

# A Joker's Card

a parody/fan film based on DC Comics Universe

"marveling techniques & ingenuity"  
Mike Conway, director  
War of the Planets

★★★★ 1/2  
"you don't have to be a DC expert to have a good time..."  
FilmThreat.com

★★★★  
"honestly wacky & not ever taking itself too seriously"  
Anthony "MIG" MacFarland  
MicroCinema Magazine

"The humor transforms into amazing action fight scenes that rare, if ever found in independent film..."  
Peter John Ross, SonnyBoo  
Horrors of War

1st Independent Filmmaker to shoot wire-stunt work in Cleveland  
Shot with 3 XLI, 1 PD150 & 1 Bolex 16mm!

Winner  
2007 My43.net  
Film Festival  
Competition

a film by johnny k. wu



26th  
Telly  
Awards  
Winner  
Best Entertainment

★★★★  
"With brisk directing  
hilarious comedy,  
and very clever  
spoofing, this is a very  
enjoyable tongue in  
cheek parody..."  
Cinema Crazy Magazine

Best Action Adventure  
2005 Sansevieria Film  
Festival, Ohio

Best Comedy Short  
2005 Wreck-Beach  
International Film  
Festival, Ontario

Official Selection  
2006 SuperHero Fan  
Film Contest  
Italy

Official Selection  
2005 MileHi Con 37  
Sci-Fi Convention  
Colorado

Official Selection  
2005 Twisted Nightmare  
Weekend Convention  
Cleveland, Ohio

Official Selection  
2008 2nd Annual RadCon  
Fan Film Festival  
West Richland, WA

Official Selection  
2005 IndieGathering  
Film Festival  
Cleveland, Ohio

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
2008 Tri-City Comic Con  
Pasco, WA

Official Selection  
2005 LepreCon 31  
Film Festival  
Arizona

Official Selection  
2007 Dark Xmas  
Convention  
Warren, OH

Official Selection  
OUTer 2k5  
Film Festival  
Austin, TX

Official Selection  
2006 Muskegon  
Film Festival  
Michigan

"one of the most  
entertaining  
& technically playful  
fan film"  
Chayden Bates,  
director

Official Selection  
2006 CWRU  
Local Filmmakers'  
Night, Cleveland

Official Selection  
19th Annual Austin Gay  
& Lesbian International  
Film Festival

MEDIA DESIGN IMAGING PRESENTS A JOHNNY K. WU FILM

PRODUCED BY JAMES V. GEIER JEFFREY LUBELL JOHNNY K. WU ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS TOM LUHTALA  
CHRISTINE CHAPMAN ANNIE JONES WAYNE ORRIS ANDREW SCHOFIELD ANDREW SOKOL  
KYLE ZNAMENAK DAVID J. LEVY DAVID MILAM ELLEN FRIEDMAN  
DANA ARITONOVICH GERRY KEATING ANDREW SCHOFIELD

WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND EDITED JOHNNY K. WU 2nd Unit Director JOHN SHEETZ

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BILL JOHNS ART DESIGN ADAM GLAZER COMPOSER ARYAVARTA KUMAR  
FX MAKEUP/PROPS TOM LUHTALA WAREDOBE/MAKEUP CHRISTINE CHAPMAN VISUAL FX ALAN TUSKES  
SOUND ENGINEER RICHARD B. INGRAHAM STUNT/SAFETY COORDINATOR ANDREW SOKOL

WWW.MDIFILM.COM/JOKER

A Joker's Card is a parody film



**WWW.MDIFILM.COM**

*First independent filmmaker in Cleveland to shoot with wire-stunt work*

**MEDIA DESIGN IMAGING PRESENTS A JOHNNY K. WU FILM**  
**PRODUCED BY JEFFREY LUBELL JOHNNY K. WU JAMES V. GEIER**  
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**WAYNE ORRIS ANDREW SCHOFIELD ANDREW SOKOL**

**KYLE ZNAMENAK DAVID J. LEVY DAVID MILAM ELLEN FRIEDMAN**  
**DANA ARITONOVICH GERRY KEATING ANDREW SCHOFIELD**

**WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND EDITED JOHNNY K. WU** 2nd Unit Director **JOHN SHEETZ** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **BILL JOHNS**  
ART DESIGN **ADAM GLAZER** MUSIC COMPOSED BY **ARYAVARTA KUMAR**  
FX MAKEUP/PROPS **TOM LUHTALA** WAREDOBE/MAKEUP **CHRISTINE CHAPMAN** VISUAL FX **ALAN TUSKES**  
AUDIO ENGINEER **RICHARD B. INGRAHAM** STUNT/SAFETY COORDINATOR **ANDREW SOKOL**

This is a parody film & unofficial presentation of characters licensed by DC Comics, The characters are © & ™, DC COMICS, Inc  
Media Design Imaging and its associates are not of any way affiliated with DC Comics.  
A Joker's Card is a parody film based on DC Comics characters.

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**www.mdifilm.com/joker**  
**johnny@mdifilm.com**

**Winner**  
**2007 My43.net**  
**Film Festival**  
**Competition**

**Best Action Adventure**  
**2005 Sansevera Film**  
**Festival, Ohio**

**Official Selection**  
**2005 IndieGathering**  
**Cleveland, Ohio**

**Official Section**  
**2006 Superhero Fanfilm**  
**Contest**  
**Caserta, Italy**

**Featured Selection**  
**VegasIndiesTV**  
**September 2005**

**Official Selection**  
**2006 CWRU**  
**Local Filmmakers'**  
**Night, Cleveland**

**Official Selection**  
**19th Annual Austin Gay**  
**& Lesbian International**  
**Film Festival**

**OFFICIAL SELECTION**  
**2008 Tri-City Comic Con**  
**Pasco, Washington**

**Official Selection**  
**2007 Dark Xmas**  
**Convention**  
**Warren, OH**

**Best Comedy Short**  
**2005 Wreck-Beach**  
**International Film**  
**Festival, Ontario**

**Official Selection**  
**Twisted Nightmare**  
**Weekend Convention**  
**2005**

**Featured Selection**  
**ClickFlick**  
**Entertainment**

**Official Selection**  
**2008 2nd Annual RadCon**  
**Fan Film Festival**  
**West Richland, WA**

**Pay-Per-View**  
**Distribution**  
**WPF IPTV**  
**Texas**

**Official Selection**  
**MileHiCon 37**  
**October 21 - 23, 2005**  
**Denver, CO**

**Official Selection**  
**2005 LepreCon 31**  
**Film Festival**  
**Arizona**

**OUTer 2k5**  
**Film Festival,**  
**Nov 5, 2005**  
**Austin, TX**

**Official Selection**  
**2006 Muskegon**  
**Film Festival**  
**Michigan**

**Winner**  
**2007 My43.net**  
**Film Festival**  
**Competition**



**26th**  
**Telly Awards**  
**Winner**

*Best Entertainment*  
*Non-Broadcast*  
*Film & Video*  
*Productions*

**InsideReport**

*Fantastic Fan Film!*  
**UK**

★ ★ ★ 1/2

*"you don't have to be a DC expert to  
have a good time..."*

**FilmThreat.com**



**MicroCinema**  
**Magazine**  
*honestly wacky!*



*Just when you think you've seen it  
all, you see something new and  
different... August 8, 2005*  
*Ron Hogan's review for*  
**LivingCorpse.com**

**19-Oct-2005**

*"From MDI Film comes a  
surprise..."*

**Soundtrack Collector.com**



*(3 stars out of 4)*

*"With brisk directing, hilarious comedy, and very  
clever spoofing, this is a very enjoyable tongue in  
cheek parody of the Batman comics..."*

**Cinema Crazy Review**

*"Johnny Wu's filmmaking style comes to  
full effect in A JOKER'S CARD. The humor  
transforms into amazing action fight  
scenes that rare, if ever found in  
independent film. This film is a feat of  
digital filmmaking."*

**Peter John Ross**, SonnyBoo  
Horrors of War

**Phil Gorn**  
**Wonderphil Productions**  
**310.482.1324**  
**www.Wonderphil.biz**



*Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films*

*A mix of digital and celluloid film, shot with 3 Canon XL1s, 1 Sony PD150, and 1 Bolex 16mm*



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Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

"A Joker's Card" is a parody/comedy that blends the style from '60s TV shows with the wire-fu of the '90s. While clearly an offbeat satire, this movie daringly speculates what might've happened with the offspring of some of superheroes' most elite in a film that flirts with the underworld of sex and leather - but actually has very little to do with that at all.

Ultimately, it is an amalgam of film genres; part black comedy, accented by elements of screwball spoofing, Johnny Wu's film-short, illuminates an otherwise dark existence for a handful of sons and daughters of action super-figures from Gotham to D.C.

A determined but focused Jonathan Napier - whose institutionalized father, The Joker, remains in an mentally disturbed abyss - schemes with the asylum's entrusted orderly, Vince Fries (who happens to be the son of Mr. Freeze), to settle a life-long score with his adversarial peers - the ones who made him the scapegoat for his father's misdeeds.



Jonathan Napier's Hideout

Jonathan's central focus is on Nick Grayson - the lovable but in-your-face, flaming gay son of an absentee Dick Grayson (a.k.a. Nightwing, who happens to be Batman's prized protege).

In a clumsy but successful plot to kidnap Nick, Jonathan, in dramatic form, proclaims unto a very puzzled and somewhat uninterested Nick what has fueled his hatred. It is not until the dominatrix of the asylum; Donna Isley (super-villain Poison Ivy's leather-donning, fetish-freak daughter) reveals that Napier's ultimate goal, to kill Nick Greyson, is when the flamboyant queen's flaming personality starts to strengthen - but only temporarily.

Although Nightwing's status as the ultimate, modern hero is established, the real heroes are the least likely characters of "A Joker's Card"

Jonathan and Vince have a chance encounter with a seemingly innocuous, heavyset Ellen, who does not, at all, resemble her shapely mother, Wonder Woman. Ellen wasn't looking for any trouble but follows up on her instincts to sneak up on the plotting duo's trail, only to complete an allegiance amongst Nick, Donna and herself - while discovering abilities that no one, including herself, knew she had.

Complete with action-fight scenes that lampoon not only classic comic book elements but Hollywood's larger-than-life depictions of them, "A Joker's Card," manages to leave you wondering why all these super-kids, who on the surface seem so dysfunctional, are in fact, stable and in touch with the human condition.

Synopsis

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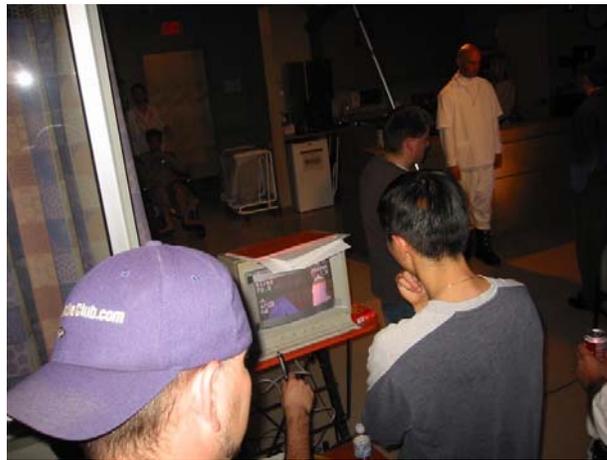


Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

## Production

In February 2004, a few of us relaxing at my place watching Teen Titans, we were discussing about the possibility to create a fan film, since all of us grew up with it. We further discussed the possibility to do a comedy instead, since there are many films that are serious. Afterward, I started doing some research and communicated with several filmmakers who already are in the process of creating their fan films. They provided me some insights involved doing a fan film while I've found out directly with Warner Brothers and these filmmakers, that doing a fan film will limit it's visibility chances, because these are copyrighted material, we had limited options available to distribute the film: mainly via Internet or public showings that the patrons are not paying to watch. Furthermore, it would be quite costly to create a good costume for Batman/Robin and the villains all around.

I further researched and decided to go with a parody, by doing a film based on the "what-if" scenario while poking some fun, making based on Anime styled look (since I grew up with it) and adding some comedy flair on the characters, this would help excel my analytical mentality in creating the offspring of the characters with our own story and further develop an environment of our own. By doing so, and by limiting the usage of actual characters, we would fall under the fair-use clause of the Copyright Act law created in the United States.



Crew observing through a monitor during shoot

Once the decision was made, I started to study the characters and their history; thereby creating a new generation, where the superheroes and villains have sons and daughters of their own. Even though the heroes and villains continue to do what they do best, these kids are trying to live a normal life like everyone else. They choose to be different:

**Jonathan Napier** (played by Kyle Znamenak)

The son of Jack Napier (movie version's Joker name) and Harleen Quinzel. Jonathan, 20, 5'9", 145#, slim with spiked hair, a college student who has been abused and mocked by peers due to his association with Joker. Jonathan wears preppy styled clothing when visiting the Asylum. During stake-out, he would have colorful more clown-like clothes on.

**Nick Grayson** (played by David Milam)

Son of Dick Grayson, formerly known as Robin and currently as Nightwing. Nick, at the young age of 22, is an openly flamboyant gay person who enjoys living life to its fullest. Growing up in a middle class environment, Nick lived without a father figure. Dick Grayson (Nightwing) never acknowledged the existence of his son, meanwhile, Nick is screaming for attention.

**Donna Isley** (played by Dana Artonovich)

Daughter of Dr. Pamela Lillian Isley, aka Poison Ivy, she has been employed at the Arkham Asylum and been treating patients, she IS a nurse, but as she is also a love interest for Vince Fries, Orderly for the Asylum, he's been referring to Donna as Dr. Isley and placed her in a position where she has absolute control within the Asylum. Donna loves to talk and can talk forever. She also has a part time job as a dominatrix mistress.

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Wire-pull training during Wu's previous short film *The Chase*

### Vince Fries (played by David J. Levy)

Son of Dr. Victor Fries, he is the Orderly for Arkham Asylum, although a minor position holder, yet, he has been influential enough to actually working as the acting director for the Asylum. Giving and providing favors to patients and staff likewise. Perhaps he has his own agenda of what he wishes to accomplish.

### Mr. Big (played by Gerry Keating)

The current Lord of the underground 10 years after Joker's gang got disbanded by Batman and his Kind... Mr. Big, around 50s, was previously known by another name that was buried during the fall of Jack Napier's empire. 10 years soon after, he managed to control the entire crime scene, with the help of several 'secret' men.

### Ellen (played by Ellen Friedman)

Wonder Woman's daughter, Ellen, is a house keeper working at different bars and nightclubs, she is a free soul. Not much to know of her other than she loves to eat and she hasn't yet discovered her true power...

### Ekin Tzu (played by Johnny K. Wu)

Ekin Tzu, who was once the head of the Chinese Triad, is a highly trained martial artist and is Mr. Big's lethal weapon. Now in charge of 'cleaning house' for Mr. Big, Tzu at one time had been a friend to Nightwing, and worked side-by-side fighting the criminals in Gotham City. During one of the fights against Mr. Big and his crew, Tzu was captured. As time had passed, he came to believe Nightwing had abandoned him. Feeling betrayed and dishonored, Tzu vowed to destroy Nightwing.

