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Sarah Lynn Dawson and Emad Asfoury Speak About Science, Deepak Chopra And Their New Film"Duality"

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As the above clip will show, there is a lot that can be said in a short time. Especially when those words are being said on film. Those few minutes can explain more than words ever could, the visuals on the screen telling a distinct story that no matter how abstract or conceptual. This is the case with the short film *Duality*, the Deepak Chopra-narrated work that explores the science of space-time, the magic of faith and asks far more questions than it answers. Which is the point, it seems. To try and get a few answers, we here at Nerdular had a terrific interview with writer/producer/lead actress Sarah Lynn Dawson and director/producer Emad Asfoury to talk about the film, what it means to them, and working with guru Deepak Chopra, who provided narration on the film.

Nerdular: Sarah, Emad. Thank you for taking the time out to speak with me. The first thing I wanted to talk about was the concept and the message of the short. This is a very high concept short piece, Was there anything in particular you were trying to say with the premise of the film?

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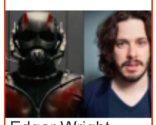
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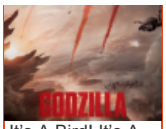

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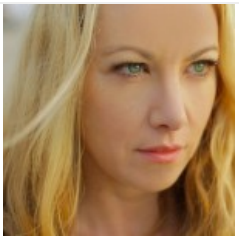
Sarah Lynn Dawson: *For me, my original idea was that it was a film about choice. About how you can make a choice that affects things. But with my writing I don't like to send any messages, I prefer to ask questions. So, the film raises issues, but it's not meant to answer anything. It's meant to be left to interpretation.*


Writer/Lead Actress Sarah Lynn Dawson

Emad Asfoury: *For me, I was surprised by the idea. Especially when I turned fifty. What if I took my so-called "wisdom"- you think you're wise when you turn fifty- took that know-how and that knowledge and gave it to myself when I'm seventeen, and ask "What would be the choice?" and "What would happen to my life?" and I discovered that I wouldn't be the man I am today. Because my seventeen year-old self would have all the wisdom and would take me into a different direction. It's that impulsive, crazy, intuitive, fearless seventeen year-old that made the fifty year-old into the person that I am today. So I was talking to Sarah about this idea, and she said "Well, I have this script" and it's so amazing that it has so many layers of meaning, that it's completely up to the viewer to absorb and define what message they create for themselves.*

N: That's something I noticed and found very interesting, because the film jumps around. Did you have any questions you were trying to raise in the script, Sarah? Or were you just trying to question things in general, and reality as it is?

SLD: *I mean, yeah. Basically, it's a journey, but with the way the timelines worked out, it's kind of a subjective journey. So, at some points you're not exactly sure where you are, but that's kind of how the main character is in his persona anyways. So that's really the reason for that.*

> *"…with my writing I don't like to send any messages, I prefer to ask questions. " – Sarah Lynn Dawson*

N: Where was this shot? I noticed a lot of really beautiful settings.

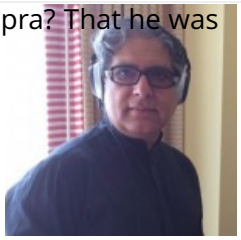
EA: *We pretty much had the entire film pre-planned before shooting, and it's all right here in L.A., Malibu and some beautiful, beautiful settings and gorgeous homes of friends of ours that lend themselves to the shoot. That was incredible to have. And to top it off, we saw some beautiful outdoors areas that complimented everything else. I was really pleased with how it turned out. Some of our backyards turned out absolutely amazing. The fight scene is right in the San Fernando Valley, and it looks like we traveled across the world, with that sunset.*

N: It looked like something more like a desert, and it looks really beautiful. Aside from yourself, Sarah, how did the cast come to be

in the film?

SLD: *We actually both, Emad and I, contacted the other actors in the short. We just asked them. So there was no actual casting process. We just had them in mind.*

N: Did the same thing happen with Deepak Chopra? That he was just asked?



Guru Deepak Chopra recording his narration for "Duality"

EA: *As far as Deepak, [Executive Producer Peymaneh M. Rothstein] had a pre-existing relationship. They went into a retreat together, so it was a matter of getting him to agree and be in our camp. And to get him to feel what it is that's in the film that might coincide with his philosophy. He did not resist. We sent him a couple of emails, and the only issue was where to find him, because he's touring the U.S. almost all the time. So we finally found him in Tampa, Florida of all places, so I flew to Tampa on a Saturday morning and came back on a Sunday night, and he just lent himself to being directed and he gave us some amazing narration that we were able to pick and choose from.*

N: Now that the film is being prepared to be turned into an expanded feature, given the way that the short played out, what are some plans for the feature length version of the project?

SLD: *You obviously have a lot more time to work with when you're working with a feature, so we're able to set-up distinct characters and distinct locations, and I worked really closely with a quantum physicist that I met through Deepak Chopra on the science of the script. So it's just an incredible journey for me to write it, but we're under a lot of pressure. Basically, with the feature, it's a little more in-depth.*

N: Given what I saw in the short, there seems to be a lot. Are the characters going to be reprised, or is there going to be a brand-new story?

EA: *It's a continuation of the short, with a complete narrative. It has a beginning, a middle and an ending, and characters that can grow and develop as opposed to the abstract, because the short was very [laughs] short to have the characters grow.*

N: Did you partner to get the feature film made, or is it an in-house project, as the short seems to be?

EA: *Do you mean funding-wise?*

> *"… he just lent himself to being directed and he gave us some amazing narration that we were able to pick and choose from. "*

> *- Emad Asfoury, on working with Deepak Chopra*

N: Yeah, funding-wise, or partnerships to create an expanded narrative.

