

Press Kit - Fent & Me
A film by Mark Cavanagh and Therese Dunn



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"Profoundly beautiful, sad, and powerful. There are opportunities to activate change with this film as a catalyst."
Jeanne Meyers, Director, the MYHERO Project

Synopsis

The snapshots of Jazmine’s life – confrontations with her mom, police, the courts – tell the story of a struggling teen and a treatment system ill-prepared for the ferocity of fentanyl addiction.



As Jazmine’s step-grandfather, Mark Cavanagh and his niece, Therese Dunn, felt the loss intensely and turned the pain into a film that implores support for individuals and families impacted by the fentanyl crises in the U.S.

Film Team



Mark Cavanagh – Writer, Director, DOP, Editor, Producer

An American writer and filmmaker, he directed the documentary, “Voices and Visions: Alcoholism in the Family,” which won awards in the National Educational Film Festival and was widely distributed to schools and treatment programs in the U.S. He co-wrote and produced the feature film, “Zombie Dearest,” awarded best horror movie at the Atlanta Film Festival. His most recent fiction is a young adult sci-fantasy series, “The Monocle Trilogy.”



Therese Dunn – Writer, Director, DOP, Voice Talent, Producer

A 14-year-old writer and filmmaker, who expresses herself in many creative mediums, she made her first film at age 11, “My Bro,” about her younger brother who was born with half a heart. This experimental film won an award in the 2020 MY HERO Project International Film Festival. Poet, painter and composer, her original scores are featured on Spotify.



John Femino, M.D. – Script Consultant

An addiction specialist, photographer and filmmaker, he is the former Medical Director and President of Meadows Edge Recovery Center and served on the national board of directors of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. He has brought science, insight and visual artistry to numerous award-winning films including “Voices and Visions.”

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did you make this film and what do you hope to achieve with it?

After Jazmine died, we wanted to turn the loss into something that could help others. We both had the same idea at the same time, but we didn't want to make the typical anti-drug video. We hoped to connect with kids who might be on the verge of using as well as those who already are. A warning is implicit in the video – this could be you - so we hope to get this film before kids' eyes whether at school or in treatment programs. That's the first part.

The second part is more challenging. We think there are holes in the treatment system when it comes to hard drugs like Fentanyl and Xylazine. Families should be more involved. Jazmine's mom saw the big picture of addiction playing out, but she felt like no one was listening to her. Jazmine slipped through the cracks. We'd like to see changes, but that comes down to a lack of funding. We would like to see more money devoted to helping kids and families who are struggling with addiction.

The film is told from the perspective of Jazmine talking to us from beyond the grave. Why did you choose this narrative style?

From the start, we wanted to channel Jazmine's mind and heart during her 2-year bout with fent. "What would Jazmine say," was the guiding question, and the script evolved from there. Her mom, Jenny Moore, and her stepdad, Joel Cavanagh, filled in the details of, as Joel put it, "A rough two years." They saw beyond the snapshots of what was happening with Jaz to the big picture of addiction.

That's how the Point of View evolved. Since the film targeted teens, who tire of adults lecturing on the dangers of drugs, we thought they would be more open to hearing it from someone their own age.

Flowers are an important motif throughout the film. Where did that idea come from?

When we started shooting, we had no idea what we were after. We had the basic script, and some shots went with the narration, but most of it was blank. On the way to the first shoot, we agreed to wing it and see what happens. We started filming a waterfall, and Therese found a clump of daisies. She plucked one, pulled the petals and dropped them on a granite slab. "I have no idea what that's about," she said, "but it's something." That led to torn flowers and we were off.

The film employs images that need to be unpacked to reveal their meaning. For example, the lock and chain. What inspired that?

That was all Therese. We were scouting an abandoned road as a place to film and I was focused on the cracked macadam. Therese called me over to a locked gate with a heavy chain. I didn't get it. "It's a metaphor for addiction," she said. She took the shot and handled the chain at the

same time. It came across as personal, especially in slow motion, where her hand lingers on the lock and chain swings like a pendulum. It came to symbolize the prison of addiction, and fentanyl is 100 times more addictive than heroin.

The soundtrack plays an important role in the film. Who did the music?

We started with royalty-free audio tracks for background music, but permission was limited - you couldn't put it on YouTube or distribute the film. We contacted the musicians, and overnight, they cleared the rights.

The ethereal atmosphere track in the first part of the film was composed by Yoav Alyagon from Israel. The piano music toward the end of the film, "Sorrow," was composed by Oleksii Kaplunskyi of Ukraine. We are very grateful to these extraordinary and generous musicians.

Were there moments during the production that made you question whether the movie would succeed or fail?

On the abandoned road, after the last bouquet of flowers were dropped, Therese looked down at the pile and said, "I know what that means. Do you think anyone else will?" I wondered myself. When I saw the images, especially the falling flowers, they conveyed a sense of youth and innocence destroyed.

In the edit room, the first cut to the flowers was weighty. If it worked, great. If not, we'd have to film something else. Plucking the daisy and timing it with narration about dying pulled the visual sides of the story together. After that connection was made, the dead flowers were easy to cut.

Technical Information

Recorded with an iPhone SE, 2nd generation.

- 4K 24 fps. Slow motion 1080p 240fps
- aspect ratio 16x9,
- audio format (stereo)
- 8:36 minutes
- English