### Nightwing/Dick Grayson (played by Andrew Schofield)

Following the death of his parents, Dick Grayson, became the protégé of Batman. His natural athletic ability and sharp mind made him an eager pupil for Bruce Wayne. As Robin the Boy Wonder he spent his teen years as the Dark Knight's partner and the leader of the super alliance known as the Teen Titans. After falling out with his mentor,

Grayson took on the persona of Nightwing and led the Titans in that guise until recently returning to Gotham. His friendship with Bruce Wayne was restored after a long estrangement culminating with Grayson standing



Chris O'Hara booming during Asylum Scene

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Director Johnny Wu with DP Bill Johns discussing the scene while the rest are having a photo shoot break.

in as Batman for a short period. On a mission ordered by Batman to nearby Blüdhaven, Nightwing uncovered a deep criminal conspiracy headed by Desmond (Blockbuster). The corruption in this depressed coastal city was so pervasive that Grayson elected to stay on and make the 'Haven his (and Nightwing's) home. He recently joined the Blüdhaven P.D. as a rookie police officer in order to work from the inside to destroy the twisted crime machine that rules his adopted city. Nightwing is a master of a half dozen martial arts disciplines with an emphasis on Aikido, as well as being armed with twin escrima sticks made from unbreakable polymer.

During writing session, I created additional characters like Penguin's son, Green Lantern's son, Superman's son... etc. I realized the more I introduced, the longer the story became and so I decided to concentrate on just a few characters: the bad guys: Vince Fries and Jonathan Napier vs. the good guys with a little saving from Nightwing himself.

Once the outline of the story had been finished, I expanded it into a story format and from there into the production script. I then sent the script to several friends, who I've met through IndieClub.com (a worldwide online network group, that dedicates in fostering our independent filmmaking skills), and also through our local Cleveland IndieClub group. Several of the filmmakers agreed to come onboard to help make this become reality: John Sheetz from Los Angeles, Kathy Fitzgerald from Boston, Bill Johns from Mentor, Timothy Gunn from Detroit and Christine Chapman from Port Clinton, not to mention everyone else that came from all parts of the country. They all agreed to par-take in this ambitious venture. Everyone had thought it was funny and harebrained, yet at the same time, a passionate project. While some didn't think this project was accomplishable, others joined just to see if I could pull it off.

Once everyone was on board, I began to send out donation request letters to friends; of which, many of them were able to provide some small financial contribution. There was a common understanding that this project was not meant to be sold. Even though "A Joker's Card" is a parody, we could not make a decision until the finished product was in our hands. Eventually our entertainment attorneys had the final say.



During the Ekin vs Nightwing fight sequence

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After many months of pre-production, and rehearsing for one fight sequence for 2 months (the final battle between Ekin Tzu and Nightwing) we started our principal photography on October 13, which ran thru till October 17, 2004. Each day, we spent 12-14 hours to shoot the scenes. John Sheetz was Second Unit Director, which allowed us to shoot multiple scenes at the same time and that allowed us to stay on schedule. Being such a packed 4 day shoot; unfortunately, a pickup date was set on November 14, 2004.

We used three Canon XLI, one Sony PD-150, and a Bolex 16mm cameras. There were also several behind-the-scene crew members that walked around and videotaped everything, sometimes, even b-

roll footages for the scene. This was a fun and long experience, the excitement was there and we got the job done with almost 100 cast and crew working together as a team. This was also my first big crew shoot for a short film which gave me a lot of new experiences.

At end of October, I've released the first teaser, with very quick touch up with wires removed and we promoted it via the Internet, generating a lot of buzz. Later, after November 14th, I released the 2nd teaser which

concentrated on Jonathan Napier. Finally our official trailer was released in February 2005.

During the editing process, I had to watch over 20 hours of footage and then, pick out the bits of footage I liked best and then cut it into a rough clip of about 30 minutes. I realized, after re-watching it again, that it was slow paced and many sections had to be removed so

the movie could still make sense. The final edit had gotten down to 18 minutes long. After getting the audio tracks from Richard Ingraham, adding the great sound scores which had been composed and performed by Aryavarta Kumar, we finally had our finished product in by March 2005.

By middle of March 2005, Alan Tuskes and Tom Luhtala also

provided the CG sequences and a great intro scene as well. Everything had been placed into the timeline with Adobe Premiere Pro 1.5, some of the footages were edited using Adobe After Effects 6.5 pro. The wire removal segment was done using Adobe Photoshop CS.

Once we had all the footage lined up in the program, it was time to color adjust each scene to match the style and look that I wanted. Thus, I learned a lot about color correction and when compared to the previous wire-fu short film of mine, The Chase, you can see that I learned a lot about wire-removing techniques.

From March 2005 till just before the premiere, I also began compiling the information needed for our DVD



Mr. Big location shoot - actual house

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set, which need to include a CD Soundtrack of all the music composed for A Joker's Card and several behind the scene footages that had been mainly edited by myself and Mike Bove. Finally, I had also included short films or trailers from our cast and crew, showcasing their work (as space permits) and to make this DVD set a good value production. Even if you disliked the film, you would appreciate the DVD for content.

I am very proud of A Joker's Card, not only because it came out well and received a lot of positive feedback, but because of the hard work each of us put into it. While working as a great team, we helped each other grow and it shows, as a result of this short film.

Now everyone wants to come back and work on the sequel, which currently we are in the production planning stage. The plans right now; however, don't show us

shooting the sequel till Summer 2006. This time frame is needed to carefully flush out our story and evolve the characters. In the plans for the next movie, we are looking at introducing two new characters that will fight off each other as Jonathan Napier is caught between them.

A Joker's Card is already received 3 awards and continuing receiving a lot of play time at many festivals and conventions; of course, one will never please everyone but at least I can say that the cast and crew of A Joker's Card has succeeded in challenging themselves by making this film. Now they are readied to step forward in creating a much more ambitious film, a feature inspired by A Joker's Card: The Joker's Rapture.



*Christine Chapman (Associate Producer/Makeup/Wardrobe) applying final touches on Dana Artonovich*

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**CAST**

Jonathan Napier	Kyle Znamenak
Vince Fries	David Levy
Nick Grayson	David Milam
Ellen	Ellen N. Friedman
Donna Isley	Dana Aritonovich
Mr. Big	Gerry Keating
Nightwing	Andrew Schofield
Ekin Tzu	Johnny K. Wu
Patient/Thug	James Orosz
Thug 1	Chandler Chapman
Thug 2	Jason Morris
Thug 3	Tom Luhtala
Thug 4	Michael Littlejohn
S&M Man	Audese Green
Gangster	Wayne Orris
Gangsters	Mr. & Mrs. Bob Bennett
Gangster	Brett Tryda
Gangster	Michael Kadlec
Gangster	Jeff Rodgers
Gangster	Joseph OBrien
Gangster	Eric Kutz
Gangster	Joey Cremo
Gangster	Keith Carr
Gangster	Joey Cremo
Gangster	Jeffrey Lubell
Gangster	Christian Ramamacher
Gangster	Edward Ostrander

**CREW**

Executive Producer	Johnny K. Wu
Producer	James V. Geier
Producer	Jeffrey Lubell
Associate Producer	Christine Chapman
Associate Producer	Annie Jones
Associate Producer	Tom Luhtala
Associate Producer	Wayne Orris
Associate Producer	Andrew Schofield
Associate Producer	Andrew Sokol
Directed/Written/Edited	Johnny K. Wu
Director of	
Photography	Bill Johns
AD/2nd Unit	
Director	John Sheetz
Assistant AD	Chris O'Hara
Continuity Supervisor/	
Assistant AD	Timothy Gunn
Composer	Aryavarta Kumar
Key Grip	Joe Thompson
Gaffer	Andrew Schofield
2nd Unit Camera	Mike Bove
2nd Unit Gaffer/	
16mm Camera	Robert Banks Jr.
BTS/Camera 3	Kathy Fitzgerald
4th Unit AD	Nicholas D'Amico
4th Unit Camera	Donna Williams
Best Boy 1	Edward Ostrander
Best Boy 2	Doug Fill
Wardrobe/Make up	Christine Chapman

FX Makeup/

Prop Creator/	
Visual FX	Tom Luhtala
Visual FX/CG	Alan Tuskes
Sound Engineer/	
5.1Dolby Encoder	Richard B. Ingraham
Boom Operator 1	Chris O'Hara
Boom Operator 2	Mike Bove
Boom Operator 3	Audese Green
Production Assistant	Jimmy Proctor
Production Assistant	James Orosz
Production Assistant	Mark Pittenger
Location Manager/Safety	Wayne Orris
Catering	Jeff Rodgers
Extra Casting	Annie Jones Casting
Safety, Fight &	
Wire Team Captain	Andrew Sokol
Nightwing vs Ekin Tzu	
Fight Choreographer	Johnny K. Wu
Wire Track/Team Supervisor	Wayne Orris
Wire Team	Morgan Fox
Wire Team	James Orosz
Wire Team	Dan Gallagher
Wire Team	Sarah Halasz
Wire Team	Christopher Quinn
Wire Team	Scott Millinovich
Wire Team	Tom Luhtala
Wire Team	Jeff Heckman
Track Construction for	
Wire work	Vic Burrows
Graphic Design/	
Storyboard Artist	Adam Glazer
Behind-the-Scene	
Interviewer	Robyn Griggs
BTS DP/Photographer	Keith Kline
BTS Crew	Jeff Heckman
BTS Crew	Kenneth Bundy
Web Layout	Johnny K. Wu / Russen Productions (Russ Emanuel)
Copywriter	Audese Green
Premiere Party Planner	Michael Littlejohn
Visual Effects Advisor	Stephen Lebed/MECHNOLOGY
Advisor	Two Man Movies
Advisor	Tumblemonster Productions

Aerial Helicopter provided by T. J. Bencin  
 Make-up supplies provided by Cybergraphic Designs, Inc. and Makeup Effects & Supply Company

Locations provided by:  
 Kenn Szorka's Real Estate, Talkies Film & Coffee Bar, David Levy's Apartment, Robert Wadden & CITI Electric, Inc., Premiere Party @ Grid'n Orbit

"Theme from A Summer Place"  
 by Percy Faith, re-composed by Aryavarta Kumar

Additional donations provided by:  
 Sean and Annie Jones, Margaret Wong and Associates, May Chen, Asian Services in Action, Inc.

Additional thanks to:  
 Lee Howard & Johnny FilmMaker Pictures, Judge Rico & Oni 13 Productions, Residential Light and Magic, Thomas S. Ballard, Larry Cada, Scott Paris, MaryEllen Tomazic, Robert Biehl, Elliot Hooper, Michael Kadlec, Mark Pittenger, Christopher Young, Raymond Elkin, and Billy Nardi.

A Joker's Card Motion Picture Soundtrack CD  
 On sale now @ www.mdifilm.com/joker!

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# Director's Statement



Being a computer geek since 1983, I've always find technology to be fascinating. The same can be said for any kind of creative visual endeavor. Ever since I was young, I have been fond of creating visual arts that poked fun at my teachers (moku-comics), competing in art competitions, and organizing visual-related events (dancing, choreographed shows, etc). Slowly, this fondness

has built up inside of me and tends to enhance my creativity.

Blending art and technology is what enables me to excel in creating a different short film style than you see commonly today. Each has its own genre and taste, and each is completed with the use of my own resources (computers, cameras, lights, and personal skills). All my films have a style totally different from each other.

Each project has helped me to understand the different areas of filmmaking and truly pushes me to extraordinary limits by helping me strive to learn the many styles of visual arts. All of this is made possible with the help of technology.

I hope to continue doing projects of the creative nature and also breaking rules in "indie" filmmaking. To me, making an independent film is an expression of ideas, concepts, dreams, and sometimes even fantasies. While transforming my stories into a visual interpretation, I also crave the need to break the different molds set by most independent filmmakers. I do not play by the rules, nor create my films based on the rules set by most people in the filmmaking industry.

I believe in creation that is not limited by society.

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## Biographies

### Kyle Znamenak

Kyle Znamenak is currently an under grad psychology major at Baldwin Wallace college in Berea Ohio. Kyle began studying acting in high school, in which he earned his membership to the international thespian society as well as being elected thespian president in 2002-2003. Kyle has always had a fascination in movies, especially horror movies made on a small budget. By being within "A Joker's Card", it sparked an interest in Kyle and he is currently writing a short film of his own that he wishes to co-direct with Johnny Wu.



### David J. Levy

Born in Doylestown, PA - David, born a military navel brat, bounced around the country during his youth and finally settled down in a small suburb outside Cleveland, OH. Fresh out of high school, he joined the US Navy. Once discharged, he resumed his college career in the communications field. He started out in the business behind the scenes as a grip and camera operator for a local cable company for high school sports. With his background in studio production, he was hand picked by Johnny K. Wu to work as grip and boom operator in the hit short film "Rodger and Dave." Propelling his career in the arts, David has also worked behind the scenes and dabbled as an extra in "Playing for Keeps." Johnny, noticing his natural talent for acting, chose David for the role of Dr. Vince Fries, in his latest short, "A Joker's Card."



### David Milam

Raised in Willoughby Hills, Ohio, David Milam had a grasp for the dramatic at an early age. After taking a long, arduous, journey through the educational system, he developed an artistic flair. After high school, David enrolled in culinary school where he trained for two years. After briefly working in the restaurant field, he realized it was time to move on. A Jokers Card was David's first foray into the film industry. Having been introduced to the filmmaker through personal contacts, David was delighted to have worked on the project. Currently working at two prominent locations in the Cleveland scene, David currently has no other projects slated.



### Dana Aritonovich

Dana Aritonovich appeared in three independent films prior to "A Joker's Card". "Blood Donors", filmed in 2002, was director Ken Carpenter's debut movie, as well as Dana's. She then had small roles in Stephanie Aldridge's "Descend Into Darkness", and its sequel. Dana is also slated to appear in Aldridge's next film, due to begin filming in summer 2005.



Aside from acting, Dana has done some modeling and TV work. Having had some poems and short stories published in small press publications; she has four unpublished novels under her corset!

Dana will continue to pursue interesting projects of any media. She'd like to have her own empire someday and also aspires to have a cabana boy for each day of the

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week to meet her every desire. Until then; though, she greets every opportunity with open arms... and heaving bosom.

### Gerry Keating

Early in Gerry's career, he did a lot of work in theater, playing such characters as Psuedolus in, "a Funny Thing Happened on the way to the Forum," and King Henry VIII in, "Anne of 1000 days." Gerry had also been involved in improvisational theater, as well as working with a Cleveland based group known as, "the Quicktime Comedy Troupe," for three years. The connection to Quicktime, took him to Miami Beach, in a 1940's musical revue, "Stompin' at LaRonde." With the Miami Beach show, Gerry was able to acquire a position on a cruise line as an entertainer. Alternating between singing on cruise ships and doing theater, he traveled the world extensively. Upon returning to Cleveland, in 1997, Gerry has been involved in the Cleveland night life, performing at restaurants around Cleveland as a singer, hosting events and had been an entertainment coordinator at one of Cleveland's largest dance clubs.



