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Challenging the Unchallengeable

By Neoconvict

Interview with **Jarek Kupsc**
Writer/Director, "**The Reflecting Pool**"

By Jim Cirile

New feature film "The Reflecting Pool" may just be the "All the President's Men" of our time. No, it doesn't have Hoffman and Redford. But it is a chilling and important fact-based investigative drama.

Writer/director Jarek Kupsc ("Slumberland") stars as Alex Prokop, a successful hard-hitting Russian/American journalist. As a last gasp before corporate takeover, his editor (Lisa Black) hands Prokop a bombshell assignment -- investigate the official version of 9-11. Prokop, dismissive of 9-11 skeptics, reluctantly teams with grieving father Paul Cooper (the outstanding Joseph Culp) to investigate. After losing his daughter in the attacks, Cooper transformed himself into a 9-11 expert -- at the expense of his marriage. As Prokop and Cooper kick at the hornets' nest, a sickening, carefully orchestrated pattern of deceit emerges -- and Prokop finds publishing the story may mean curtains on his career.

The well-researched (and exhaustively documented on the DVD) thriller ultimately proves more compelling than 9-11-themed documentaries such as "Loose Change" by taking a narrative approach and by personalizing the story. Disbelieving investigative reporter Prokop is an effective audience surrogate, while the passionate, fragile and self-destructive Cooper grounds the story with heart and soul -- a constant reminder of the human cost of the "war on terror." The script is solid, the characterizations moving. If the film has a flaw, it's in trying to document so much evidence in a narrative structure. Yet by and large, it pulls it off to deliver a chilling and effective message -- maybe it CAN happen here.

"The Reflecting Pool" will open eyes, anger some and

test the faith of others. But it also finally gives voice to the 48% of Americans distrustful the official 9-11 story, according to a recent Zogby poll. And it's a tour de force from writer/director/actor Jarek Kupsc. With the 9-11 Truth movement gaining steam by the day (this week alone, Willie Nelson "came out," joining a growing list of celebrities to question 9-11; Dario Fo & Gore Vidal's 9-11 documentary "Zero" is dropping jaws and creating buzz in Berlin at the European Film Market; and NY Times reporter Philip Swenon's expose "The Commission" hit bookstores) we believe this is an important topic worthy of serious discussion, and thus we are proud to bring you this interview with the courageous Mr. Kupsc.

Jim Cirile: Tell us a little about your background.

Jarek Kupsc: I'm over forty, so the background is pretty vast and littered with a lot of debris. But, in telegraphic terms, here it comes. Born and raised in Warsaw, Poland. Art and History major in high-school. Participated in juvenile delinquency politics during martial law with mild consequences. Escaped military service by becoming a political refugee in Greece. Emigrated to the U.S. in 1987 (after an unsuccessful attempt to enter Australia and Canada). Worked my way through college and state university in San Francisco, studying acting and film directing. Wrote a book on film history as a way of financing first feature film (didn't work out). Subsequently, went bankrupt making two movies.

JC: Wow. What was the genesis of "The Reflecting Pool"?

JK: The movie came as a direct result of my personal interest in 9/11, which began on 9/11 at 9:03 a.m., the moment the second tower got hit. As a born skeptic fed totalitarian propaganda in my native Poland, I never bought the official story of nineteen hijackers. After three years of research, I amassed enough information to believe that this tragic event was orchestrated within the U.S. government circles. I never intended to make a movie about 9/11. I was absolutely positive someone else would. Sure enough, some excellent (and some outlandish) documentaries started to (emerge). I thought it would be a matter of short time before the notoriously "liberal" Hollywood or some independent producer would tackle the subject in a dramatic form. By 2005, that didn't happen. So I decided to do it on my own. I was simply driven by anger and disbelief that the narrative sector of the movie industry would not deal with this issue. Since I am trained in the narrative form, it was only natural to develop a character-driven

fictitious film based on actual events.

JC: The idea of turning all that research into a narrative investigative drama sounds pretty daunting. What was your writing process?

JK: From my personal research, I had all the facts. And by "facts," I mean sources that came directly from mainstream media – New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, even Fox News, believe it or not. All these outlets reported some pretty damning information. Granted, it was never front-page news. Those articles were buried deep. Luckily, as a grad student, my wife ("The Reflecting Pool" producer) Jodie Baltazar had access to an online library that rivals the Library of Congress, so I could cross-reference any officially published 9/11 topic. I also looked at some of the best 9/11 Truth websites to find links to mainstream articles. They are very thorough in indexing their sources to avoid any suspicion of fabricating or distorting the facts. Having had these facts at my disposal, I then begun a truly arduous process of selecting what should stay in the script and what should go. It was an editorial process of elimination of those facts that were still questionable, less relevant, or could be misconstrued as misinformation. I ended up with a short-list, which I then trimmed to what a two-hour movie could support without overwhelming the audience. The facts you hear about in "The Reflecting Pool" were ultimately chosen to give a solid foundation for the narrative of two guys who go after the truth. The fiction part of the script is what gives the movie human dimension, real drama, as opposed to a fact-driven documentary.

JC: I noticed the DVD is meticulously sourced. These are facts, and the picture they paint is inarguable. Yet many will dismiss them because the concept of government and media complicity is just too horrifying for some folks to handle.

