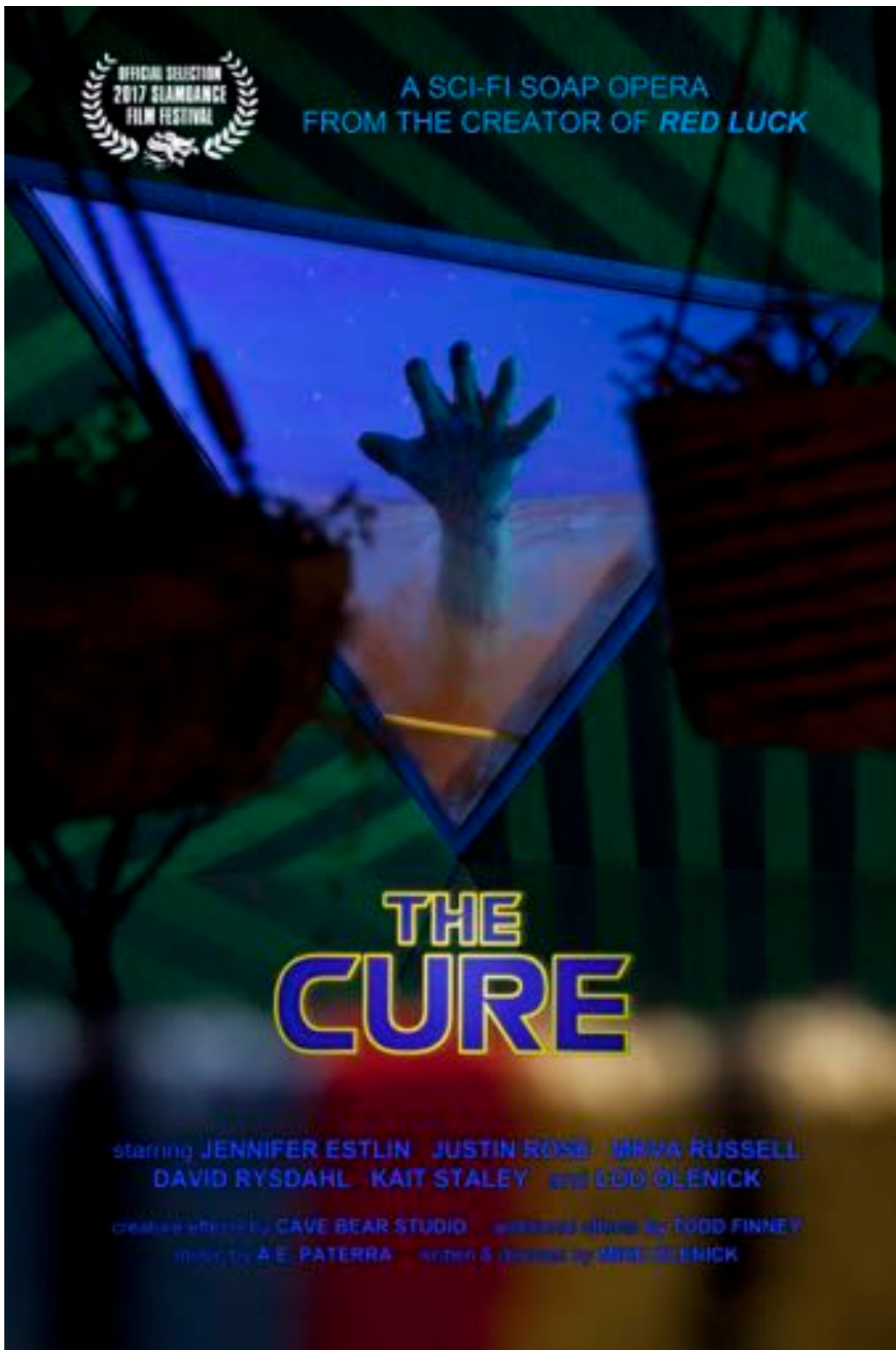


THE CURE – PRESS PACKET

Mike Olenick

19:35, 2017



**OPENING CREDITS:**

THE CURE

**RUNNING TIME:** 19:35

**FILMMAKER & FILM CONTACT INFO:**

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**LOGLINE:**

A mom cries, photos fly, cats spy, and bodies collide in this sci-fi soap opera about people dreaming of and desperately searching for ways to cure their fears of loneliness.