Being very diligent in his efforts to keep his career moving, Gerry can be found at auditions and performing as voice-over talent. Once such audition landed Gerry a supporting role in the NBC movie, "The Next American Hero," in which he played a scene opposite 'the villain' of the movie, Billy Zane. In the spring of 2004, Gerry was approached by film producer/director Johnny K. Wu, to play the role of Mr. Big in, "A Joker's Card." Gerry, knowing of Johnny's abilities and merit, thought it sounded like a fun and interesting project and agreed

to look at the script. At a striking 6 foot 4 inches, and 275lbs, Gerry believed that he and the part were a perfect fit... and it was.

### Ellen Friedman

Ellen N. Friedman is a professional actress and acting coach. A Joker's Card is Ellen's third film directed by Johnny, and she has performed in numerous other independent films throughout the country. In addition to film, Ellen is the on-camera acting coach for the UPN TV network reality series "Industry Model Search" to air in the fall of 2005. This year Ellen will be a panelist in the Cleveland Entertainment Conference, and has just taught a workshop on directing actors in film at the Moondance International Film Festival in Boulder Colorado. She has also taught workshops and guest lectured at Independent Pictures, Kent State University, Pioneer Lake Theatre in Oberlin, Riverside Vocal Academy in conjunction with Baldwin Wallace College, Life Center Plus in Hudson, and many others in areas of acting, directing, voice, and media presence. Ellen is one of fox network's media coaches, and has also done a great deal of executive coaching as well. Visit Ellen's website at [www.ellennfriedman.com](http://www.ellennfriedman.com).



### Andrew Schofield

Andy Schofield is a talented actor born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. He grew up always dreaming about how to become an entertainer for the camera. His passion and drive is to be in front of the camera and it shows; whether for commercials, television, or movies. He has more than 10 years of experience in regard to film, stunts and vocal training and he has been an integral part of many



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features short films, commercials and corporate video. Andy Schofield's integrity and the way he strives for excellence exhibits itself in his performance and in the way he lives his life. His vitality for life is second to none and he loves helping others.

Andy loves acting and life; he continually strives to become better whether honing his craft as an actor, director, producer, videographer, electrician, or martial artist; in fact, Andy is currently a first degree black belt in Moo Duk Kwan Tae Kwon Do. He was always an excellent student and had perfect attendance all through junior high and high school, but always felt something was missing. He even completed 5 years of an electrical apprenticeship through IBEW and decided it was time to pursue his dream of acting and directing and producing his own projects. He is now a member of such organizations as SAG (eligible), AFTRA and IATSE, with certification from OSHA and training in firearm safety and CPR. He is also a member of the Academy Players Directory and a dual member of the IFP (California and New York). Andy Schofield also manages his own production company, Dream Maker Productions, and is always searching to expand as an actor, director and producer of his own material. More about Andy at [www.movieamandy.com](http://www.movieamandy.com)

### Chandler Chapman

Chandler Chapman got his start in theater as a teen. After appearing in such plays as "Hello, Dolly!", "Carousel", and "Kiss Me Kate", he left the theater to pursue his writing.

In 2003 he collaborated with writing partner and wife, Christine, on his first short



film, "Twenty First Century", which is now on the festival circuit.

Chandler received the role of Thug 1 based on his 6'4" 250 pound build and martial arts background. He had a great time working with Johnny Wu and all the cast and crew of "A Joker's Card" and looks forward to the sequel.

Chandler and Christine are currently in pre-production on 2 more short films and Chandler is completing two adaptations of his books for film.

### Jason Morris

Jason is a 22 year old actor from Columbus Ohio. He has performed in several short films, one feature length



project and has many things on the board right now. AJC was his first attempt at a spoof and had a great time with it. Jason played the role of

THUG 2 and as he puts it, "Nothing better then getting Kicked around old school batman style!!!" To learn more about Jason visit [www.HHHent.com](http://www.HHHent.com).

### James Orosz

James worked on A Jokers Card in many roles. Primarily serving as a grip and production assistant, he also performed in the role of "patient/thug." Prior to AJC, James has worked on a small scale film for his friend's government class project. In his free time he enjoys paint ball, volley ball, going out to night clubs, and just being active. James also enjoys working on his yard and turning things that look like crap into something beautiful. Currently, James is planning his very own short film and is looking forward to the sequel of A Jokers Card.



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## Johnny K. Wu

Johnny K. Wu, a veteran filmmaker with a MBA specializing in marketing, has been involved in the media creation of visual and audio services since 1998 when he co-founded MDI (Media Design Imaging). Since then, he has helped small and medium business in developing focused visual media through promotion videos, commercials, corporate videos, while at the same time, creating his own



short/feature films and documentaries that has continued to be shown worldwide at film festivals, online sites, colleges, national televisions, DVD distribution, and sci-fi or horror conventions.

Wu has been featured in many publications including the Smart Business magazine, Kungfucinema.com, Kungfu Magazine, The Plain Dealer, Cleveland Free Times, Cleveland's Scene Magazine, FilmThreat.com, and Erie Chinese Journal, World Journal, Post Magazine, Cleveland Magazine, and others.

Johnny Wu belongs to several organizations including the American Federation of Film Producers, Indieclub.com, International Karate and Kickboxing Fall of Fame, the World of Head Family Sokeship, to name a few. He has also spoken at Universities and film festivals. He also helped organized and produced numerous events for organizations, including a benefit in Hollywood with the participation of Alicia Keys, Steven Seagal, Uncle Kracker, Kevin Bacon, Kid Rock, Will Smith, Eve, Pamela Anderson, and many others during his commute to Los Angeles from 2000 to 2002, which he also worked directly with prestigious

public relation firms such as PMAK, Lee Solters and Co., and Roger and Cowan.

Locally, he helped produced several successful events such as OCAGC Fundraising Christmas Gala, Summer Crush and the Oscar Night Party for Independent Pictures, workshops including the annual Director of Photography at WVIZ/PBS, Visual FX Workshop with Stephen Lebed (Charmed VFX Supervisor), Budgeting workshop with Norman Berns, and others.

In late 2003, Johnny Wu founded a monthly local filmmakers' networking group, the Cleveland Indieclub, which allows everyone to socialize, screen and network with others, the meetings has garnered a lot of support from local and national businesses.

A Joker's Card, had gathered a lot of attention and positive reviews, it has been requested to be screen at many conventions and film festivals. The film, currently holding strong in 2nd most watched film at their site, is available online at [www.undergroundfilm.org](http://www.undergroundfilm.org) (according to UnderGround Film, A Joker's Card contributed to the highest video download in their 7 years history when it debuted on April 2005).

A Joker's Card just won the 26th Telly Awards for Best Entertainment category for Film and Video Productions. 2nd Telly Wu had received for his involvement. And Best Comedy Short at Wreck-Beach International Film Festival.

## James V. Geier

An electrical engineer by trade, producer Jim Geier had no filmmaking experience prior to A Joker's Card. Besides some financial backing, he brought to the project a lifelong love of science fiction, and fantasy, both written and filmed,



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and comic books. Though he became involved late in the effort, Jim was able to provide another set of eyes, ears, and opinions, as well as a helpful suggestion or two, for the post-production process. He has thoroughly enjoyed the experience and looks forward to working with his friend writer/director Johnny K. Wu on future projects, including the sequel to "A Joker's Card."

### Jeffrey Lubell

Jeffrey Lubell is a local care physician who is an avid filmgoer. A supporter of the arts he is a member of the Cleveland Film Society, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Cleveland Institute of Art and The Cleveland Institute of Music. He can often be seen at performances/shows at many of these local institutions. He was last at the Cleveland International Film Festival and was last year at Cannes.



### William (Bill) Johns

Bill is a Cleveland area writer, producer and director and says he 'toys' with Special FX. Having created a medallion prop and a scene that looks like a furry creature being blown away for his award winning short film, "We Have Your Daughter," he offered to help on "The Chase" by removing the fight scene wires. Though he only used Adobe After FX and Photoshop for this job, he's also used Lightwave 3D with eerie success in another short film called, "Too Good to be True," which is available for viewing at [www.TriggerStreet.com](http://www.TriggerStreet.com). More on Bill Johns can be found at his website [www.cinevidproductions.com](http://www.cinevidproductions.com)

Mr. Johns' latest film *Left for Dead* recently won the 2005 Telly Award, a prestigious awarding organization where Johnny Wu participated as a crew.

### John Sheetz

Increasingly dissatisfied with the cinematic fluff and drivel permeating the movie theaters, Sail Away Pictures, the brainchild of production couple John Sheetz and Kim Van Meter, set out to see if they could do better, if even on a smaller scale. Their belief,



reinforced by what was being churned out by the studios, was big budgets did not necessarily guarantee a better film. In their opinion, inflated egos and bloated budgets seemed to actually hinder a film artistically.

In 1996, after dabbling with small shorts produced by friends and fellow independent filmmakers, John made his way into the independent film scene

with his first short, *Simulated Madness*, with little more than gritty determination, life savings and a hope that their dreams could come true. "Simulated Madness," a 15-minute drama written and directed by Sheetz, throws the audience into the unsettling world of a man who cannot reconcile the childhood abuse he suffered at the hands of his father. After a brief stint in Los Angeles, John relocated to the mountainous community of Mariposa County, where he embarked on his second largest filmmaking endeavor, "Seeing the Elephant," a 40 minute documentary. Delving into the realm of documentary filmmaking was a new and exciting chapter in Sail Away Pictures history that proved to be educational and fun. Following the NCWA (National Civil War Association) around for an entire year provided

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the stunning imagery and historical authenticity for the documentary. "Seeing the Elephant" went on to win the 1998 WAVE (Western Alliance for Video Excellence) award in Palo Alto, beating out hundreds of other projects. This project also was the winner of the 1999 Golden Telly. Currently, John is working towards finding funding for an, as-of-yet, untitled feature. More about John at [www.sailwaypictures.com](http://www.sailwaypictures.com)

### Robert Banks Jr.

Robert Banks: Former Sundance Producer / Director Robert has been working in the realm of experimental cinema and photography with such vigor and quality that he has become known as one of the leading talents of this medium in Cleveland. His work is underlined with the

belief that film is the extension of photography.

Robert utilizes classic method of film manipulation to bring forth a vivid display of film loops and film tests involving a nude figure, sculptures, oil paints, and clay. The result is a high



energy stop motion montage which complements the entire exhibition.

It is hoped, by Robert, that people will come to a better understanding of the ideas in his work, in that cinema is indeed an extension of photography.

Robert directed the 2nd version of The Chase in 16mm reversal film stock to experiment the display of cinematography differences and comparing the final products between two visual format: digital and film.

Robert helped with 2nd unit director John Sheetz in creating a look for several scenes in A Joker's Card, he also lensed his Bolex 16mm camera for few of the fight sequences between Ekin Tzu and Nightwing at the end of the movie.

### Timothy Gunn

Before becoming a filmmaker, Timothy has spent the past thirteen years training to become a professional musician. While studying the bassoon at Michigan State University, he met Jonathan Worful and quickly developed a strong friendship. After months of discussion, Timothy and Jonathan decided to begin work on a joint feature film effort which would become, "An Apology to the Dead."



Timothy has long held a passion for the dramatic works of Ingmar Bergman, Francois Truffaut, Krzysztof Kieslowski and more recently, Lynne Ramsay. It was his wish to infuse much of, An Apology to the Dead, with the social realism and romantic dynamism of these

cinematic forebears.

Tim recently directed a short educational film for The Writing Center at Michigan State University entitled, "The Thesis Reloaded." The short film features a few cast members from An Apology to the Dead, including Emily Richett (Allison) and Shawn Luckey (Employer), as well as his co-director's wife, Andrea Worful. The film was crewed by some Apology alumni, as well, including Barry Elmore and Mike McLeod. You can watch the twenty minute short in its entirety here.

Timothy currently resides with his wife, Shannon, in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the Second Bassoonist with the Greater Lansing Symphony Orchestra, and is the

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Bassoon Instructor for Albion College. Timothy is also an accomplished artist and graphic designer. Along with Jonathan, Timothy is a co-founder of Vernacular Films, LLC. More about Timothy and his project can be found at [www.anapologytothedead.com](http://www.anapologytothedead.com)

### Christine Chapman

Christine Chapman provided wardrobe, make-up and hair for "A Joker's Card".

Mrs. Chapman has over twenty years experience in costume and make-up design.

She began her behind the scenes work as a teenager and eventually became the first paid costumer and make up designer for the Bowling Green State University Opera Theater, where she did the "Barber Of Seville", and "The Marriage Of Figaro".



A former member of the International Costumer's Guild, Ms. Chapman has provided wardrobe and make-up services for theater and film since 1984.

Currently, she has film projects lined up back to back through the end of 2005; however, she is always looking for a 'paid gig'.

She is also a film-maker and theater producer in her own right. Her directorial debut was "Twenty First Century," a short film that is currently on the festival circuit. She and her producing/writing partner (and husband), Chandler Chapman have two short films in pre-production.

Ms. Chapman is also the founder and Artistic Director of the Lakespeare Theatre Festival, which is in its second season.

### Tom Luhtala

Tom Luhtala's love of film and art is the driving force behind Cleveland FX. While huge budget movies are fine for the most part, they are driven by money and sadly, too few offer anything worthy of \$8 a ticket.



Independent films offer a much better opportunity for the artist to convey his vision and story unmolested to the audience. To be able to do this the producer and director must have access to high quality special effects, and most importantly they have to be able to afford them and that's where Cleveland FX comes in.