JK: If you dismiss the facts of "The Reflecting Pool," you have to dismiss every source we used, including Fox News and the most prominent newspapers in the country. So you have to ask yourself, if Fox News is telling me that every intelligence service in the world sent us warnings about the attacks, what does it mean? Now, Fox News, for all intents and purposes, is a propaganda channel for the Bush administration. They are not apologetic about it -- they provided the President with a Fox News spokesperson for heaven's sake! But now and then, even Fox has to report some truth just to give us an illusion of objectivity. In this case, reporting on the foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks, they got it right. Of course, they didn't break

this story – they wouldn't dare. But once they saw it being reported on the other networks, they were forced to pick it up in fear of not falling behind. The worst form of censorship is self-censorship. Not reporting something you know is true is far more damaging than burning a few library books. What we have in this corporate media-driven society is a combination of self-censorship and marginalizing the inconvenient truth. If you bury it by the obituary page, nobody will read it. If you listen to our commentary on "The Reflecting Pool" DVD, you'll hear all these quotes from corporate media, and you may think, wait a minute, they DID report this! They must be on our side! What you don't realize is that none of the facts we quote were ever front-page, or even back-page news. They were meticulously marginalized and, obviously, nobody came out in the mainstream media to connect all the dots. Which is what "The Reflecting Pool" attempts to do -- to paint a larger picture based on marginalized reports.

JC: I understand the film was at least partially financed by credit cards. How did you go about raising the money?

JK: We didn't. We, Jodie and I, and (producer/actor) Joseph Culp, combined our meager personal resources to make this film. There was no time to wait for outside money, which could take years to raise. It had to be done in the moment. For the same reason we are self-distributing the DVD on www.reflectingpoolfilm.com. A lot of people don't realize that even if you do secure a distribution deal, the so-called turnaround time for the movie to see the light of day would take twelve to eighteen months. By then, Cheney and Co. will (hopefully) be way out of the office, laughing all the way to the bank.

JC: You have a few key cast members from Corman's original "Fantastic Four" (Joseph Culp and Alex Hyde-White) in your cast ;) Hyde-White's Bill O'Reilly-esque host was chillingly accurate.

JK: I met Joseph Culp about three years ago through an actor friend. Joe is an accomplished drama teacher, in addition to his other skills. I took his Walking Theatre Workshop for several years. About a year into my acting training with Joe, I began working on the "Reflecting Pool" script. We ended up workshopping the material in the theatre on weekly basis. In fact, the script really took shape thanks to the acting workshop with Joe.

Now, through Joe and his workshop we had access to some amazing actors. In the early nineties, Joe had been cast in the Roger Corman original "The Fantastic

Four" movie as Dr. Doom. He befriended Mr. Fantastic, the outstanding Alex Hyde-White, and during "The Reflecting Pool" casting process, he immediately thought of Alex for the part of our TV host, who is clearly modeled after Bill O'Reilly. The only directorial suggestion I made to Alex Hyde-White in preparation for his role was not to think of it as parody. He really played it straight. When you know what O'Reilly is capable of on the air, you can almost say Alex is underplaying a bit. But in all honesty, the character of Mahoney, the TV show host, in "The Reflecting Pool" is a sad commentary on reality, not on O'Reilly specifically. You have these so-called "news shows" on any network, and they are cast, scripted, and directed as pure entertainment. There is no real news on television, period. Unless you're into traffic reports and weather.

JC: One thing that jumped out when I saw the film was that I wish there was one brave editor somewhere who'd take on this story, as happened in the film. And yet even Rolling Stone, American Prospect, Mother Jones and The Nation are inexplicably silent on the issue. What do you think is going on?

JK: Vanity Fair did a fairly decent piece on 9/11 and "Loose Change" in 2006. But even they had to beat around the bush, if you excuse the pun. On a good day, I believe they are not educated enough on the facts of 9/11 and still consider it another "nutty conspiracy" case. On a bad day, I think the pressure from the top, meaning the ownership, is just too dangerous to risk a 9/11 expose for the major publications. It's a make-or-break issue, and most likely they would be broken. Look what happened to Dan Rather with his "60 Minutes" report on Bush's National Guard service. Look at how ("The View") dealt with Rosie O'Donnell after the Building Seven episode. This is the message they are sending to other prominent figures - you risk having your career shattered. The issue of spin and damage-control by corporate media features prominently in "The Reflecting Pool."

JC: What sort of reaction is the film getting? I would imagine there's praise and also some hostility.

JK: I would have to honestly say that most people who have seen "The Reflecting Pool" so far are firm believers in the government complicity in 9/11. So, by default, they nearly uniformly praise the film. We are getting applause at every show and the Q&As. Personally, I'm very flattered by that. But the real trick is to find a larger, skeptical audience. We have gotten a terrific support from various political groups in spreading the word about the movie. What we need is a fund-raiser to

place a full-page color ad in LA Times and book a nice theatre for a week-long run. Then, the papers would have to review the movie, and people not involved in politics would see the ad and hopefully come to the screenings. We have to cross-over to the mainstream if this message is going to be heard loud and clear. That takes the kind of money we simply don't have. What we do have, however, is grass-roots support, which is a beautiful beginning of a long journey. I'm sure we will encounter real hostility if we show the movie to a larger audience. We are prepared and ready to face it.

JC: What's next for you?

JK: In terms of a next film project, I would like to continue making small-scale independent films for the rest of my life. I made three so far. Realistically, the next project will need outside financing – I'm tapped out. I have about five projects of varying budgets lined up. What I do next depends on how much money I can get. I'm not a player in the film industry, so my prospects are grim. For now, I'm fully committed to take "The Reflecting Pool" as far as we can take it, domestically and internationally.

JC: Tell us where can folks see "The Reflecting Pool"?

JK: "The Reflecting Pool" screens EVERY Saturday and Sunday at 11AM at the Laemmele Monica 4-plex in Los Angeles. Followed by Filmmakers Q & A after each show. 1332 2nd Street, Santa Monica, CA

You can also check for additional screenings [on our website.](#)

JC: And you can also order DVDs off the website. Thanks for your time, Jarek, and best of luck with the movie and your career.

JK: Thank you, Jim.

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