

From Times Online

May 16, 2007

Weinstein braces for SICKO backlash

Mark Bridge

Harvey Weinstein, the American film mogul, touched down in Cannes yesterday with a crack team of lawyers and PRs briefed to cushion a predicted backlash at *SICKO*, Michael Moore's expose of the US healthcare system. The film was financed by the Weinstein Company and is set to screen on Saturday.

Earlier, Weinstein told journalists that the film's negative had been spirited from the US to prevent government attempts to seize it. "It was like a middle-of-the-night operation from a spy novel, moving your negative to another country," he said.

Moore's latest polemic is expected to prove even more controversial than his 2004 Palme d'Or winner *Fahrenheit 911* – an outspoken critique of US foreign policy.

The film has already landed Moore in trouble with the US Treasury. Officials are investigating the director for possible breaches of America's trade embargo with Cuba. In February, he took former rescue workers suffering breathing problems caused by the September 11 attacks for treatment there to highlight deficiencies in the American system – allegedly without authorisation.

Moore has described *SICKO* as "a comedy about 45 million people with no health care in the richest country on earth."

A statement on his website elaborates: "We pay significantly more than any other country in the world – and get less back. Americans life expectancy is lower than other developed countries and our infant mortality rates are higher. And our heroic Ground Zero 9/11 workers live in a society where the Bush Administration has shown more concern about their travel than their health."

SICKO will be screened in an out-of-competition slot at Cannes and so is not eligible for the Palme d'Or prize for best film. It will be released in America on June 29.