Offering high quality special effects at an affordable price Cleveland FX hopes to serve those wanting to make their vision a reality in the Cleveland area. It doesn't matter if it's a student film, a short, digital, or a feature. Check out his website at [www.clevelandfx.com](http://www.clevelandfx.com)

### Alan Tuskes

Being a fan of effects wizard Ray Harryhausen started at an early age. Alan decided at the age of 10, back in 1970, that he wanted to grow up and make monsters. He saved his allowance for 2 years, bought an 8mm camera by the time he was 12 and spent the next few years trying to convince family and friends that his goals were realistic. They weren't convinced until a few years later when Star Wars was released. Al's response was to build a working optical printer



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and rotoscope stand for the purpose of creating optical effects that would rival those in that ground breaking film. After a few years of courage mustering, Al headed to California with his extremely supportive wife and managed to quickly work his way into top effects studios, such as KNB Effects Group, Stan Winston Studios, Rick Baker's Cinovation, Steve Johnson's EdgeFX, and many others, on films such as *Chronicles of Riddick*, *Van Helsing*, *From Dusk 'til Dawn*, *Passion of Christ*, *Blade*, and many others. Being an advocate of the idea that the make-up coordinators and the digital folks could co-exist in peace, he started studying the use of Lightwave 3D, After Effects, Photoshop, and several other programs early on. This gave him the opportunity to move back to Ohio and still do the work he loves so well. More about Alan can be found at [www.alternative-realities.com/](http://www.alternative-realities.com/)

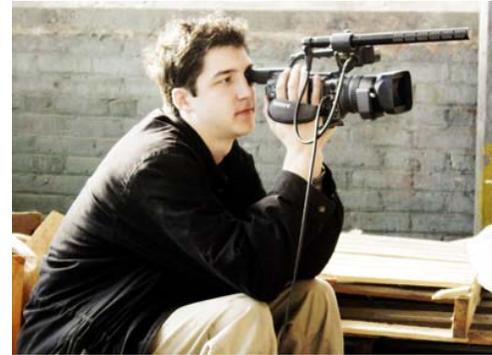
### Andrew Sokol

Andrew Sokol has been teaching Taekwondo, Judo and Hapkido since 1982 at numerous locations around Cleveland, including the Case Western Reserve University, Kim's Martial Arts Schools in North Ridgeville and Fairview Park, to name a few. He is one of the founders for the Miami University Korean

Martial Arts Society in Oxford, Ohio. Also being an instrumental key member to help make the Han Wei National Tournament a success from 1995-1998 that was held at Cleveland State University. Andrew Sokol also had done many demonstration and workshops on self-defense and the Korean martial arts. "HayWire," was Andrew's first involvement with a feature film produced by Johnny K. Wu and later by Wu's request, he helped in *The Chase* as Fight Choreographer/Safety Director plus also starring at Robert Banks' version of *The Chase*. Andrew helped on *A Joker's Card* providing a much elaborated wire-stunt system along with Wayne Orris. Mr. Sokol is now helping Johnny on the sequel by providing a much challenging wire-stunt work and explosives usage. He is considered by Johnny as the set's McGyver.

### Mike Bove

Mike is an aspiring filmmaker from the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio. He got his start making terrible home movies about a super-hero named Slugman. From there, Mike expanded his horizons and began experimenting with all different types of stories, ranging from



mental hospitals to self-documentaries to horror flicks. Filmed with a Hi8 home video camcorder, these productions are the basis of Mike's later work.

Armed with a new camera, Mike went out and attempted his first "real" film—which failed terribly. Having learned from the experience, Mike busied himself with various other video projects and music videos for school, where he learned the ins-and-outs of non-linear editing. No longer naive, Mike (with fellow filmmaker friend Doug Devor) produced their first successful short film entitled "Howler", about a man who is chased throughout



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his life by a pack of wild howler monkeyts. The film went on to tremendous acclaim from friends, family and the local film community alike. Mike once again blew his savings and armed himself with a plethora of new video equipment before attempting his next outing. A year passed before he launched his next project, a dark comedy entitled "Trunks and Corpses". Filmed over four months in summer 2004, the film follows a bumbling pair of friends as they attempt to dispose of two bodies. Surprisingly to Mike, this film got a better reception than the last and was asked by Cleveland filmmaker Johnny K. Wu to hold a special premiere with his short fan-film "A Joker's Card". Mike's ultra-low-budget, guerrilla, no-rules style of filmmaking is respected by some, but rejected by most. Mike tries to stay actively involved in the local filmmaking scene, however loosely. He resides in Wickliffe but is leaving for film school in Chicago this fall.

### **Aryavarta Kumar**

Arya (Aryavarta Kumar) began his musical training with introductory classical piano lessons at age 9 in Kuwait. He continued these formal classical piano lessons for 13 years with a period of one year away from the piano after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd 1990. Having studied with several different teachers in different countries, he brings a unique experience to his music. After arriving in the USA, he played in several rock bands and groups including Retron, a rock/jazz band, Stasis, a progressive metal band, and Xenophobia, a world music high school independent project. On a trip to India, he started



learning the sitar and tabla and continues learning the intricacies of Hindustani music. In college, Arya began to explore western orchestral scoring and from this grew his desire to score film and media.

Being influenced by film scores and the ambient electronica/pop group Delerium, he set out to form a new fusion of styles. He continues to build his musical studio to enhance the sounds in his composition while writing passionate music that helps build the atmosphere it for which it is designed. More about Arya can be found at [www.aryavartakumar.com](http://www.aryavartakumar.com)

### **Richard B. Ingraham**

Although you'll typically find Richard Ingraham sitting inside a dark room, designing sound for the stage, he has recently been working on breaking into film production.

In addition to working on A Joker's Card, Richard was the Sound Designer for Christine Chapman's film 21st Century. Richard has manipulated audio for just about all mediums within the entertainment industry: Theatre, Film, Live Sound, Audio Recording, Industrials, etc. Richard is a former Resident Sound



Designer at The Cleveland Play House, and the current Resident Sound Designer for Hope Summer Repertory Theatre in Holland, Michigan. He has designed sound for numerous theatres in the area and around the country, including: Beck Center for the Arts, Ceasar's Forum, Cleveland Art Theatre, The Cleveland Public Theatre, Cleveland State University, The Cleveland Theatre Company, Dobama Theatre, The University of Evansville, The Jewish Community Center of Cleveland, Playhouse Square Center, Rabbit Run Theatre,

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Shakespeare and Company, The Working Theatre, and Willoughby Fine Arts Association. You can learn more about Richard's work, or keep up on upcoming projects, by visiting his web site at: [www.rbicompaudio.20m.com](http://www.rbicompaudio.20m.com)

### Adam Glazer

Adam Glazer is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Art, has done storyboarding in the local indie film scene and commercial gigs and recently worked with Johnny Wu's A Joker's Card to assist in visualizing the film. He also has published stories in the small press comics industry and is continuously involved in that realm and

works digitally on computer and by traditional media. His next project(s) are gaming illustrations for an online trading card game and hoping to do more works to be shown in art shows and in publications. His work can be seen at:

[www.studioinasanctum.com](http://www.studioinasanctum.com)



### Kathy Fitzgerald

Kathleen started her career at 10 years old by 'staging' her friends and sisters in still shots of 'action'. In 1982 she began directing and producing theatre in Boston.

Dozens of plays later, and a writer herself, she decided to leap into film. A big leap, her first feature that she wrote, directed, and produced is a three-hour epic style film titled Messiah. It was completed in 2002 and picked up by a distributor shortly after.

It was screened at the Wreck Beach Film Festival in Toronto with wonderful reviews, and winning Best of the festival. Prior to that, she studied all the books she could, she had gone to the Hollywood Film Institute's short courses and graduated. From there she did a one-year internship at a local television studio running camera, directing, and writing on an award-winning comedy show. Kathy is a member of



[indieclub.com](http://indieclub.com), where she's learned more than she could in film school.

She belonged to the Harvard Square Scriptwriters, Women in Film & Video, and Mass Media Alliance. On the occasion, Kathy will throw herself into an 'extra' role in a movie. Such as the likes of A Civil Action, Man Without A Face, and Celtic Pride. In 2002 Kathy wrote, shot, and directed an emotional documentary, Out in the Dark, following a toddler that was raped and beaten and what his life was like for him. It's hard to see a five year old suicidal. It's not yet in distribution, as she is still working on later in his life, but for what

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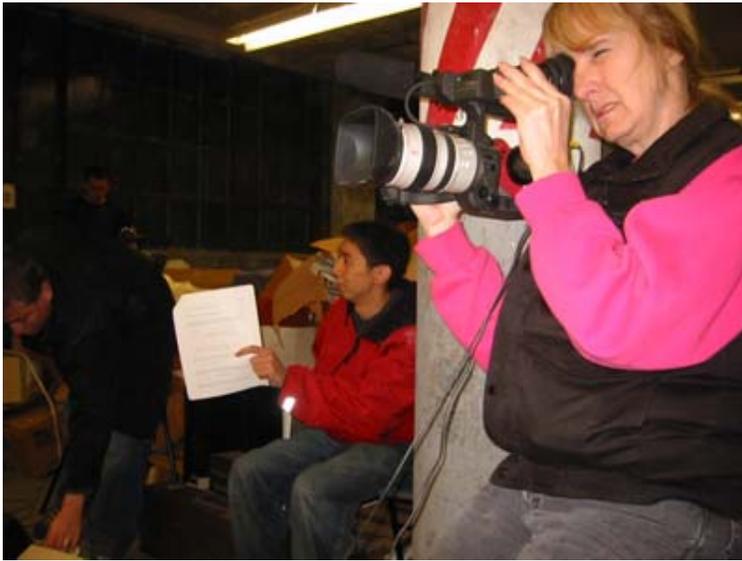




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has been shown to two test audiences, the tears flowed and emotions ran high.

A producer in Italy hired KAM Fitzgerald to manage and direct his movie in Boston in 2003, *The Ring of The Bishop* which now is making the festival circuit. Also in 2003, she took on a family feature, *Nathan's Rebellion*, that was shot on location in Southwick, MA.



It was an Official Selection screened at the 2004 Boston International Film Festival in a prime time slot. The reviews were excellent.

To date, Kathy has worked on the following features and shorts: *Messiah*, *Ring Of The Bishop*, *Out In The Dark*, *Magical Portals*, *Nathan's Rebellion*, *The Ancient*, *A Joker's Card*, *A Matter Of Choice*, *Chaotic Breakfast*, *Parallel aka Penis Envy*, *A 9/11 Remembrance*, *For The Troops*, and is currently working on a feature documentary entitled *Killer Mom From Outer Space*.

Her favorite movie, yet to be made, will be from the book *MiKayla-The Second Coming*. The business plan,

budget, and script are just about ready. Then watch out world.

In one of her production pics, you'll notice the blood. When she worked as a co-Director and co-DP of *The Ancient* (written and produced by Richard McClure), she mentioned that it was her first horror movie.

Well, she couldn't get away without being 'inducted' into the horror genre via a blood bath; a very sticky situation, to say the least. For more info about Kathy, visit [www.povertiproductions.com](http://www.povertiproductions.com)

### **Donna Williams**

Donna was invited to come down and shoot for a day on *AJC*. It was her first time shooting on an independent film, she had fun despite how cold it was and she truly enjoyed the professionalism and comradely that was present throughout the entire day of the shoot. She shot on her Cannon XLIS with sticks and also free hand, which is my favorite!



Donna's background begins with a bet from her father to go to college. That she could not go for longer than he did. She won. Now she have a degree in Media Productions. Before *AJC*, she has been involved in a number of projects. She directed and shot *Real-estate Showcase TV* and also *Apartment Showcase TV* on PAX. *Real-estate Showcase TV* is now on WUAB. She also helped to write and shoot "Dr. Mike's Painaway" infomercial and was even cast in the interior commercial! With her associates she has been involved with a lot of documentary work on Kyle Maynard, a wrestler who has overcome, and continues to, physical challenges. This

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Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

has also led to working with the World Power Lifters' Organization in shooting their competitions including the Arnold Classic. Her next upcoming project is co-writing and shooting a commercial for Competitive Edge Fitness Center. But she can't wait to shoot AJC sequel!

Although her education is in production Donna also does performance work. She is an independently contracted actress with Jovialities Entertainment Services and has been for 12 years now and loves it. Ms. Williams also recently started working with Talent Group and been enjoying that as well. In recent months she was cast in an independent film called Dead Planet in which she played Corporal Amora.

In front of the camera or behind, for as long as she can, she's there! On a set is one of her favorite places to be. Donna love being involved in creative projects and she is thankful to have been a part of AJC. It has been a wonderful experience!

"If the entire world's a stage, then people's answering machines are my playground!"

### Annie Jones

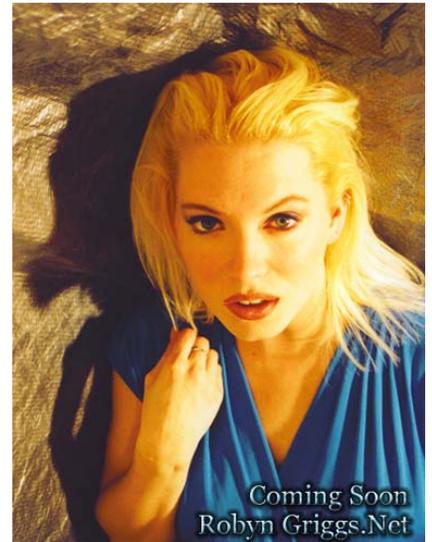
Annie McDermott Jones has been casting for 15 years. Her work includes feature films, television shows, commercials, print and live staging. She has worked with crews from all over, including Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Miami and in every major city in Ohio. Her Keen eye for talent, familiarity with the acting world,

and ability to work well with directors has made her popular with many producers in the United States.

Annie is a graduate of Ohio University, and also of Second City Comedy School, Writing Program. She currently lives in Lakewood, Ohio.

### Robyn Griggs

Robyn Griggs is mainly known for her lead roles on the daytime soaps. She played Stephanie Hobart (Carlos niece/ first one to murder him) on ONE LIFE TO LIVE ABC and the rebellious teen Maggie Cory on ANOTHER WORLD NBC. She has just been cast as the lead role in the new scifi/horror film, DEAD PLANET and just completed the psychological thrillers ABATTOIR, GHOST TOUR for deepkut productions and THE URN by Clippis productions. Robyn has been also signed to a 2 picture deal with Twisted Insomniac Productions and will be playing Suzie in Amy Lynn Bests' film SEVERE INJURIES featuring Debbie Rochon. More about Robyn can be found at [www.robyngriggs.net](http://www.robyngriggs.net)



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## "Color Corrections"

Why is Color Correction important? It helps create a nicer visual look that you want to come out in your film. It also helps fix some of the issues with image quality during shooting.

All movies from Hollywood are color processed and they light their scenes as needed but add some color tone during post, to make it closer to the directors vision; hence, it increase the quality of your production.

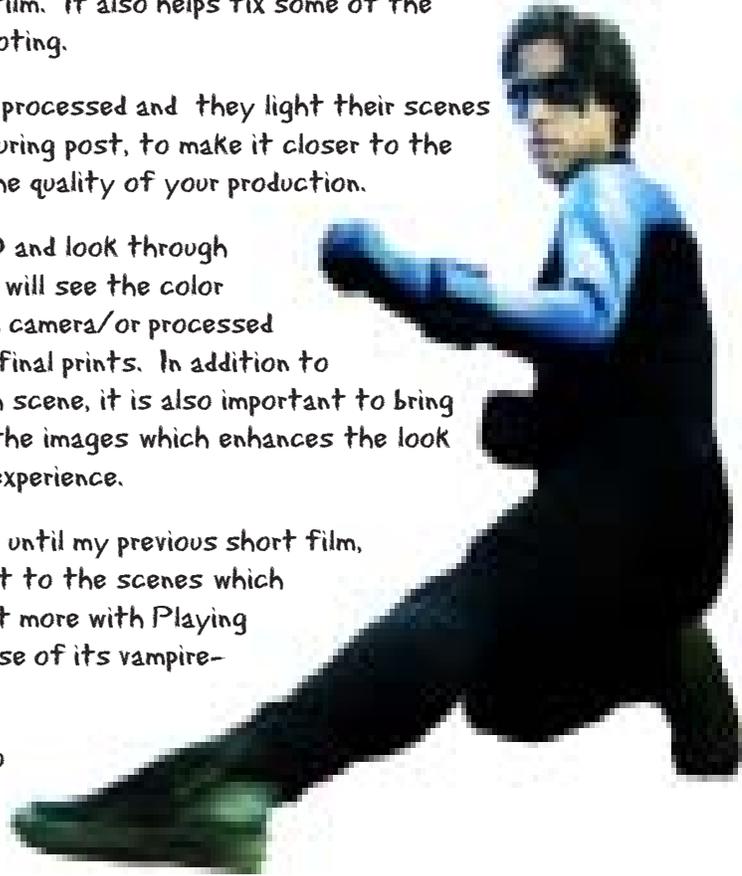
If you check out any movies on DVD and look through their behind the scene footage, you will see the color differences from raw footage, from camera/or processed film footage, to the quality of the final prints. In addition to matching the color and tone of each scene, it is also important to bring out the visual quality by enhancing the images which enhances the look and feel the director wants you to experience.

