information on what John and Zee had to do to make a movie for next to nothing. Guerilla film making as John puts it, is doing "what you can with what you have." He had to do a lot of fancy footwork.

I can't understand why there are not a zillion Civil War films made. There is no dearth of reenactor groups replaying the War Between the States. I mean, have you ever run across people redoing the Spanish American War or the War of 1812.

So, I don't know where John and Zee are going with this, but there is plenty of scope to expand in keeping with John's vision to

"inspire by leaving the audience with a bright light at the end of an odd and dark tunnel."

It will be necessary to raise money for the next incarnation of Secession Path. They did so well with so little that one speculates raising millions could ruin them.

As filming will take place here in Nova Anglia, we shall keep you informed of fund raising and filming progress.

**For more info:** contact  
[zee@unfoldingstorypictures.com](mailto:zee@unfoldingstorypictures.com). To view a trailer, go to [www.secessionpath.com](http://www.secessionpath.com).

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