

Interview With Ryan Jafri of Jafri Pictures
Conducted by R.Simpson of TheSleepyBuffalo.com
3.4.2010

TheSleepyBuffalo: This is your first short film out of film school.. In other interviews, you have stated that being on set taught you more than a formal education. What's something new you learned during the production of *The Cure*?

RyanJafri: *The Cure* was my first short ever actually. I've learned a lot from that production. Word to the wise: Never take on the entire project yourself. Hire A.D.'s, line producers, and production managers. Those positions were created for a reason. During the production of *The Cure*, I literally wore all the hats. It was a rough experience and definitely took its toll on me. For the next film, I'll definitely be filling those positions.

TSB: How important do you feel it is for an indie director to know how to work a camera himself. Is it possible to simply be a "director" and have limited knowledge of the other aspects of filmmaking? You wrote, directed, and produced *The Cure*, but you let photographers Eric Giovon and Marie Peze take over cinematography duties...

RJ: For the cinematographer position I realized early on I didn't have the experience necessary to operate a camera, especially an Arriflex, so hiring a cinematographer was one of the few positions I knew I had to give to someone else. You mentioned Marie Peze, but she was actually on board that project for a very brief time. The footage she shot would accumulate to about 20% of the final cut of *The Cure*. Eric came on board and delivered all the way. I did have control over the image though, because each shot was story boarded during pre production. This is something I feel is key to a good image lock.

TSB: You had great editors in Eric Giovon and Jerry Heer. How involved were you in the editing process and do you feel that the story you had on paper matched the story that came out of post?

RJ: Yeah, Eric pulled double duty on *The Cure*. He was cinematographer and editor. I was extremely involved with that process, and Eric would definitely agree. I would do something we liked to call "micro editing", which is when I would literally go frame by frame through all the footage and choose what to put in the final cut of the film. It drove Eric nuts, I'm sure, but he's a good sport though. Jerry did some final touches on the film and also edited the trailer.

TSB: I mentioned earlier, you both wrote and directed *The Cure*. How important was

the writing to you? I ask about the writing because *The Cure* is really a film which could have been scripted simply with storyboards.

RJ: The writing was extremely important to me. Without a good script a film is nothing. No matter how good the music or special effects are, the story and script is where it counts. *The Cure* was originally meant to be a silent film actually. During pre production I thought to myself that a soundtrack could be very helpful in conveying mood, and adding another narrative layer to the film. Then during post, another light bulb went off, and I thought about a narration, which is where Judy Maier came in. The very original script was mainly descriptions of the actions taking place within the storyboards. It was this early script which laid the groundwork for the film.

TSB: Do you feel like you would enjoy working on a film you didn't write as much as you did working on *The Cure*, a film you harvested from script to screen? I feel like writing something, then directing it, it must seem very special to you, like your little baby that you are solely responsible for.

RJ: Yeah, that's a good way to put it! Of course you know what your baby will look like and feel like, you wrote it. You know the atmosphere, the setting and most importantly, you understand the characters inside out. They're a part of you. So, I might feel uncomfortable directing a script that I didn't help write. But if such a thing would happen, I would have meetings with the screenwriter(s) and take notes on just about everything. I would make it my world and know it inside and out.

TSB: You talked about adding the music which plays a major role in the ambience created by *The Cure*. How did you go about completing this? The arrangement plays throughout the short and was obviously written especially for it...

RJ: Well we had our rough cut ready and I realized music was desperately needed. Funny enough, I posted an ad for a composer and no joke, I must have listened to hundreds of demo reels. I chose a "top 5", showed them the cut and asked them to just create a little arrangement. A composer named Dan Caravetta hit the ball out of the park and he was on board immediately.

TSB: I enjoy it because it has a real 'rock' edge and seems to make the whole film seem that much more ominous and dangerous.

RJ: Yeah! My thoughts exactly. I've always been a hard rock fan, so that's the genre I was naturally inclined towards. However, to talk about the editing process... the part before the park scene, when Kristine is leaning against the wall, I actually had to make some decisions on what to cut there. Dan's original version had a pretty intense guitar solo and as much as I loved it, I knew I had to switch it to a cello/violin. I just felt it would be more timeless in a way.

TSB: Have you thought about continuing *The Cure*? The "stranger" seems like a pretty interesting character to follow around.

RJ: Continuing *The Cure*, hmm... I could certainly see another short film based on another event with this particular "stranger" involved. But that's not on my agenda right now. The actor that played him, Doug, was a great joy to work with however.

TSB: The festival circuit has been extremely good to you. Have you managed to travel with film to these different festivals, or have you just sent your work without accompanying it?

RJ: Yeah I went to several of them but not all. India was not visited unfortunately. I would have loved to go though. People who attended that fest have emailed me saying how much they enjoyed my film. I would have liked to meet them in person. L.A. and N.Y. were a blast.

TSB: I bet. To close our interview, what's coming up for Jafri Pictures?

RJ: Well, there's another short called "No Man's Land" in development. I wrote the script with Ben Woodiwiss over the past year or so, and we are currently story boarding the script and raising funds for it. I can't wait to see this one come to life! The story boards can be found on Jafripictures.com, and they are from an artist named Jay Simba who is doing just great work for us.

TSB: Is this a more traditional film in the sense that it will have dialogue?

RJ: Oh yeah, for sure. It's not as experimental as *The Cure* was. As much as I love the visuals of *The Cure*, NML won't be as dreamlike. The plot will be more linear and structured. But the plot is very interesting. It's heavily inspired by old episodes of *The Twilight Zone*. I'm really proud of the script and everyone is enjoying it so far.

TSB: The *Twilight Zone* is a great example of what a short film can really do, also old *Tales from the Crypt*. They were these excellent, tight little stories with huge impact.

RJ: Yeah, I've always been a fan of those shows. If you take out the host introductions, you have some of the best early short films. Rod Serling was just a great writer. Even with a 22 - 24 minute time window, you can develop your situation, and tell a very emotional, dramatic story the way you see fit, and Serling knew this I'm sure. A lot of his scripts were social criticisms too, they criticized the McCarthy era big time. He discovered the importance of layers and got away with such a radical message because it was buried deep within the core of a sci fi, mind trip plot.

TSB: Well look, you put together a great first film. It's tight, there's no cheese factor, and it looks like a million bucks. I feel that it's going to be interesting to follow your career and we'll definitely keep in touch for *No Man's Land*! Aside from your production house website, is there any other sites you would like audiences to check out?

RJ: Yes, if they're curious about "*The Cure*" at all, it's available here:
<http://www.bigstar.tv/movie/the-cure>