For me, color correction didn't start until my previous short film, *The Chase*, where we used a blue tint to the scenes which gave it a cold feeling. Then I did a bit more with *Playing for Keeps*, giving it a dark feel because of its vampire-esque nature.

But with *A Joker's Card*, I decided to experiment more with Color Correction. Since I used Adobe Premiere Pro 1.5 as my main editing suite, it was easy to play with and learn. First, I created sequences in Premiere; wherein, each sequence represents a scene in my story.

I edited each sequence individually and made sure that they were what I wanted. I then color corrected each sequence by adding the look on each clip. Premiere comes with some free color correction settings, but they weren't enough for what I was looking for and so I purchased some additional settings, with that, I then played with combining some of the settings to see if the result is what I wanted.

Of course, you **MUST** have raw footage that contains good lighting, this way you have an ample degree of latitude to adjust during color correction.



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For A Joker's Card, I wanted a comic book color but with a darker feel to it. So the manipulation of colors is very important, for outside scenes, I wanted the basic street colors to be dry while enhancing the green grass a bit more than usual.

For indoor scenes, most are depending on the mood of the actual story, some scenes were just making it darker feel, others I've enhanced the basic colors.

Overall, I've learned that, to tell a good story, your actors, audio and lighting are very important. But not to forget, that a good visual will bring people closer to the story and less likely to see the flaws. Having a movie color corrected, particularly with independent films, is a must have tool. So, if you ever go out and shoot a movie, please don't forget to light it well and to color correct in post.



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## A Joker's Card

May 19, 8:45 PM

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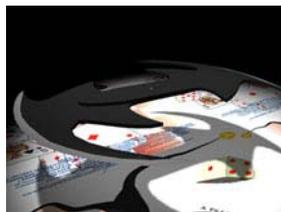
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Okay, the twist I mentioned is this. What if the Joker, you know...batman's nemesis, and gave him a kid? What would he be like? Well, this Napier kid, played by Kyle Znamenak, is a sore loser type who gets picked on and wants revenge by ruling the world and gets help from that crazy hospital always mentioned in comics and movies. Basically, Joker Jr. is lead to believe he has to wipe out all the superhero kids in order to clear the path to world domination. He also gets help from Mr. Big, an ex-henchman who worked for his father, the Joker. It would seem that even Mr. Big

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doesn't like the kid much, but helps him out by lending his lackies.

Gerry Keating plays Mr. Big, my favorite in this short film, as his presence and voice impresses me as a director to no end. Props go out to Johnny Wu for perfect casting on this character. Andy Schofield (Nightwing) versus Johnny Wu (Ekin Tzu) fight is a lot of fun, as this is supposedly the first time wire fight scenes were ever done locally in Cleveland. The fighting and costumes of this scene, which there is a backstory that we don't fully know, are pretty gosh darned good for independent, if not excellent, actually! There's a dominatrix style character Donna Isley, played by Dana Artonovich, whom I've starred in my debut film, "Blood Donors". Her character gets around the crazy house and tries to get into Nick Grayson character's favor, played by David Milam, who actually seems to be gay, from the opening scene, but plays along with her needs in order to survive.

Other characters, like Wonder Woman's daughter make a fun appearance and use of visual effects. Plenty of liberties with D.C. Comic material in the form of parody are a plenty in this short. I like it more each time I see it, which is good. The Ekin Tzu character can disappear and reappear like the ninja type he is. I have no idea where his character comes from, but I don't keep up on comic characters as much as I should. Again, the wire work is cool and the Tzu character should have been given one or two more fancy things to do, but it's a short film! Yes, there is extreme violence in this parody!

Aryavarta Kumar, <http://www.aryavartakumar.com/>, does a campy cool rendition of comic movie music that is sure to please even the most discerning listener. I only use campy as part description due to the parody it's being composed for and that the music relies on keyboards and synthesizers, which are my instruments of choice, as well. There's definitely talent here!

As in any review I do, there has to be something negative with an indie film. In this case, it's the same issue I have with almost all indie films, including my own. Directors want to give a lot of time onscreen to pull every ounce of talent from their actors and actresses. Perhaps it's to honor our cast's moments. The problem with this is that there is usually only one camera being used, making it hard to switch up angles and shots. This forces the shot to be from one vantage point and leaves the director and editor dwelling on the emotional emphasis the talent gives. When editing, the tendency is to stay too long on a shot and deliver that emotion longer than necessary for story and flow. Otherwise, that's it, really!

On the flipside of indie film, I think the short is very funny and enlightening in many places. I think the work William Johns does on camera is quite good and there are plenty of unique shots. Alan Tuskes does cool digital effects...Then again, he does work on Hollywood level projects. Everyone did their part well, though this review can't shed light on everybody involved. It's a fun parody that shows us how families feud, even in the comics. While Johnny K. Wu has gone on to many other projects since this one, I'm sure this one will remain close to his heart for many years to come. It's sure to be for many others.

Go with a smile, Kenny

### Author: Kenny Carpenter



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Comments

Johnny Wu says:

Kenny, thank you for the review :) For anyone interested in the press-kit for A Joker's Card or use it as an example for your own, you can download it at www.mdifilm.com/joker

The press-kit however, is HUGE, which you should trim yours down to the essential. :)

The thought of making A Joker's Card was conceived after watching Teen Titans with Kyle, David and Dave, and we thought of doing a fan film at first, and then realized the cost of their costume would be too much, so we decided to go toward the offspring angle.

While making the planning of the script, I was starting to include Batman's blind son, Penguin's muscle build son, Superman's short son, etc and realized it was going a bit too much and too far. THUS remembering what Peter Jackson said at one of his commentary for LOTR, I decided concentrate the story more on essential. Wonder Woman's character is actually there as 'extra'.

While writing the script, I put the actor's real personality in play, since these are friends I know that actually CAN possible BE the offsprings. Even Dana, Poison Ivy's daughter, we made her a chatty mouth (as she is also the same in real life).

The next step was to make the film fun and a blend of 60s styled superhero show and the wire-fu of the 90s, so it became campy thanks to Arya's music (which I asked for, this was the first time he ventured into film scoring)

And because I also wanted add 'that' Anime flare, we went and study several Asian cinema, the main crew actually got together and watched a few movies like Casshern, Natural City and others to learn their angle/shooting style.

When the movie was done, we presented the film to 3 attorneys to make sure we still 'fall' under parody clause, since as filmmaker, we know that what you have on script is not necessarily is what the final product would be like. (Luckily they all agreed this is still under the parody clause) :)

Nevertheless, we decided to give the movie away free (we gave away over 2000 copies and it reached millions viewers at Undergroundfilm.com when debuted, making the month of April their highest visited months by viewers in their site's history).

The goal of A Joker's Card was to attract the comic book fans, as a filmmaker, I tend to go and do different type of movies to try to attract and retain that particular genre viewers, this would slowly increase my fan base. A Joker's Card worked.

Thanks again for the review and the opportunity to add these info :)

Johnny Wu

May 20, 8:02 AM

Kenny Carpenter says:

I want to add, before writing an article on it, that what was thought to be a typical indie editing issue on cast moments is infact intentional and popular within asian film, pointed out by Johnny Wu, himself. It never occured to me he was playing to a larger and culturally varied audience. That's global thinking that you don't see in indie film very often. We should all take note as filmmakers.

May 20, 2:37 AM

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## Cultural differences in filmmaking & an apology to Johnny Wu

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My last article was a review on Johnny K. Wu's 2005 short entitled "A Joker's Card", and while the review was very positive, I always balance reviews of independent film with what I percieve to be a negative. However, I have made an understandable oversight in what I thought was negative about the short film's pacing, that was in fact stereotypically judgmental of our North American film culture, wrongly. I thought the focus on characters stayed too long at times, which is typical within indie film, and found out it was very much intentional and for multiple reasons most independent filmmakers and U.S. audiences probably are completely unaware of. The reasons are cultural film style and playing to global audiences for distribution. For this, I apologize to Johnny K. Wu and my readers, as we all learn something important today!

Note: Johnny K. Wu is likely to be Cleveland, Ohio's top independent filmmaker for half a decade, not counting Bob Kurtzman and his studio, which are practically Hollywood level and a few hours away. He is also the founder of the Cleveland Indie Club, which can be found at [www.clevelandindieclub.com](http://www.clevelandindieclub.com). His projects are award winning and information can be found at [www.mdifilm.com](http://www.mdifilm.com).

So, with the extreme quality of film and art that Germany has been known for, and so many other countries/ cultures more intent on topics like family and life, it is funny that many U.S. cinemagoers are glued to the "blockbuster" mentality. We eat fast food have short attention spans within our own "melting pot". We have such a limited spectrum drowned by fancy marketing and corporate hype. This article was going to be a full workup on these unique differences and celebration of film-making worldwide, whether indie or Bollywood. However, after insights from Johnny K. Wu, it was decided to interview him Q & A session style in regards to these issues and his film-making in Cleveland. These were all respectfully taken from correspondence between us in email. Hopefully, this helps the film community awareness grow!

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Kenny: How does Asian film-making styles differ between each other and other country's cultures in general?

Johnny: There are different style used in Asian Cinema, but the basic generally speaking it is based on pacing. In Asia culture, the pacing is slower, it is to let the actor 'evolve' within the film, so the director tends to hold on a shot a bit longer as it helps 'build' the character up. When watching Arahan (an action martial art film) or Natural City (sci-fi) or Casshern (Manga based life action), or even Red Cliff I and II (John Woo's latest film in China), or the recently showed film Orz Boyz at the Cleveland International Film Festival (by a Taiwanese Director), the pacing can be seen slower in these compared to American cinema. One reason, as many directors had said, is to let the actors continue playing the character and to continue evolving (as I mentioned earlier). The other reason is the cultural background, in Asia, there is emphasis that can be created via a 'space' of a scene, or what we say, a silence within a scene, that 'space' helps create the mood. For example, in many past Jackie Chan's movie, such as Drunken Master II, when he was 'punished', you see his expression, the camera tends to hold a bit longer than usual to 'accentuate' or to 'show' the small 'motions' that only film would capture. That leads to the 3rd reason.

In Asian culture, opera is done in a much elaborate 'gesture' compared to American Theatre (Broadway or such), and the actors tends to exaggerate a lot more so audiences can see when sitting like a basketball field away. To differentiate that from film, the actors are asked not to 'emote' freely, or rather, keep it very 'dignified' to help separate the two.

I was also told by many European filmmakers that I know that their films are also paced slower compared to American cinema.

Kenny: What styles or methods have you adopted from Asian film, and what nationalities are they? Movies that influenced you?

Johnny: The styles that I've adopted varies, it all depends on the 'scene', for example in The Rapture, when Midael is about to confront his 'brother' Job/Abaddon at the beginning of the scene, I kept the shot longer as you can slowly but visibly see Midael's facial reaction where it surely showcase that he is fighting within himself to decide what to do. Of course, watching it on a small screen, you would've missed that but while watching it on big screen, you can tell the differences.

As I do watch movies, mostly from Asia, I grown to love their pacing and style, some were too long paced (especially films from Japan), but many were paced accordingly to their 'needs'. Hence I've learned to use that style, there isn't any particular ones, but I would say these movies have inspired me: Dragon Tiger Gate, Twins Effect, Hero, Red Cliff I and II, Arahan, Volcano High, Casshern, Natural City and some others.

Kenny: Why do you think North American style film-making keeps getting faster paced and larger than life and do you feel it ruins the art, story, and will it finally hit a brick wall at some point?

Johnny: I think this was once done as a research, the research was about why TV commercials have to be fast paced, and the result was due to the current

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state of our society in the United States. We have grown to always be on the rush, always on the run, and we slowly have developed the need for speed, and do everything at once: texting, emailing, reading, watching/listening all at one time, and slowly losing interest very quickly (which is why many children now are diagnosed by the doctor to have a certain type of ADD). Because of our attention span has shortened, we yearn for faster paced film, which also made films a bit harder to appreciate if it's not 'fast paced'. And of course, that would also make foreign films lose their grounds for good sale in the US.

As many times this is what I've heard at several Film Markets (Cannes, Toronto, AFI, etc), that you must cut a trailer that is exciting, fast, so it can attract sales. that has proven the case. (just like reality tv shows, they are fast paced or it wouldn't go far).

Kenny: How greatly does a film's style affect foreign distribution chances?

Johnny: US film to foreign distribution. None, because if the film has a big name, foreign distributor will buy it. BUT see below, pacing is based on the director, if the director felt the scene has to be longer, so be it, pacing is about the choice/taste of a director it wouldn't much differ from what it would be sold or not. Mainly action, or a lot of action sells.

Kenny: Can the average U.S. indie filmmaker compete in foreign markets/fests or is it a waste of screeners and fees?

Johnny: Yes, average independent filmmakers CAN compete in foreign markets, but this is all about planning, think first, what you want to shoot, what format, what genre (which is VERY important) and then what market, then make the film based on the research and what your want to accomplish, this would then make it easier to compete in foreign territories.

And since now, US territories are saturated with too many films competing against each other, it is best to think globally.

Kenny: I thank Johnny K. Wu for his contribution to this article and our local film community within Cleveland. This has been an enlightening experience that makes one think about what we do when making a film and who the audience is that we are targetting. I will be reviewing his other works, such as "The Rapture" and "Jean Claude, The Gumming Zombie", which is very much looked forward to. Honestly, it's hard to decide which to review first, however, it will be "The Rapture" since much info on it is ready for this greedy Examiner to absorb!

Best, Kenny

**Author: Kenny Carpenter**



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# Filmmaking in Cleveland is no "Joke"

## Johnny Wu

A name frequently heard around town particularly in film circles is that of Johnny Wu. A "veteran" of the Cleveland film arena since 1998 when only a handful of movies were shot in the city, Wu is now a man who relishes in providing support and advice to a barrage of up and coming filmmakers who join the Cleveland community every day. Wu's experience as a filmmaker, scriptwriter, and project planner with his company Media Design Imaging has allowed him to grow both professionally and artistically. His latest project a Batman fan film entitled, *A Joker's Card*, recently wrapped shooting over four days this past October. A release party which promises a cash bar and free DVDs of the movie is planned for late April.

*A Joker's Card* is based on the premise of comic book heroes and their offspring. An amalgam of film genres; part black comedy, accented by elements of screwball spoofery, Johnny Wu's film-short illuminates an otherwise dark existence for a handful of sons and daughters of action super-figures from Gotham to D.C.