**SYNOPSIS:**

Dad is dying, mom can't sleep, and Nancy is determined to forget what she saw. Linda relives a past trauma and fears what might happen while she is away from home. Meanwhile, Mark entertains a mysterious stranger, who is secretly conducting a deadly experiment in this sci-fi soap opera.

**PREVIEW LINK:** <https://vimeo.com/180435087>

**pw:** cure

**SELECTED SCREENINGS:**

Fantasia International Film Festival

Fantastic Fest

Slamdance Film Festival

Palm Springs International Short Fest

Chicago Underground Film Festival

Athens International Film + Video Festival

Wexner Center for the Arts

**SELECTED PRESS**

13 Narrative Short Filmmakers to Watch at Slamdance Fest

<http://newmachine.co/2016/12/28/13-narrative-short-filmmakers-to-watch-at-slamdance-fest-2017/>

**PARK CITY TV interview (2017-01-20)**

<https://youtu.be/YLgl4wgVR20>

**Coleman, Jason. “Slamdance 2017 – Twenty-Two Short Film Reviews”**

**Whysoblu.com. 1/24/2017**

<http://whysoblu.com/slamdance-2017-twenty-two-short-film-reviews/>

“A sinful short that could be seen as either a tale about finding a cure for disease through sex or a biting stance on the one night stand – take your pick.”

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION:**

Near the end of its festival life, Mike Olenick's *Red Luck* won Best Experimental Short at the 2015 Slamdance Film Festival. Since then, he has started numerous scripts but was having trouble finding the right story to tell as his follow up film.

While in Park City for the 2016 Slamdance and Sundance Film Festivals, Olenick had a vision that became *The Cure*. Between screenings of two short films, a curious series of images flashed through his head. A woman returned to her childhood home because her father was dying. While she was there, her long-term boyfriend was cheating on her with another man, who had a few surprises of his own, including a partner of his own somewhere far, far away.

It was clear from the beginning that the film would take the form of several of Olenick's favorite film genres: suspense, sci-fi, and soap operas. While writing the script he thought of the summers during his childhood spent watching *All My Children* and *Twin Peaks*. When he was shooting, he thought of the films of *Brian De Palma*, especially *Dressed to Kill* and *Carrie*, and their use of split field diopters. The films of Curtis Harrington were on his mind during the entire production, especially *Queen of Blood* and *Games*. When he edited, he thought of Saul Bass's inspirational quote, "Symbolize and summarize." That phrase guided him as he made decisions about what to keep, what to cut, and how to meaningfully transition from scene to scene.

With the exception of the role of Mark, whom he wrote for New York actor David Rysdahl, Olenick cast Ohio actors, where Olenick has lived since 1992. The cast hails from across the state: Columbus, Cincinnati, and Zanesville. When casting the role of Nancy proved difficult, he turned to Chicago actress Jennifer Estlin, who unbeknownst to him was born in Cleveland, Ohio. He first met Estlin through his work as an editor on *A Million Miles Away* and *Blood Below the Skin*, two award winning films she starred in for director Jennifer Reeder. He also cast his mother, who lives in Cincinnati, as the mother in the film. She had previously starred in the short film *Magnetic Resonance Medley*, where she played a woman driven insane by sonic experiments.

In March of 2015, a mutual friend introduced Mike to musician A.E. Pattera at the Ann Arbor film festival. Mike has been a fan of his work in the band Zombi for years, and was thrilled to have him join the production as the film's composer. They immediately shared a common language and talked about scores they liked, from *The Thing* to *Twin Peaks*. While the film was still shooting, Pattera sent Olenick two cues that were inspired by the raw footage, one of which became the haunting main theme for the film. If you asked Mike, he'd tell you that he cried a few times while he was listening to the music Pattera created. It was even better than he dreamed it could be.

In addition to serving as the film's producer, writer, editor, and director, Olenick also served as the film's director of photography. He drew inspiration from one of

his favorite films from his high school years, Robert Altman's 1992 film *The Player*, which features the drifting and zooming camera work of Jean L epine. Aside from the special effects sequences, the film often uses simple lighting schemes, which is a departure from the lighting setups in his earlier works. Working with professional actors for the first time, he wanted to shoot scenes fast and simply without getting bogged down in technical hiccups.