EA: *Existing partnerships with producers or financiers.*

SLD: *We have a lot of strong relationships in place, and the short was obviously more production, and this is a different work, so we're bringing a lot of great people on board.*

N: Are there any additions to the cast that you can talk about?

SLD: *[Laughs] No we can't, but there's some good options.*

N: Fair enough. Are you going to be starring it in as well, Sarah?

SLD: *Yes.*

N: Do you have anything you would like to add personally about the film or the journey of the film itself?

Director Emad Asfoury

EA: *Certainly. The experience of making this film was almost magical. It's very hard in this day and age with science and everything to use the word "magical" or "magic", but truly, how the cast and crew intertwined and how the film happened so quickly without a single problem. Without an issue. Whatever we wanted was ready and available. Anything we set out to do we did without compromise. Some of the most difficult scenes, such as the bus stop scene or the beach scene, were very difficult to record audio. At the end of the day, we wound up having to do a little bit of ADR [additional dialog recording], but most of the production audio was salvageable, and most of the footage, regardless of the condition, was great. I wish that we could come very close to this experience when making the feature. Because that magic, that synchronicity and that synergy between the people that were involved was unmatched on any other project that I've done before.*

N: The music was also beautiful. Can you tell me about that?

EA: *Of course, the generosity of Moby was incredible from the get-go. And then [composer, producer and editor Basil Moore] was very instrumental in using Moby's song where he used it, towards the end, and how it carried down to the end credits. He made himself completely open to listen to my ideas for what music to use and what specific sounds. Because we basically have two time-lines, the music selected that. And I wanted to use some ethnic or authentic instruments that we weren't able to have virtuoso player on them, so*

we wound up using Western classic instruments to produce these sounds. So we had an incredible experience with the music. The soundtrack, in my opinion – no bias, of course [laughs]- is an amazing soundtrack that I would just love to listen to on it's own.

N: I noticed what you mentioned with a lot of the Western instruments, and it's amazing how it synergized with Moby's provided music.

SLD: *I was again really impressed with that. I met some of the musicians involved and they were so generous with their time and just gave their all to the project, and their work is really incredible. Apart from Moby's* Look Back In *it's pretty much an original score, and it was nice to have that.*

> *"The experience of making this film was almost magical." – Emad Asfoury*

N: You both brought up something pretty interesting earlier on. Sarah, you talked about working closely with a quantum physicist, and Emad, you talked about science in a form of opposition with a magical experience, so I wanted to ask: what kind of science did you bring to the film that was applied to the telling of the story?

EA: *Oh, wow. Sarah has been doing a lot of research, and so have I, and I think we're on the same page.*

SLD: *Yeah, I'm very interested in quantum physics and the idea of quantum entanglement, and that was part of the original basis for the short. Obviously, like you mentioned, you can't do too much in a short, but in a feature, we have the luxury of being able to build a scientific basis for everything we're creating. I have a logic and the science there, and I'm very, very grateful for the time that has been given in order to be able to establish that. I think with the short, it's a lot of magic [laughs], as opposed to science.*

Actors Jon Foo and Don Most

EA: *From the get-go, it was very interesting for me to think about space-time in the sense of Einstein, and I wanted to express that in many visual ways. Whether it's the moon rise, or the time-lapse on the street, or the time-lapse throughout the day around the tree. Those scenes in the script is just one word, or something like "Danny sits under a tree". And it took an entire day to shoot that one scene where he's sitting under a tree and the camera goes around the tree. To me, I wanted to co-mingle the concept of time with the concept of culture. There are two distinct cultures, there are two separate universes that are tied in with time, and in the feature, this idea will be quite enhanced, because it's been scientifically backed up with research. And also with budget, you can really express yourself freely, and show things that were not available*

for you in a limited scope.

N: The concept of space-time works really well in the film, but I felt a lot more of the mystical or magical vibe in the short, so it's interesting to hear that you'll be applying both into a kind of high concept feature. Did either of you have anything else you'd like to add?

EA: *The one thing to add is to express my gratitude and my pleasure to work with Sarah twice [on the "Duality" short and it's forthcoming feature film] and the amazing Jon [Foo, who played Danny in the short]. He comes from a completely martial arts background and he just gives himself to a dramatic role and listens to directions. No ego in the way, just comes across as someone who just wants to play the part. And if I mention Jon I have to mention Don [Most, who plays Kyle], who was incredible. He was completely and utterly devoted to the project. He could wait for hours while we're doing make-up or setting up something, and once he's on he's on 100%. As far as writing and editing, Sarah as a producer has done something absolutely incredible by watching the dailies with me each day and selecting the best scenes and refining what we see and making comments. The procedure itself of making the film left us in awe, and we had withdrawls after finishing the film.*

SLD: *I think my favorite place in the world to be is on a movie set.*

EA: *And the film would have never, never been made without Peymaneh, who was a driving force behind the project. Uniting everyone, pushing me to be my best, pushing Sarah to be her absolute best, and of course, providing the financing.*

SLD: *I agree with Emad. Everybody involved, the whole cast and crew were just incredibly generous and supportive, and I'm just grateful for everybody, because anytime I turned around, there was just support there. It was amazing.*

> *"I'm very interested in quantum physics and the idea of quantum entanglement, and that was part of the original basis for the short." – Sarah Lynn Dawson*

N: Thank you, I really enjoyed the film and I appreciate your time.

Thanks again to Sarah Lynn Dawson and Emad Asfoury for taking out some time of their busy schedules to speak with us here at Nerdular.