People from all over the United States including Boston, Michigan, LA, and Columbus flocked to Cleveland to work on the biggest short Wu has ever produced which included using wires to fly his actors around the set.

In order to help stimulate and support ambitious projects like his own, Wu has created a group called IndieClub which meets monthly at Talkies Coffee and

Movie Bar to showcase its members' films and build up the Cleveland Indie community. The club, which has been around about a year, says Wu, has received a lot of interest from veterans of the industry and amateurs alike. Wu also is willing to take a look at movie scripts and potentially direct or produce them. "Cleveland is such a small city with so many good scripts," he says. While he can't always give extensive advice to everyone who comes to him with a question, he does make it a point to answer all of his emails.

Wu believes that making a movie in Cleveland is possible for anyone who wants to do so and suggests the following points for a filmmaker to pay attention to:

1)Preproduction: "Planning is very important," says Wu. Figuring out locations, who can do your lighting, costumes, and other details "takes time." For his latest film, Wu spent from February to October in this phase. However, with immense energy placed in the stages of preproduction, "you see the result" of your hard work, he promises.

2)Staff: It's important to get as many people involved in the film as possible, says Wu. "Sometimes, you want to go further than just your friends" for actors and tech positions. "Friends sometimes bail out on you," he explains. Wu stresses the importance of creating a group of alternative people to call on for emergencies.

3)Honesty: "Be honest with everyone you deal with," Wu stresses. "You must say to them "I



want to do this movie because I enjoy this," as opposed to this will be the best movie in the entire world. If you listen to everyone's opinion, "people will feel they are valued."

4)Post-Production: "Many people don't have experience in editing," says Wu. A starting filmmaker learns the art of editing by watching the rough cut once and returning to it at a later date to start editing. Wu suggests that a beginning filmmaker create a short instead of a feature film in order to fine tune his or her skill before attempting anything longer.

The main way to get your foot in the door explains Wu is to network and then follow through on any commitments made. "It's a small community. If you do a good job, it's going to spread. If you do a bad job, it's going to spread."

**Contact Johnny at  
[johnny@mdifilm.com](mailto:johnny@mdifilm.com)**

Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

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## Local filmmaker wins contest

Posted by [Julie E. Washington](#) May 11, 2007 17:44PM

Categories: [Arts & Life](#)

By Julie E. Washington  
Plain Dealer Reporter

A television station's Web site can be more than video clips and headlines.

Sister stations WOIO Channel 19 and WUAB Channel 43 wanted their new Web site to be a virtual stage for local poets, musicians and filmmakers.

The My43.Net Film Festival contest kicked off the site's redesign and invited local filmmakers to upload short video clips of their films. The recently announced winner, based on viewer votes, is Cleveland filmmaker Johnny Wu for a trailer of his superhero-homage "A Joker's Card." The short film premiered in 2005.



Roadell Hickman/The Plain Dealer

Johnny Wu

Wu, 39, will have a chance to write, produce and direct a promotional spot for Channel 43 and its Web site, said Adam Clark, Web producer for channels 43 and 19. Look for Wu's promo this summer.

"I was surprised I was chosen as a finalist and happy to see that my friends and colleagues voted to make me the official winner," Wu said. "I'm excited to do

something for Channel 43." His clip was one of three finalists selected from 50 submissions.

The trailer for "A Joker's Card" is no longer on My43.net, but you can find it at [www.mdifilm.com/joker](http://www.mdifilm.com/joker).

Wu's attention now is on finishing his latest feature film, "The Rapture." Computer graphics, wire stunts and special effects make it the most

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*Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films*

complicated film he's directed.

In the science-fiction/action movie, Dr. Gutierrez (Annie Kitral) is a surrogate mother to two "enhanced" humans, Midael (George Michael Tutie) and Job (Brian Richeson).

Job can manipulate energy blasts, but his power has made him mentally unstable and he escapes from Dr. Gutierrez's care. Midael, who has wings that shoot daggers, wants Job to come back so that they will be safe from the military leaders and crime lords who want to use "enhanced" humans for their own purposes.

"This movie is all about revelation," said co-writer and executive producer Jim Geier.

Comic books and Asian martial arts heavily influence "The Rapture." Wu, who directed and co-wrote it, wants it to look like a live-action version of a Japanese animated film.

Since the movie finished shooting in Northeast Ohio about a year ago, he and two other filmmakers have worked to digitally add special effects such as Midael's wings.

The most complicated part of filming involved wire stunts. That's when actors wear special harnesses attached to wires and pulleys. Crew people jerk the wires, and the actors fly backward.

Wu experimented with wire stunts in his previous movies, including "A Joker's Card." For "The Rapture," the scene involves five actors in harnesses and a five-person team on each wire. Once the wires are erased digitally, the sequence will look as if the actors are being blown by an energy blast.

"We can do the same thing you can do in Hollywood — wire work. We know how to do it," he said.

Wu, who has studied kung fu since childhood, choreographed the fight scenes. He videotaped himself doing them with a partner and sent the videos to his actors to help them learn the moves.

As he finishes "The Rapture," Wu is looking to his next film, a thriller called "Incarnate." Everything that he learned making "The Rapture," he'll use to make "Incarnate" more polished.

"Each movie has to be better than the last one," Wu said. "You don't do a worse one."

#### Sound bites

Eric Mansfield, anchor of Time Warner Cable's "The Akron-Canton News," is the new host of WEAO Channel 49's weekly news program "NewsNight Akron." Mansfield replaces WKSU FM/ 89.7's Vincent Duffy, who moved to Ann Arbor, Mich.

Mansfield is adding "NewsNight Akron" to his regular on-air duties.

The New Life Assembly of God's new church in Geneva, and BibleWalk, a wax museum of Bible scenes in Mansfield, are featured on an episode of

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Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

"American Bible Society Presents" on WVPX Channel 23. The program travels across the United States to find stories about people inspired by the Bible.

"American Bible Society Presents" airs at 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays. The New Life Assembly episode airs May 22, and the BibleWalk episode airs May 29.

Carole Sullivan returns to WKYC Channel 3 as a part-time reporter, starting Tuesday.

Sullivan co-anchored Channel 3's morning show before she left in May 2006. She joined her husband, Mike Sullivan, who was then coaching at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. The family moved back to Cleveland when the Cleveland Browns hired Sullivan as an assistant coach in January.

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## A JOKER'S CARD

by Stina Chyn

NEW FAN FILM! When paying tribute doesn't sufficiently express your love for a book, a movie, or a narrative style, you must resort to emulating it in the spirit of campy fun—which is exactly what writer-director Johnny K. Wu does in his DC Comics parody "A Joker's Card"... [MORE](#)

FILM THREAT "STAR" REVIEW RATING SCALE	
From five stars "Perfect" to zero stars "Crap" totally honest movie reviews.	
★★★★★	PERFECT!
★★★★	OUTSTANDING
★★★	EXCELLENT
★★★	GREAT
★★★	GOOD
★★	OKAY
★★	DULL
★	LAME
★	BAD
★	SUCKS
★	CRAP

When paying tribute doesn't sufficiently express your love for a book, a movie, or a narrative style, you must resort to emulating it in the spirit of campy fun—which is exactly what writer-director Johnny K. Wu does in his DC Comics parody "A Joker's Card." Running just twenty minutes long, Wu's film immediately commences with action. Jonathan Napier (Kyle Znamenak), son of the Joker, and Vince Fries (David J. Levy), warden of Arkham Asylum, interrupt Nick Grayson's (David Milam) S&M session. He puts up a good fight but is zapped by Mr. Fries's freezing-gel gun, kidnapped, and taken to an abandoned warehouse. Nick hasn't completely thawed out when Napier tells him why he's been nabbed. Nick's father Nightwing (Andrew Schofield) put Joker in Arkham and Napier spent his childhood laughed at and ridiculed.

Nick is just the beginning, though. Napier intends on getting every good superhero's offspring. He and Fries leave Fries's assistant Donna Isley (Dana Aritonovich) behind to persuade Nightwing's ambiguously gay son to talk. A quick visit to Mr. Big (Gerry Keating) for more goons and Napier is all set. The next target: bar owner Ellen (Ellen N. Friedman), gravity-defying daughter of Wonder Woman. In the final showdown, Nick and Ellen display their butt-kicking skills, accompanied by text bubbles of "POW!" "BAM!" and "OUCH." But, it is the duel between Mr. Big's invisible ninja Ekin Tzu (the director himself) and Nightwing that saves the film from jovial mediocrity.

### A JOKER'S CARD

by Stina Chyn  
(2005-06-28)

2005, Un-rated, 20 Minutes, Media Design Imaging, Inc.

[OFFICIAL SITE](#)

[CREDITS](#)



Wu effectively channels the comic book aesthetic by framing the characters in a particular way and employing the close-up for specific moments, but the quality of the actors' performances is not as easy to judge. Is the acting deliberately bad or unintentionally bland? Vince Fries should be sinister (right?), but he is a monotone bore-head instead. Jonathan Napier is less resentful and bitter and more wide-eyed and cranky. The only villain that poses any real threat is Ekin, who demonstrates his martial arts prowess in an impressively choreographed—again by the director himself—sequence that makes "A Joker's Card" the first film shot in Cleveland, OH to feature wirework (courtesy of Andrew Sokol, Morgan Fox, James Orosz, Dan Gallagher, Sarah Halasz, Christopher Quinn, Scott Millinovich, and Tom Luthala). Combining slow and accelerated motion, this action spectacle lasts a mere two minutes and ends with the destruction of artifice. This self-awareness suggests that "A Joker's Card" doesn't take itself seriously and neither should you. Knowledge of DC comic book characters definitely enhances your appreciation for the parody process, but you don't have to be a DC expert to have a good time.

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**Batman Fan Films**

**A Joker's Card**



AVG. VIEWER RATING:



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**SYNOPSIS**

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In the not too distant future, the offspring of Nightwing and Wonder Woman are caught between the revenge planned by the sons of The Joker and Mr. Freeze. A Comedy/Anime Styled short film blending the style of 60's TV with the wire-fu of the 90s.

**TRAILER INFORMATION**

**Rating:** "T" for TEEN - Contains Action/Violence

**Written:** Johnny Wu

**Directed:** Johnny Wu

**Starring:** Kyle Znamenak - *Jonathan Napier*  
David Milam - *Nick Grayson*  
Andy Schofield - *Nightwing*  
David Levy - *Vince Fries*  
Ellen Friedman - *Ellen*  
Dana Artonavich - *Donna Isley*  
Johnny Wu - *Ekin Tzu*

**Produced:** Jeff Lubell, Johnny Wu and James V. Geier

**Run-Time:** 1:49 minute(s)

**Web-Site:** <http://www.mdifilm.com/joker/>

**[NEXT TRAILER >>](#)**

PICK:

**[Batman Costumes - Adult](#)**

Nice selection of popular Batman costumes in all styles and sizes.

**[Batman Begins Poster](#)**

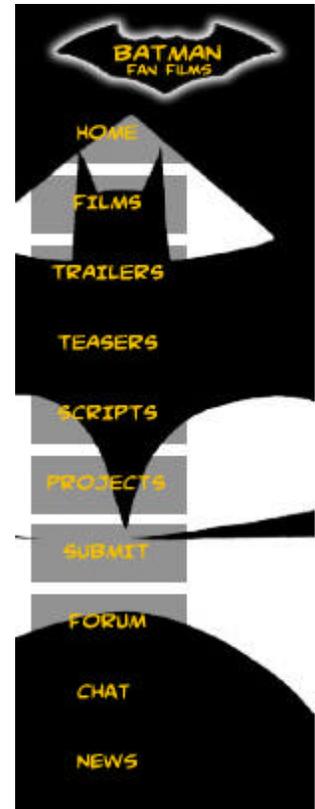
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NEWS

**Dick Grayson comes out swinging in fan film**

[Ads by Goooooogle](#)

2004.12.27 - Nightwing versus the sons of Joker and Mr. Freeze? That's the idea behind **A Joker's Card** a new comic book-inspired fan film from media designer Johnny K. Wu that's set in a near-future version of DC's world of Batman. A student of wushu, Wu has taken on the realm of Gotham City and appropriately added martial arts and wire fu action.

The short film has yet to be released online, but the [official site](#) contains two teaser trailers, sample music from the original score, poster art, and movie stills.

To find out more about Johnny Wu and his martial arts background visit [Wu Jia Quan Shu](#).

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Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

**The Plain Dealer**  
by Julie Washington

**Wu puts fans in tights spot**  
Friday, April 22, 2005

Dust off those Superman tights and Wonder Woman breastplates. Cleveland-born filmmaker Johnny Wu wants comic book fans to wear a science fiction or superhero costume to tonight's premiere of his parody short film, "A Joker's Card." His tale - told in the campy style of the 1960s "Batman" series - is about the children of Joker and Mr. Freeze trying to destroy the sons and daughters of the most famous superheroes.

"This way, we can make a parody without anybody suing us," said Wu. He contacted Warner Bros., which owns DC Comics, and was told that he could make "A Joker's Card" but cannot charge admission or sell the DVDs.

Wu wrote, directed and has a role in the movie, which includes a martial-arts showdown. Alan Tuskes, a Hollywood special-effects artist who recently moved back to this area, helped with the effects. "It's my best, most ambitious short film I've ever done," Wu said. "A Joker's Card" premieres at 7 p.m. today at the Grid'n Orbit, 1437 St. Clair Ave., Cleveland. Admission is free. The first 150 people receive a DVD-CD combo including "A Joker's Card," other short films created by the cast and crew, and a soundtrack from the film. Also premiering that night is Mike Bove's dark comedy short, "Trunks and Corpses."



June 2005  
Review by: Mig MacFarland  
MicroCinema Magazine  
www.microcinemamagazine.com



In my years, as if I were that old—oh shite, I am that old!  
Incidentally, I had my fair share of parody films and over-the-top spoofs from the barrage of internet Star Wars home-made-projects to the SG1 fako-sodes popping up on the wild, wild NET. I bet they were all fun to make and Director Johnny Wu had a ton of fun making his DC Comic's based parody entitled "A Joker's Card". Eighteen minutes of OTP (over-the-top) acting and particle illusion effects fun.

There' some black comedy, an undersexed buxom-vixen, a demented squirmy mobster, a Brando-type mob boss, a fade-in/fade-out Ninja, a superhero wielding escrima sticks and a wire work package that gets circumvented and exposed in a hilarious reveal. Plot? Conflicts? A-list acting? Who cares? This is fun stuff with a total guerilla film-making approach poking fun at obsolete batman punch balloon cartoon exclamations and the over-sensationalized stylisms of Chinese action wire work found abundantly today. By the way, you ain't getting spoilers out of me you lazy bum.

This film is eighteen minutes, so do yourself a big favor, grab a copy A Joker's Card and director WU will show you that it is okay to have fun, dress up in tights and pay homage to movie-comic mayhem. I give this four little guys for being honestly wacky and not ever taking itself too seriously. Goes great with Kool-Aid and a dumb voluptuous blonde. (Yikes! I was kidding ladies.)