When actress Jennifer Estlin read the script for the film, she wondered how large of a budget the film had since it featured a scene set on an airplane. The budget was relatively small, and didn't include an airplane rental. However, the budget did account for special effects. Olenick was determined to film what he wrote, by any means necessary and as creatively as possible. The plane shot was achieved by a simple optical trick that draws on studio films from decades ago, as well as Olenick's background as a visual artist. Mike has an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, and is aware that all the skills he learned while pursuing his degree in art are that secret tools that he uses to make his films unique.

Olenick took the lead on designing many of the analogue effects in the film. He prefers to film actual objects and events rather than create them in a computer. He loves the look of real light on fake skin, fake rocks, and fake rain. He is a fan of the rubber suits seen in *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*, miniatures like in *Logan's Run*, and matte paintings like in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and *Earthquake*. Olenick is not afraid of using digital technology as a tool to realize a special effects sequence. He's used Photoshop to create titles which are re-filmed to give them a unique look. He also combined hi-tech laser cutting with painted foam to create a large-scale miniature for the last shot of the film.

Mike turned to his old friend from undergrad, Nikos Rutkowski, and hired his studio, Cave Bear Studio, to create the prosthetic effects for his films. Olenick's favorite special effect in movies is when someone tears off a secret mask, revealing their true face underneath. He's watched this happen in countless movies and TV shows, from the *City of Death* episode of *Doctor Who* to *Naked Lunch* to the *Mission Impossible* films. He couldn't have been more excited to utilize this effect in *The Cure*.

## **FILMMAKER STATEMENT**

The Cure is easily identifiable as belonging to several genres: sci-fi, soap opera, and suspense. But it is also a horror film on a conceptual level. While I realize that blood and gore can be horrible, it's not the only thing or the first thing on my list for what makes a good horror film. I make films about things that I'm afraid of in every day life, and sometimes blood and gore compliment that.

While I do think about imaginary creatures, deranged killers, and strange diseases, what I'm really afraid of is rooted in my own experiences: getting a really bad case of poison ivy, witnessing someone's body fail, being attacked from behind by a gang in broad daylight on the 4th of July (true story), meeting new people, being intimate with someone, losing memories from my childhood, and most importantly the scariest thing I can think of – losing my parents. These are terrifying and keep me up at night.

I studied art, and learned early on that you can't truly understand a dark value without comparing it to a light value. To get this across in my films I juxtapose scenes with different emotional tones. I have a dark sense of humor, and I'm interested in what happens when disparate elements come together to form an unexpected whole. I enjoy crafting narratives that appear to move in one direction, but unexpectedly twist in several different directions, just like real life. I'm interested in deconstructing genre tropes and using familiar imagery to explore new cinematic territory.

I set my films in an ambiguous era before cell phones and laptops took over our lives, when photographs were still physical objects, and when you couldn't reach into your pocket and have the world at your fingertips. Setting my work in an analog era also opens the door to exploring analogue effects: matte paintings, miniatures, and practical effects. This extends to the use of music in my films – I love the retro sound of the Theremin and synthesizers.

I use ellipses strategically. Rather than explicitly state everything that happens in my film, I intentionally leave gaps that allow each viewer to come to his or her own conclusions about the narrative. Sometimes a question asked at the end of a scene might never get answered, and the first line of dialogue in the next scene might sound like it could be an answer. While an expertly crafted image can be really powerful to a viewer, there's something equally as powerful in omitting an image and requiring the audience to imagine it, especially when it is violent or horrible.

I grew up watching 1980s soap operas with my mother. The lingering looks that often end a scene, the over-the-top scenarios, the larger narrative that is always ongoing, and the crisscrossing stories that weave together have left a lasting impression on me. I enjoy crafting narratives that appear to move in one direction, but unexpectedly twist in several different directions, just like real life. Psychological thrillers, suspense films, body horror, and memory horror are also

In my films I follow multiple characters rather than a single protagonist: I think this is more true to life. I look for similarities and differences in these characters and weave their stories together to form the larger fabric of the film. I'm interested in creating strong roles for woman of various ages. I draw on my own experiences and those of close friends when I'm writing. I want characters to feel real, even if the scenarios they encounter are surreal.

**CAST LIST (in order of appearance)**

Kait Staley – Linda

Lou Olenick – Mom

Steve Olenick - Dad

Jennifer Estlin – Nancy

David Rysdahl – Mark

Justin Rose – The Visitor

Mrva Russell – Velana



**Writer / Director / Producer / Director of Photography / Editor**



Photo courtesy Mike Olenick.

