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JUNKHEARTS

A Web Exclusive with Director Tinge Krishnan

Junkhearts is a challenging social realism thriller that's short on laughs, but superb in its execution and performances. It stars Eddie Marsan as Frank, a down on his luck ex-soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In a parallel story, Romola Garai's working single mum Christine also struggles to keep it together. While Frank lives a solitary existence, self-medicating with whiskey and fags, Christine temporarily forgets her problems with casual sex and pill popping. Then Frank meets young homeless teenager Lynette, played by newcomer Candese Reid, and an unlikely friendship is forged. Frank has a reason to smile again, until Lynette's psychotic boyfriend Danny (Tom Sturridge) arrives on the scene.

STUDIO spoke to Tinge Krishnan about her hard-hitting debut.

STUDIO: You've said that *Junkhearts* is based on a phenomenon called 'cuckooing'. Could you explain what that is?

Tinge Krishnan: A vulnerable person such as an elderly person, someone with learning difficulties or in Frank's case, an ex-soldier with post traumatic stress disorder, is befriended by individuals who then take over the person's flat and use it to sell drugs.

STUDIO: I understand that you were attracted, in part, to Simon Frank's screenplay because of your own experience of post-traumatic stress disorder after being caught up in the 2004 tsunami. Was making the film a cathartic experience in anyway?

TL: Inevitably I'd say it was, as anything where the experience is re-

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examined will reap beneficial fruit in terms of processing. I wasn't wandering around set having massive cathartic weeping fits though!

STUDIO: *Junkhearts* is your first feature and you've managed to pull together a very talented group of established and emerging British actors. How did you go about casting the film and bagging Romola Garai and Eddie Marsan?

TL: We worked with a casting director, as approaching established actors needs a structured technique in coordinating with agents, etc.

STUDIO: You've drawn a particularly fine performance from Eddie Marsan. How would you describe yourself as a director? Do you stick very tightly to the script or do you let the actors bring their own ideas to the set or ad-lib at all?

TL: My process is to bring the script into rehearsal for a workshopping phase, where we can take the time to work out characters' back story motivation and deal with any elements of action, dialogue, story that the actors feel uncomfortable with. Usually a new path emerges, which honours the spirit of the story, but is authentic and surprising.

STUDIO: Candese Reid is remarkable in her first feature and she went on to win Best British Newcomer at this year's London Film Festival. How did you find her and what was it about her that made her right for the part?

TL: Candese we found at Ian Smith's Television Workshop for young people. His workshop has produced actors such as Paddy Considine, Samantha Morton, Aisling Loftus and Lauren [Socha] from *Misfits* and *The Unloved*. Her feistiness and warmth were real draws for me. Lynette needs to have toughness, as Candese does, mixed in with a madcap 'f*** you' kind of humour and lovability that she was able to bring.

STUDIO: What would you say to the critics who have described *Junkhearts* as a bleak and depressing film?

TL: I think everyone has a personal response to the film. *Junkhearts* is so many different films to different people. Of all the pieces I've made, it's created a passionate set of responses. Some people really love it and find it life-affirming.

STUDIO: What have been the biggest challenges, or perhaps even struggles, you faced in making *Junkhearts*?

TL: Budget and time – the main challenges of any filmmaker. »



STUDIO: Glancing over your varied CV, I see you've made a documentary music video about a Thai lady boy boxer for Dido's album *Safe Trip Home*, a six-part online drama series shot on location in Malaysia called *Dimensions* for an advertising campaign and *Backpacker Orpheus*, a stage play. You seem to enjoy working across different platforms: music videos, theatre, feature films... Are you experimenting?

TL: I see filmmaking as a martial art, so I exercise my muscles across different disciplines. As a filmmaker, your film school is making work so the bigger my range of practice the bigger my range of filmic tools.

STUDIO: If there were a thru-line in your work, how would you sum it up?

TL: Redemption and guts.

STUDIO: You practiced as a hospital doctor for three years and gave it up to go to film school in New York. So what were the circumstances that lead you to become a filmmaker?

TL: I always wanted to make work and write and I found that being a doctor I didn't have the time to devote to these crafts. I also watched a lot of people die, which informed me that life is short and I should follow my mojo ASAP.