We rate on a scale of 1-5 "Little Guys" We also use 1/2 ratings MCM always gives some kind of rating No film deserves a 0. Every film gets at least a 1 for effort

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# Cleveland Filmmaker Readies to Premiere Another Film, *A Joker's Wild*

By Karen Hess

Cleveland-based filmmaker, Johnny K. Wu is up to his tricks again. Following his release of *The Chase*, Cleveland's first independent short movie to feature wire-fu action, comes *A Joker's Card*, also filled with tantalizing martial arts-driven wire stunts. The 18-minute short film will premiere on April 22.

A certified Kung Fu master, Wu incorporates carefully choreographed fight sequences using Cleveland's first wire-fu technique. Simply stated, with wire-fu actors wear a harness with wires running through it and up to the ceiling where four to five technicians, or pullers, use pulleys to keep the actor afloat. A wire track on wheels allows the actor more freedom of movement, such as the ability to move from one corner to another. When the wires are painted out in the film process, the finished look simulates a flying motion similar to fight scenes depicted in the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

*A Joker's Card* is a parody/comedy that boldly satirizes and spoofs some of DC Comic's best-known heroes and villains. The action in Gotham City

centers around the emotionally plagued Joker's son (played by Kyle Znamenak) who recruits Mr. Freeze's son (played by David Levy) to kidnap the sadist-masochistic son of Robin (played by David Milam). Wu himself portrays another superhero who participates in a martial arts driven showdown that unravels into a slapstick expose of the characters real source of their super abilities.

Shot in several Cleveland locations during October 2004, an ensemble of more than 100 cast and crew mostly from Cleveland, assisted on the project which has been in the making since February 2004.

Professionals from California, Chicago, Boston, Toledo and Columbus also collaborated to provide expert stunt direction, visual effects and music scoring. Produced by James Geier and Jeff Lubell, along with Wu who also served as director, *A Joker's Card* has already had requests for viewing by three film festivals. Additionally, it will be shown during Twisted Cinema, a horror weekend convention to be held August 4-7, 2005.

Wu's company, Media Design Imaging, is a small Cleveland-based firm that has provided multi-media film production (such as videos, films, and commercials) since 1998. Wu says he is always looking for young adult actors to participate in his projects. For example, Wu cast his friend, Kyle Znamenak, who portrays the Joker's Son, in Kyle's first film. A student at Baldwin Wallace college, majoring in psychology, Znamenak has now been asked to do another short film by a filmmaker he met through Wu. I don't necessarily have professional aspirations, says Znamenak. But I'm having a lot of fun. And that's exactly what Wu was looking for when he filmed *A Joker's Card*—a daring parody with technically masterful fight scenes that offers a lot of viewing fun.

About the April 22 FREE Premiere:

\*7p.m. at The Grid'n Orbit located at 1437 St. Clair Avenue, Cleveland, featuring complimentary appetizers and entertainment with a cash bar.

\*Free DVDs of the film



given to the first 150 people.

**For more information on *A Joker's Card* and Johnny Wu:**

**\*For photos, video clips or additional info.:**

[www.mdifilm.com/joker](http://www.mdifilm.com/joker)

**\*For teasers and trailers:**

[www.mdifilm.com/joker/media.html](http://www.mdifilm.com/joker/media.html)

**\*To contact Johnny Wu:**  
[johnny@mdifilm.com](mailto:johnny@mdifilm.com)

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Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

## FanBoyTheatre Review

www.fanboytheatre.com

A JOKER'S CARD-From Director Johnny K. Wu and MDI Films comes this entertaining short film which pokes fun at some of the heroes and villains in the DC Comics Universe. The plot has Jonathan Napier(The Son of The Joker) joining up with Dr. Vince Fries (Son of Mr. Freeze) to try and eliminate the Superhero population. Napier demands vengeance for His years of torment growing up and for His father being locked up in Arkham for most of His childhood. Fries (played by David J. Levy) takes Napier(played by Kyle Znamenak) under His wing and with the help of a local crime Boss named Mr. Big (played by Gerry Keating) They



assemble a team of goons and go looking for the offspring of their sworn enemies. Nick Grayson (son of Dick Grayson AKA Nightwing) is kidnapped and brought to the criminals secret hideout. Next Fries and Napier's gang track down Ellen (Daughter of Wonder Woman) who refuses to go down without a fight and escapes. After tracking down Grayson's location Ellen arrives to save the day but finds an army of Baddies waiting for Her. However, Ellen will not be alone in this fight thanks to the assistance of Nightwing (played by Andrew Schofield) Check out the ending of this puppy Yourself for the battle Royale featuring of all things, Wire-Fu! There are many things that make this film so great, from the perfect casting, to the impressive display of Martial Arts (choreographed by Johnny K. Wu Himself!) this is one short You don't want to miss! I admire Mr. Wu for making the offspring of the Heroes "real people" rather than starchy clones of their Comic Hero predecessors. This film is also very humorous, even poking fun of itself at certain points. While this film should prove entertaining to all, Comic Book Fans will definitely get the biggest kick out of it. You know when You've enjoyed a film so much that You didn't want it to end? Well, this is one of those films. To see this great piece of work for Yourself You can view it steaming at [Undergroundfilm.org](http://Undergroundfilm.org). If You would like to own a copy of the film You can purchase the films soundtrack by Aryavarta Kumar which comes with the A JOKER'S CARD DVD free! Please visit the official website [HERE](http://www.mdifilm.com/joker) for all the details. Mr. Wu has a sequel planned for A JOKER'S CARD called A JOKER'S RAPTURE. Stay tuned to Fanboy Theatre for updates on this project as they are made available. Two Thumbs and Big Toes up!

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edited by Jacqueline Marino

# Auteur on a Wire

Johnny Wu takes Cleveland independent film to new heights.

by Christopher Johnston

**I**n a scene from Cleveland filmmaker Johnny Wu's short, "The Chase," a woman is in a warehouse, running away from a guy with obvious bad intentions. Two guys with good intentions are chasing him. Their paths collide in a freight elevator at the end of a tight corridor.

This is where suspense turns into suspension. Harnessed to a contraption made of hooks, pulleys and wires that run from the corridor into the top of the elevator, the three men become airborne, their arms and legs spinning like deadly whirligigs in a martial arts melee.

Not one to follow convention, Wu experimented with wireworks because it had never been done in Cleveland.

"I try to break different rules," says the 37-year-old auteur. "The fact that we pulled it off is kind of cool."

Wu was born in Cleveland — he surprised his parents while they were visiting friends here. But he grew up in Panama City, where his late father was a Taiwanese diplomat. In 1995, Wu moved to the city where he was born. A few years later, he went to Los Angeles, where he ~~was~~ ~~with~~ ~~contact~~ ~~major~~ Hollywood publicity and marketing firms, such as PMK, and learned to "make noise."

"Make noise not to make yourself heard, but to make people see that there is something good going on," Wu says of his main goal when creating cinema. In L.A., the lean, gregarious guy with the accent also learned that who you know matters.

"The most important thing about Johnny is that he is a con-



summate networker," says Tim Gunn, an indie filmmaker who moved here from Michigan last summer. Gunn says he once complained to Wu that he couldn't find a photographer. The next day he received phone calls from several.

Last year, in an effort to make noise for Cleveland's independent film scene, Wu founded the Cleveland chapter of Indie club.com, which claims 200,000 members worldwide.

Free and open to anyone interested in film, meetings (held

**In his films, Johnny Wu sometimes plays a wire-rigged warrior.**

on the third Sunday of each month) regularly pack the viewing room of Talkies Film and Coffee Bar in Ohio City or some other location. In the first half of the meeting, filmmakers can screen their work. For the second half, Wu schedules different experts to address everything from working with weapons instructors to operating different

types of equipment.

About 50 indie-film lovers from as far away as Canton attended a recent meeting. Filmmakers ranged from a high school student premiering his short film about angst-ridden teen vampires to a middle-aged man showing clips from a police zombie-hunt movie. Gunn, who served as the host, showed an excerpt from his new noir film. He also moderated a detailed discussion on

continued on page 36 >>

« continued from page 34

high-definition video versus digital video.

Wu used the forum to show off a teaser from his most recent foray into wirework, "A Joker's Card." Shot in less than a week last October, the mini motion picture premiered at The Grid dance club in April. In an effort to save money on expensive superhero costumes, Wu imagined the plight of several superheroes' progeny. Thus, the plot pits the spawn of Batman's former nemesis, the Joker, against the scion of his sidekick, Robin. Having studied the martial arts since age 3 — his father taught him *Wu Jia Quan Shu* (Art of Wu Family System), created 2,800 years ago by his ancestors — Wu himself became a wired warrior in several sequences.

Wu made this "fan film" with no legal hassles from the characters' creators because he will not earn any money. It's destined for film festivals.

Wu also serves as president of the Organization of Chinese Americans of Greater Cleveland and earns his living working part time for a civil engineering firm in Berea, as well as from his own marketing and creative media consulting firm, Media Design Imaging. He's planning a film for 2006 that will feature an original superhero with 15-foot steel wings, so that copyrights won't be an issue.

Ever the networker, Wu hopes local filmmakers will band together more as Cleveland continues to gain momentum as a place to make movies.

"I can't say that they're all making good films," Wu says, "but it's encouraging to see it evolving to this point."

**Clevelanders can catch "A Joker's Card" Aug. 5 through 7 during the Twisted Nightmare Weekend fest at the Quality Airport Inn in Middleburg Heights. For more information on Wu's work, visit [mdifilm.com](http://mdifilm.com).**

## In Other Indie News . . .

Cleveland filmmaker Matthew T. knows that a good sequel can't simply ape the original, a la Hollywood's recent (and dreadful) "Be Cool." So he and his L.A. counterpart, Marcel DeJure, are mixing things up at the sixth annual 20,000 Leagues Under the Industry Film Festival to keep it fresh.

The indie-thriller fest teams up with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Cleveland and takes things alfresco on Friday, June 17, to kick off the museum's annual MOCA Mix summer series. Starting at sunset,

"Fever Dreams," a program of more than 30 short films, will be screened on green space that T. refers to as "the grassy knoll" outside MOCA's digs.

A low-wattage transmitter will broadcast the films' soundtracks over an FM band. T. encourages audience members to bring their own radios so they can listen



A still from the indie film "Why Is This Commercial?"

to the movies drive-in fashion while sitting on their own lawnchairs. "The goal is to create a beach-party feel for the screening," he says.

After the films, Los Angeles-based puppet troupe The Cinnamon Roll Gang will perform a show titled "Beach Blanket Babylon." — *Michael von Glahn*

**Cost is \$5 for MOCA members and students with ID, \$7 for nonmembers. For more info, call MOCA at (216) 421-8671.**

Cleveland Scene Magazine  
April 20, 2005 issue

## Knighfall

**Pow! A local filmmaker makes a Batman movie.**

**FRI 4/22**

When your dad is the world's most famous supervillain, you *really* get tired of hearing about it. Cleveland filmmaker Johnny K. Wu dramatizes that pressure in his short film **A Joker's Card**, in which the son of Batman's notorious nemesis, the Joker, struggles with his identity.

"A few friends and I were watching *Teen Titans* on television, and we talked about doing another wire-fu work," recalls Wu, who previously worked with gravity-defying, *Matrix*-style martial-arts action in *The Chase*. Joker Jr.'s idea of rebellion is to attend college and skip the whole mass-murder thing. But after one bad day too many, he sets his sights on Nightwing, the superhero formerly known as Robin. And despite all the vengeance and teen angst, the film doesn't get too heavy, notes Wu. "I enjoy the campy '60s *Batman* TV show," he says. "So I incorporated some of that too." *A Joker's Card* premieres at the Grid/Orbit (1437 St. Clair Avenue) at 7 p.m. Friday. Admission is free; call 216-623-0113.

— **D.X. Ferris**



Cinema Crazyed


★★★
2004
<b>Rated:</b> PG-13 <i>for sexual themes, adult language, and graphic violence.</i>
<b>Genre:</b> Comedy Spoof Short
<b>Directed By:</b> Johnny Wu
<b>Running Time:</b> 18 Minutes
<b>Review by:</b> Felix Vasquez Jr.
<b>Review Date:</b> 6/24/05
<b>DVD Features:</b> <i>* Casts commentary</i> <i>* Director's commentary</i> <i>* Blooper Reel</i> <i>* Behind the Scene (2)</i> <i>* Lighting 101</i> <i>* Cast and Crew Short films</i> <i>* Buzz Maker (Teasers and Trailer)</i>
<b>If you like this, try:</b> Batman (1966)



**THE GOOD:** “A Joker’s Card” is possibly one of the more ambitious DC fan films I’ve come across in years. As a comic geek, I’ve admittedly seen very little fan films, but this one was surprisingly good. I wasn’t expecting much in terms of quality, but director Wu takes what he has and turns it in to a very colorful off-beat fan film that spoofs Batman’s rogues gallery. Imagine the villains and heroes off-spring attempting to create their own crimes and chaos. Dick Grayson’s son Nick has a bondage fetish, the Joker’s and Mr. Freeze’s sons are working together to kill Gotham’s off-spring of heroes to inflict their own crimes but are met with obstacles when Wonder Woman’s daughter decides to save the day. I was just laughing my ass from beginning to end because while it is a fan film, it’s intention is to charmingly spoof the Batman lore and it pulls it off well.

Harley Quinn’s daughter (Dana Arironavich) is a sexy doctor who works with Fries whose kidnapped Nick. And the Joker’s son Jonathan Napier, played by scene stealer Kyle Znamenak, is a geek whose ambition is to follow in his father’s footsteps... if only he could get some respect, and stop being beaten up at school. Znamenak is utterly hilarious and the crew leave no stones unturned in this spoof from the old Adam West Batman, to the modern lore, the makers have at it. Most of the comedy comes mostly from Znamenak who is utterly hilarious here and appropriately over the top.

His facial expressions really made me imagine that the Joker would have a son that looked like him. David J. Levy plays straight man well to Znamenak and on parade are the clever spoofs of the Batman Universe. Wonder Woman’s less than shapely daughter is still getting a grasp on her powers, and there’s a surprise appearance by a character from the Batman Universe. All the while there’s a sense of chaos that drips from the screen that make this even more screwball and I was satisfied in the end. Fans of the Batman world will appreciate the joke as I did, and it left me wanting more in the end.

**THE BAD:** As for the comedy, the timing is off during much of the film, including from the supporting cast whom never really commit to their lines. The acting all around was always iffy, especially from the character Nick, and Vincent Fries who never really look like their committing to their lines, and often their acting is very wooden.

**SUMMING UP:** Though it does have its flaws, fans of the Batman universe should find it best to keep an open-mind to a clever and very witty spoof that doesn’t even take itself seriously. With brisk directing, hilarious comedy, and very clever spoofing, this is a very enjoyable tongue in cheek parody of the Batman comics.

Movie Note(s)

- For information on “A Joker’s Card”, and how to buy it, visit: · <http://www.mdifilm.com/joker/>
- Filmed with less than 6,000 dollars.
- Received a 26th Annual Telly Awards under the category of non-broadcast film/video productions for best entertainment DVD/CD set.
- The film was shot with a mix of digital cameras and a 16mm film camera.