### **MIKE OLENICK BIO**

Mike Olenick makes perverse films focused on photography, forbidden desire, reproduction, transformation, and memories. His work has screened at Fantastic Fest, streamed on MUBI, played on Dutch TV, and won awards at the Slamdance Film Festival (Best Experimental Short, 2015), Chicago Underground Film Festival (Best Looking Film, 2014), Ann Arbor Film Festival, and Big Muddy Film Festival (Best Experimental Feature). Mike is the recipient of several awards and fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council and the Greater Columbus Arts Council. In 2016 He attended the inaugural Shudder Labs.

Mike has worked as an editor for Guy Maddin (including *Keyhole*, *The Forbidden Room*, and *Seances*), Kelly Reichardt, the Quay Brothers, Lucy Raven, Michael Robinson, and Sadie Benning. Since 2003 he has edited numerous works for Jennifer Reeder, including *A Million Miles Away* and *Blood Below the Skin*, which screened at Sundance and Berlin, respectively.

Mike received his MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art with an emphasis in Photography and a BFA in Media Studies from the Columbus College of Art & Design.

**Composer  
A.E. Pattera**

**Twitter: @aepattera**

Anthony Emidio Pattera is a composer and percussionist based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He co-founded synth-prog band Zombi in 2001, and records under the solo moniker Majeure. Both acts have toured North America and Europe extensively. He has also released a steady string of albums over the past 15 years, and has worked with experimental filmmakers Olivia Ciummo and Tony Balko. This is his first time working with Director Mike Olenick. He is tickled.



**Creature Special Effects**  
**Nikos Rutkowski**  
Cave Bear Studio / [www.cavebearstudio.com](http://www.cavebearstudio.com)



Nikos Rutkowski is a special effects sculptor and mixed-media artist based in Columbus, OH. After working for five years as Creative Director for a top manufacturer of animatronics and props for the haunted attraction industry, he founded Cave Bear Studio in 2013.

Since starting Cave Bear Studio, Rutkowski has worked on a wide range of projects: large scale art installations; puppets and masks for stage productions; and public sculptures. *The Cure* marks his first foray into designing and creating special effects makeup and prosthetics for film.

Olenick and Rutkowski first met nearly twenty years ago when they were attending the Columbus College of Art & Design. *The Cure* is their first collaboration.

**Spaceship Design  
Todd Finney**



Todd Finney in *Beautiful Things*. Photo by Mike Olenick.

Since 2009, Todd Finney has been one of Mike Olenick's closest collaborators. In addition to playing The Thing in *Beautiful Things*, he assisted with special effects and designed and operated the animatronic tentacles used in the film. Todd was a production assistant on *Spaceboy* (2009) and in *Red Luck* (2014) he brought several characters to life, including a serial killer known for sending anonymous notes to his victims. When it came to designing the miniature spaceship for *The Cure*, Todd was Mike's first and only choice.

## CAST HEADSHOTS & BIOS

### Jennifer Estlin (Nancy)



## Jennifer Estlin

Jennifer Estlin is both an actress as well as the Executive Producer and owner of The Annoyance Theatre, in Chicago. Film credits include short films *A Million Miles Away* (Sundance 2015), *Blood Below the Skin* (Berlin 2016), *A Short Film About Execution*, and *Choose*. Feature films include *The Eyes*, *Volcano*, *iMurders*, *Chicago Boricua* and *The Stand-In*. Television credits include *Chicago P.D.*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, and the recurring role of Cathy Briscoe in *Law & Order*.

Olenick met Estlin when he edited two feminist films that she starred in: *A Million Miles Away* and *Blood Below the Skin*, both directed by Jennifer Reeder.

## David Rysdahl (Mark)



David Rysdahl's acted in numerous films and television shows including Netflix's *That's Not Us*, CBS's *Bull*, Jamie Sisley's *Stay Awake* (2015 *Slamdance Narrative short winner*) and MTV's pilot *Get Real*. His credits extend into theatre - most notably as the lead in Blake DeLong's *The Hottest Blood*. His own film *Black Swell* premiered at Slamdance (2016) and won the Next Exposure Award at the Hamptons Film Fest 2016. David has studied under Terry Knickerbocker and Adrienne Weiss, and graduated from St. Olaf College with degrees in chemistry and creative writing. While there he spent his summers in Guatemala teaching sex-ed in Spanish and once accidentally told a group of 6<sup>th</sup> graders that sex involves penis milkshakes; it was a life-changing event for everyone involved. He performs improvised comedy all over New York but mostly at the PIT with his duo team *True East*.

