

ARTS

"Emotionally, physically and psychologically it was the most demanding role I've ever played"

Elizabeth Pena is just as impressive as Jacob's girlfriend Jezz. She displays a remarkable ability to change her emotions almost instantly. At one moment she sympathizes with Jacob's plight, but then changes her disposition to toughen up Jacob and make him fight harder.

With *Jacob's Ladder*, Pena easily makes the jump from her smaller roles in *Batteries Not Included* and *La Bamba* to leading lady status.

Danny Aiello has a small but effective role as Louis, Jacob's chiropractor and friend. Aiello once again exhibits the likable tough guy image that he's been known for in films like *Moonstruck* and *Do The Right Thing*.

"He's an angelic character," said Aiello of Louis. "He loves Jacob like a son. He helps Jacob see the light by giving him information that makes his life easier to accept."

On the other side of the camera, Adrian Lyne was trying to prove that he should be taken seriously. He chose the right film to demonstrate his intentions.

Following the success of *Fatal Attraction*, Lyne was given the opportunity to make whatever film he wanted. *Jacob's Ladder* was gaining recognition in Hollywood as one of the best unproduced screenplays around. Adrian Lyne was sent the script and after reading it he knew he wanted to make it.

Lyne took the script to Paramount and following studio head Ned Tanen's approval, *Jacob's Ladder* was given the green light.

As is so often the case with studio heads, Tanen switched studios and the new Paramount regime was not as enthusiastic about *Jacob*. Enter Carolco Pictures.

After bringing the script to Carolco, *Jacob's Ladder* was once again given approval to start production. At the same time however, Adrian Lyne was given the opportunity to direct the newly released *Bonfire of the Vanities* with a powerhouse cast that includes Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

Despite the temptation, Lyne stuck with *Jacob's* bizarre subject matter and little known cast. Bruce Rubin's script made the decision for him.

One major problem for Adrian Lyne during the shooting of *Jacob's*

Ladder was how to represent Jacob's hallucinations on the screen.

Not being a tremendous admirer of slimy special effects make-up, Lyne decided to take the bold step of setting up Jacob's horrific images to be filmed directly in front of the camera.

Lyne explained that he had interviewed many special effects companies including ILM (George Lucas' company) and discovered that with every one of those companies, one technician would do the same effect for every film he was currently working on. This meant that as many as five or more different films would have very similar looking special effects. What Lyne wanted would have to have an original look to it.

One major inspiration for the special effects in *Jacob's Ladder* was artist Francis Bacon. His terrifying paintings usually featured blurred figures with a streak of red through them suggesting they were ripped apart or bleeding.

This chaotic effect inspired Lyne who believed that to terrify the audience he would have to leave a lot to the imagination.

"I think this sort of thing works best if you only get a glimpse of it," Lyne said. "Your imagination has to fill in the rest. You should always see

it for just a beat less than you want to."

In their bizarre way, Lyne's effects remain faithful to those of Francis Bacon.

Adrian Lyne currently has several movie projects in the works. One of which is another adaptation of Nabakov's *Lolita*, which was previously filmed in 1962 by Stanley Kubrick.

Even though a great admirer of Kubrick's, Lyne nevertheless felt that he hadn't really dealt with the book well enough.

Certain to be another change in Lyne's version will be the character of Humbert Humbert.

"James Mason's Humbert was too much of a scumbag," Lyne said.

One aspect of *Jacob's Ladder* which will linger long after the film is over is the ending.

As I was walking out of the theatre I noticed that some people enjoyed the ending, while others felt ripped off. My friends and I also felt the need to exchange notes on the ending. But it kept lingering. We kept talking about it.

I'm sure that's what Adrian Lyne and Bruce Rubin expected. They made the film so that it would affect people. It certainly accomplished that.



LOOK HERE: Director Adrian Lyne discusses a scene with Tim Robbins in *Jacob's Ladder*

Bashu, the Little Stranger is worth your time and money

by Dave Weissman
Bashu, the Little Stranger
(Film Company)

Braham Beizal's *Bashu, the Little Stranger* is the touching story of a young orphan's struggle for acceptance and understanding from a woman and her two children, and how they both overcome suspicion and language barriers to win a place in each other's hearts.

In the vivid and horrifying opening sequence, Bashu's village is the target of a bombing.

Stumbling through the haze and smoke of destruction, the 10-year-old boy sees his home destroyed and his father and mother killed.

Making his way to a truck, he stows safely away until he is north (the rice-growing district) of Iran. There he meets up with a small family (minus a father who is job-hunting), and gradually earns the

love and respect from the mother and her two children.

What makes *Bashu* a poignant film is that it draws attention to the problems of the human condition in all of us and our inability to overcome our distrust and prejudices of others in order to gain a better understanding of one another.

The adults in the film seem to have more difficulty with this problem than the children, who are seen easily making up with Bashu after a fight while their parents continue to argue amongst themselves.

The beautiful Nai (played by Susan Taslimi) encounters the same problem with the hardened and narrow-minded villagers, who are constantly urging her not to waste her limited food supply feeding a non-trustworthy, black boy.

The quiet irony is that their bigotry and indifference to Bashu only strengthens Nai's love and devotion for him.

When Bashu (Adnan Atravian) first meets Nai, he's wild and afraid. But Nai feeds him, locks him in the barn, and then sets out to tame him, by seeking a common language with which to communicate.

Later, when Bashu reads a hidden letter from Nai's husband expressing doubts about Bashu's acceptance into the family he runs away from the house in tears.

The villagers tell a despondent Nai that it's all the better that he's gone. But this only strengthens her resolve to find him in a violent rainstorm.

She finds him, she becomes ill and is unable to take care of her home. Bashu, who has carefully watched her performing her tasks assumes her role and nurses her back to health.

The story of *Bashu* is simple because life on this scale is simple, but the complex relationship between Bashu and Nai along with a timeless theme makes *Bashu the Little Stranger* a film worth seeing.

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