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## A Joker's Card (2005)

**Directed by** Johnny K. Wu

**Written by** Johnny K. Wu

**Starring:** Kyle Znamenak, David Levy, David Miliam, Ellen Friedman, Dana Artonavich, Gerry Keating, Andrew Schofield, and Johnny K. Wu as the Invisible Ninja

**Genre:** Comedy / Comic Book | **Rated:** NR | **Runtime:** 20 min.

**Online References:** [Official Site](#)



Just when you think you've seen it all, you see something new and different. In the microscopically-budgeted world of independent cinema, there isn't much that hasn't been attempted, but time and budget restraints prevent the average indie from indulging in the oh-so-popular wire-fu phenomenon that peaked (in American Hollywood, at least) and guttered out with the abysmal "Charlie's Angels" franchise. With less money at their disposal than McG's cocaine budget, how could an independent filmmaker from Cleveland, Ohio ever possibly take on the world of big-budget superhero movies?

Simple! When in doubt (and especially when you can't get copyright usage), you parody your ass off and hope you don't get sued. It works out well for people who make serious money off their filmmaking, so it ought to work out just fine for a guy way outside of the Hollywood vortex that is basically doing a flick for fun.

You'd think that the DC Comics universe would be parodied to death after the abysmal Joel Schumacher Batman films, but there's still a lot of fun to be had with the lesser DC comics characters, or more specifically, their progeny, because that spares on the purchase, building, or rental of the outlandish superhero costumes necessary for such a project. However, there's still wire-fu.

Straddling the line between the 90's Batman franchise, the 60's Batman TV series, and the Wonder Woman series of the 70's, this film never takes itself seriously enough to bring me down and has enough funny elements to keep me, at worst, giggling. From Nick Grayson (David Miliam) and his Steel-look-alike whip-carrying boyfriend (who I missed entirely on first viewing) to the... shall we say, "Venus of Willendorf"-esque daughter of Wonder Woman Ellen (Ellen N. Friedman), there are laughs aplenty in this short film.

I've noticed a strange trend in short films of this nature. Typically, the best and most interesting actors and actresses in the film turn out to be the main villain. This film is no exception, with Jonathan Napier (Kyle Znamenak) standing out from the crowd with his eerie, Joker-ish smile and frighteningly outlandish maroon leather coat and lime green shirt.

Another stand-out feature of the film is the original score composed by Aryavarta Kumar, which melds both the playfulness of Danny Elfman from Oingo Boingo with the serious orchestral leanings of the good batman films, with a dash of 60's-style zaniness thrown in when appropriate. One of the things that kill a lot of movies is a soundtrack that doesn't fit the picture. You should notice a soundtrack, but it shouldn't be obnoxious. So many no budget films get by with no soundtrack or simple public license tunes. To put forth the effort to construct a soundtrack from scratch like Kumar did is really impressive, and it turned out really well. The results really fit the film and they add quite a bit of ambiance and depth to the movie, acting as a clue to how the scene is being played, be it for seriousness or laughs.

Probably my favorite aspect of the movie, aside from the final kung-and-wire-fu fight scene is the times when it parodies not just DC, but itself as well. While I detest metatext and self-referentiality in horror films, in a spoof film or a comedy, they're almost necessary traits to possess. After all, you don't really want the audience taking your funny movie seriously, and self-parody helps to make sure everyone knows that if they think it's meant to be funny, it's meant to be funny. Parody and metatext in horror films just serve to undermine the level of tension necessary to make them actually scary. A little black comedy is one thing, but "Scream"-level postmodernism is something else entirely.

With some good -fu action, tolerable to good acting, and a shocking degree of both technical prowess and playfulness, "A Joker's Card" shows that you don't have to spend a lot to get a lot of good results. Best of all, you cheap bastards can watch it for free on the internet, or you can get the soundtrack and DVD for \$12 bucks in one fell swoop. Check it out, give Johnny Wu and the gang a little of your love and support, and tell 'em we sent you.



- RON HOGAN | 08-08-2005



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Watch the indie parody A Joker's Card

**Director** Johnny K. Wu **Movie** A Jokers Card  
**News Genre** : Fantasy Films Comedy Movie News

I just watched this little indie movie and have to say that its really cool. The Parody/Fan Film "A Joker's Card", while clearly an offbeat satire, daringly speculates what might've happened with the offspring of some of superheroes' most elite in a film that flirts with the underworld of sex and leather – but actually has very little to do with that at all.

Ultimately, it is an amalgam of film genres; part black comedy, accented by elements of screwball spoofery, Johnny Wu's film-short illuminates an otherwise dark existence for a handful of sons and daughters of action super-figures from Gotham to D.C.

You can view some movie pjotos in our gallery [here](#), and to watch the trailers, clips and the movie just visit the **Official Site**.



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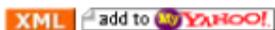
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Johnny K. Wu - Cleveland's first independent filmmaker to utilize wire-work stunts in films

Joel Danford, founder and director for The Voice of Bluewing

Got my DVD today. Watched it on the Big projector. The image/DVD quality is better than my Xena DVDs blown up. The soundtrack I really liked, it really is worth it for that alone. But you get some really cool behind the scenes stuff, some extra shorts (quite a handful). The 5.1 sound was pretty amazing stuff alone. One of the more ambitious and "complete" fan films I've seen, meaning you get a completed story not like Batman Dead End or the infamous "teaser" trailer fan films.

The cost of the DVDs plus the casing and stickers and inserts and shipping is not cheap and no one has the rights to sell a fan film. So I think selling the soundtrack is a pretty ingenious and fair way to compensate the filmmakers who are getting you something this cool for virtually nothing. I mean that's shipping included, so I imagine there's hardly any profit involved.

Reviews



Sandy Corolla could take some pointers on the visual effects end, especially the flying. There was only one effect I really had a problem with, and after watching the behind the scenes, I'm surprised it was that elaborately done. I would have done it completely differently, but it's a minor effect in a minor scene. The rest was pretty frickin cool. I think you guys will really like the wire work and fight sequence. Wish they had done stuff half that good on The Tick TV series, and I'm sure they could have afforded it if these guys could.

There is some "fan film" acting in it, but I thought the bulk was above par, more than you'd expect from a fan film. Some pretty cool and pleasing stuff here overall, especially visually. I'd say they just helped raise the bar for Fan Films.

From Chayden Bates, director of fan film Batman:Fear

"A Joker's Card is one of the most entertaining and technically playful fan films that I've run across. It had a mix, rhythm and beat all its own, yet still remained faithful to the source material while adding dimension and scope to the world and characters that populate it. Johnny Wu and team have really raised the bar with their efforts, and prove that with diligence and effort, even the 'little guys' can create something tremendous. Great job to all. Each of you did an amazing job on this film."

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Review from Mike Conway, Director of War of the Planets, Las Vegas:

Johnny, I just watched A JOKER'S CARD and really enjoyed it! I showed it to my friends, Kelly and C.J. We laughed all the way through it, periodically marvelling at your techniques and ingenuity.

My favorite part was when the "POW!" and "BAM!" words started popping up onscreen. Then, Napier actually grabs one of the words! Cool stuff.

The music score and animation were good. The characters were well realized. Nice wire work to top it off.

Just so I'm not totally stroking you, I should mention that the ending was kind of strange. It just stopped. When your movie started nodding at itself (showing the wire and the crew), It kind of pulled me out of the adventure, which I would have preferred to see the ending of. It was still funny, though. Kelly and C.J. couldn't stop talking about the gay guy - "Was he acting? Does he have a cold?"

Extremely enjoyable, overall. Give yourself a pat on the back, Johnny. (I would, but you're not in Vegas!)



Reviews

Pyro Max, filmmaker  
From Superherohype.com forum

Its not perfect, but it is great. Even after following all the "Hype" on this board about this film, I was still pleasantly surprised. I don't know if I hadnt read, or maybe I forgot about Wonder Woman, but she was great. Kudo's to the actors, they all seemed to know who they were, and were able to come across as goofy nuts, without being stupid. I think it would be easy to go to far with these types of characters. Either the actors or director really knew when to say when.

The story is fun and well paced, with enough information to know what is going on, but with enough holes to let us make up little sub plots in our minds. I like that.

From a technical standpoint the costumes, effects, etc were great. The only problem I had was with some of the sound. Some of the dialogue was a bit hard to hear. This could easily be a problem on my end though. Overall a highly ambitious effort, with a really great result. Thanks to Johnny and his cast and crew.

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From Donald Flaherty, director of Death of Batman

johnny, Congrats on finishing your film. I recieved it today and really enjoyed it. You put a lot of work in to this project and you should feel proud. All the best

Review from Judge Rico, director of fan film Batman:The Fall of Bruce Wayne (UK)

Got my DVD yesterday and have watched every single inch of it for about an hour or two straight. Now I've seen the film in various rough cuts for a while now but even so the final version blew me away.

The Production values were excellent, the pristine 16mm footage during the final fight looked absolutely gorgeous. The film's obviously long preproduction paid off well as everything from the casting to costume design was excellent.

Excellent performance by Kyle Znamenak as the Joker's son. Considering he had to get that point across without the aid of green hair, white skin and a permanent smile, I think he did a damn good job. The film was mostly based around his character, and I feel he really carried the film well, setting the tone perfectly with his "what the f\*\$%" face at the beginning.

David Levy as Vince Fries similarly turned his evil character into a cool goofy one, and his interaction with Jonathan Napier were well balanced, making a good father/son type relationship. Oh and Mr Big was absolutely note perfect. He was only in the film for a short time be he looked an sounded exactly like he should have.

The final fight (ie. the big payoff) was well put together and I thought it improved much on Johnny's last wire fight The Chase. The angles were well done the choreography never missed a beat (I'm guessing you spent some time rehearsing.) The ending made me laugh and whole film had such a happy-go-lucky attitude it never disappointed me.

All in all the film was a really well put together package, with something for everyone to enjoy.



Reviews

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Reviews



Heres a review from John Morgan, founder of Moviemakersportal.com.

I am going to have to be the first person here to say something negative about the film. I must say, i really was rather disappointed by it. Heres why...

THERE WASNT ENOUGH OF IT!!!

When it ended, I was so hoping there would be more!

The music was downright incredible, especially the opening theme. Made me really start thinking about the opening to Batman. I also like your opening title sequence, made me really get that comic book feelm, and MUCH better than the

original rough cut version you showed me (even though is does kinda copy the Marvel thing (with the flipping somic book pages).)

Mr. Big was a great casting job, and whether you want to admit it or not, so too was YOUR part Johnny. You did a great job. Without a doubt thought, Kyle takes the cake.

The fight scene was great.

I could go on for an hour, but let me just say that you all did a great job. Johnny, Kyle, Tom, and the rest of you, congrats on such a fun and apparently succesful premiere. All your hard work, DEFINATELY paid off. Cant wait for your next one.

I liked "A Joker's Card". It's a very clever mix fan film that salutes the DC comic characters we all grew up reading. The storyline put a different spin on the "getting revenge" plotline, with the Joker's son and Mr Freeze's son taking on Nightwing's son and Wonder Woman's daughter.

As an admirer of fan films, I liked everything about it, from the well done score that reminded me of the big-budget superhero films, the unique camera angles and special effects, the dialogue and banter between the characters, and the modern day fighting effects that ranged from the campy style of the 60s Batman TV show to the modern day martial arts style that's been seen in some current action films. What made it more amazing is that all of those elements were spun together into one film and that it all fit.

I liked all the acting performances in the film, but Kyle Znamenak, who plays the Joker's son, Jonathan Napier, absolutely stole the show with his perfomance. From his remarks in the opening scene (which had me laughing out

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loud) to the one scene where he literally had to peel off one of the graphics in the fight sequence that was a remin, he made his character a definite standout. I hope we get to see more of him in the future.

I applaud Johnny K. Wu for not only directing this film but for also choreographing the excellent "wire-fu" fight sequence towards the end. The one downside to this film was the fact that it was a lot shorter than I thought it would be, but it's a small matter compared to the overall effort from this film, which had a perfect ending that really made it a homage to the fans.

Great job! Thanks again for sending it out and I can't wait to see the sequel. Take care and keep in touch.

Mark Brown, a fan

A Jokers Card was hilarious on the big screen (at 2005 Wreck-Beach International Film Festival). The end battle with the wirework was one of my favorite moments. No wait.. it was Wonder-woman's child flying around the city. No wait, it was the beginning where we first see Nick Grayson... no wait.. there's too much good stuff in the film. I loves it.

And don't forget to read my review about the festival at [www.superguncinema.com](http://www.superguncinema.com)

Denis Steven "Shakes" Emmerson Logan  
Director of Macbeth 3000



From: Ron Hogan, LivingCorpse.com, Writer  
*Read his official review on page 37*

Johnny,

Dude, that was really damn funny. We're all big fans of well-done parody and comic book movies here, and that was pretty successful on both counts by my estimate. It was really well done, and I really liked the acting of the guy you got to play Joker's son. Of course, I really got a kick out of you taking the homosexual innuendo of the old 60's Batman TV series (well, what everyone else sees as gay) and making Nightwing's son actually gay.

Sorry it took me so long to get around to reading it, you shot me the email at a bad time. Needless to say, I loved

Reviews

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it, and I definitely want you to keep me abreast of whatever else you do. Shoot the occasional link, drop a screener in the mail, whatever.

Thanks again, and excellent flick!

*Also his email to Aryavarta Kumar (AJC's Composer)*

Arya,

I waited until I got the A Joker's Card DVD with included soundtrack to give you my thoughts on it, but now that I have it, I'm ready. Some of these will probably be repeated in my review of the DVD itself, but I figured I'd write down my thoughts separately.

I'm really digging the soundtrack. One of the things that kills a lot of movies is a soundtrack that doesn't fit the picture. You should notice a soundtrack, but it shouldn't be obnoxious, and I think your OST (Original Sound Track) for A Joker's Card really compliments it well. I especially liked the blaxploitation-y bass line and strings combination in Ellen Soars, and the Doof! fight scene music is just dead on 60's Batman. I thought you combined the Burton Batman orchestral soundtrack with the campy 60's Batman soundtrack quite well, making the music really fit the scenes.



I like the ominous quality of The Gallery, too. It reminds me of the OST to 28 Days Later in that it has that driving, sort've aggressive bottom line mixed and contrasting with the operatic vocals and strings. Welcome to the Asylum was another standout piece, which made me think of (at the beginning) the theme from Tales from The Crypt.

So many no budget films get by with no soundtrack or simple public liscence tunes. To put forth the effort to construct a soundtrack from scratch like you did is really impressive, and it turned out really well. The results are spectacular, and the OST CD has earned a place in my driving rotation.

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From director of Horrors of War and others, Mr. Peter John Ross:

Johnny Wu's filmmaking style comes to full effect in AJOKER's CARD. The humor transforms into amazing action fight scenes that rare, if ever found in independent film. This film is a feat of digital filmmaking.

**Reviews**

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