Rysdahl and Olenick first met when they both had films in competition in Slamdance in 2015.

## Justin Rose (The Visitor)



Justin Rose is an American actor known for immersing himself in his performances and devoting himself to realistic character portrayals. Justin began a successful career with independent films after writing and directing his own short art films with close friends. He has also found much success in directing music videos and commercials.

Born in Wheeling, West Virginia, and raised by his mother. Justin began imitating his favorite actors and comedians, and decided at an early age that he wanted to become an actor. After relocating to rural Ohio, he began acting in community theater, his first play was the catalyst that lead him to acting in film.

## Kait Staley (Linda)



Kait Staley has been an actress for over ten years. She has improvisation, modeling, and runway experience, and she has taught a successful, non-profit young adult theater group for over seven years. She has been the lead in numerous short and feature films, including *Punk Girl* and *Before You Go*. She has also appeared in *HOME*, *Devil's Point* and in several commercials and TV shows, including NBC's *True Crimes with Aphrodite Jones* for character reenactment.



**Mrva Russell (Velana)**



Mrva Russell is an actor/producer known for *Another Lost Soul*, *The Land*, and *Three Knee Deep*. Projects in production include *Divorcing Gravity* and *Wacko Roary Lionman*.

## Lou Olenick (Mom)



Though she has always been supportive of her son's artistic pursuits, *The Cure* marks the first time that this mother son duo has worked together. The role was written for Lou, and even though she turned it down no less than five times, Mike wouldn't take no for an answer. Before shooting, she said repeatedly that she would only act in her son's film this one time.

In addition to *The Cure*, she previously played one of the leads in the short film *Magnetic Resonance Medley*. One of her co-stars in that film was a goat that she encountered in an elevator inside of a mysterious institution.

## **COMPLETE END CREDITS**

Writer, Director, Director of Photography, Editor, & Producer  
Mike Olenick

in order of appearance

Kait Staley – Linda

Lou Olenick – Mom

Steve Olenick – Dad

Jennifer Estlin – Nancy

David Rysdahl – Mark

Justin Rose – The Visitor

Mrva Russell – Velana

passengers on plane

Kristin Dombi

Nigel Coutinho

additional aliens

Todd Finney

Barry Harrington

Jessie Horning

Andrew Wood

Music

A.E. Pattera

creature SFX

Cave Bear Studio

designed by Nikos Rutkowski

make-up by Miranda Stansbury

spaceship design

Todd Finney

additional miniatures

Mike Olenick

assistant directors

Jamie Frank-Wagner

Melissa Vogley Woods

assistant camera

Nigel Coutinho  
Liz Roberts

photographers  
Nick George  
Michelle Maguire  
Luke Sislowksi

sound recordists  
Nigel Coutinho  
Cameron Sharp

sound mixer  
Paul Hill

production assistants and set construction  
Ricky Crano  
Kristin Dombi  
Todd Finney  
Leah Hartman Frankel  
Nick George  
Isabel Hickok  
Jessie Horning  
Tyler Keener  
Ori King  
Shanice Linton  
Erek Nass  
Molly Pattison  
Rob Thompson  
Andrew Wood  
Ben Yacavone  
Melissa Robert Yes

Velana's Nails by  
MINE Luxury Nail Lacquer

Velana's Wardrobe provided by DOMBI

catering provided by  
Mikey's Late Night Slice  
Lou & Steve Olenick  
Xan Palay  
Luke Sislowksi

support provided by  
Greater Columbus Arts Council

special thanks

Ben Balcom

Molly Jo Burke

Addie Maya Chegges

Lily Dawn

Nick Fagin

Lori Felker

Mary Carol & William Finney

Todd Finney

Logan Floyd

Ryan Gillis

Nate Grogan

Jeff Hazledon

Laura Heberton

Steven Hudosh

Jennifer Lange

Diana Matuszak

Elaine Matuszak

Kevin Merriman

Missy Merriman Gorman

Matt Olenick

Ronanda Perkins

Lisa Ragland

Jennifer Reeder

Arlette Roeper

Dan Schoenbrun

Mikaela Sislowski

Tim Smith

Jeremy Stone

Blake Turner

Veleta Vancza

Kelli Williams

Polly Jean Woods