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To Jennifer

Release Date **October 15 2013**

Studio **Psykik Junky Pictures**

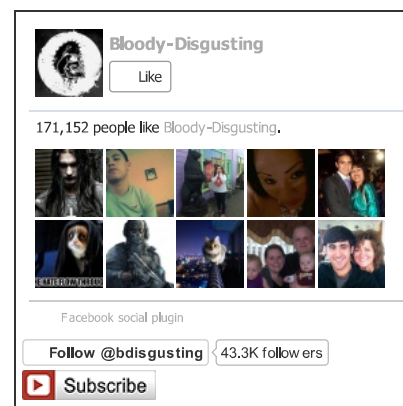
Director **James Cullen Bressack**

Writer **James Cullen Bressack**

Starring **Chuck Pappas, Jessica Cameron, Jody Barton, James Cullen Bressack**

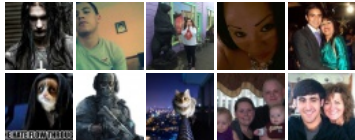
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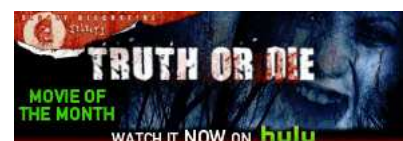
[BD REVIEW] 50-50 'To Jennifer' IS AN interesting Experiment



Posted by [EvanDickson](#) on August 21, 2013 @ 10:22am
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By [Lonmonster](#)

James Cullen Bressack is tearing up the indie horror world. At the tender age of 21, he has already directed three feature-length films, with a handful of other projects either completed or in production. His latest film, *To Jennifer*, is shot entirely on the iPhone 5. Yeah, that's right, entirely on a smartphone. As a horror film, it is not all that effective and it suffers from pacing issues, but as an experiment in modern independent filmmaking, *To Jennifer* is undeniably alluring.



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The film is slow to kick off, easing the viewer into a relationship with the neurotic and testy Joey (Chuck Pappas), a man on a mission to catch his long-distance girlfriend, Jennifer, in the act of infidelity. Along with his friends, Steve (James Cullen Bressack) and Marty (Jody Barton), Joey embarks on a bizarre road trip to Jennifer's house. Bressack does a commendable job of introducing a variety of obstacles for the guys without offering any real antagonist for the vast majority of the film. The guys encounter a barrage of semi-realistic situations including an anxiety attack on a plane, a sketchy motel room, and a late-night fistfight. The situations build the tension and even bring about some laughs, but they do little to in terms of progressing the story. The motel scene in particular sticks out as mostly unnecessary given how much screen time it takes up. They show up and find a room covered in blood, but decide to stay the night anyway. Why? I'm not sure. There's a certain suspension of disbelief that comes with horror, but there is a bit too much to bite off here.

I'm a big fan of loosely scripted films, going off the *Curb Your Enthusiasm/Blair Witch Project* model, especially in found footage. I have no doubt that *To Jennifer* was loosely scripted. It gives the action and character interaction a sense of realism that you just don't get with actors memorizing lines. It's clear that the three leads have off-screen rapport, and the way they play off each other makes for plenty of gags. By the time they reach Jennifer's house, the lead character's emotional flip-flops come to the forefront. Joey's temper makes sense, but it's also irritating when he starts to yell uncontrollably. James Cullen Bressack gives the best performance of the group as Steve, the camera operator. He's funny and often keeps the scenes running long after they could have died.

Many found footage filmmakers feel the need to attack the audience from the beginning with jarring camera movements and jump scares. Bressack, on the other hand, takes his sweet time. While the slow burning is a strength of the film, it is ultimately the downfall. The first half drags on far too long in order to get the film to its 74-minute runtime. Without some of the lengthy dialogue scenes that don't do much in the sake of story, the film would be all the more impactful, especially given the fact that the climax itself is rather tame. There's no doubt in my mind that *To Jennifer* would kill as a 30-minute short, but as a feature it suffers from its length.

The action heats up during the final 10 minutes of the film, including the credits. We finally get the twist ending, and the horror kicks in. While the reveal is a bit predictable given some of the earlier scenes, we finally see Jennifer. The climax takes place in Jennifer's dark house and the lack of lighting provides a sufficiently creepy vibe. Rather than utilizing that green night vision we've seen so many times in found footage, Bressack leaves us complete darkness. **SPOILERS** As the film comes to an end, Joey chases Jennifer through the house, while singing a hauntingly catchy song that I still can't get out of my head. I hope they release the track as a download on iTunes. **END SPOILERS**

The most impressive aspect of *To Jennifer* is that it was seemingly shot without any budget at all, giving it an authentic video diary feel. The lighting, as far as I can tell, is entirely natural, or from the iPhone itself. There's no score, no special effects, and very little added in post-production except a few title slides. This is a bare bones film and it is impressive that it manages to captivate throughout most of the ride. More than anything, *To Jennifer* is a message to wannabe filmmakers. It's a slap in the face that says, "I made a feature film with some friends on my f*cking phone. Get off your ass and make a movie". While it may not be a great horror flick, *To Jennifer* is proof that you can make an enjoyable feature film without fancy equipment. And for that alone, it is worth watching.

Giving this movie a rating seems unfair. If you're genuinely interested in filmmaking and want to see how to make a movie on little to no budget, this is an absolute must. But, if you're seeking a balls-to-the-walls horror flick, seek elsewhere.



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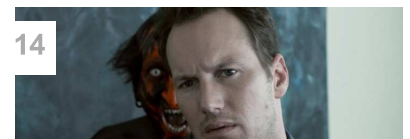
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