

"THE WAKE"

NewTV producer confronts grief in first feature film

Kreitzer's movie a Sundance Film Institute Screen Writer's finalist

By **Chloe Gotsis**
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Telling stories through film has always felt natural for Jesse Kreitzer. Now the young filmmaker is planning

his biggest and most challenging story yet – his first feature film.

After making more than 40 short films throughout his career, Kreitzer, who is a producer at NewTV, decided

it was time to make a feature film. The film, "The Wake," tells the poignant story of a social worker so consumed by grief over the death of his mother that he starts caring for another dying woman unbeknownst to his wife and children. The film is the result

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Jesse Kreitzer is making an independent film called "The Wake." He is a content producer at NewTV. WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTO BY KEITH E. JACOBSON

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of a 30-minute short story Kreitzer wrote for class at Emerson College seven years ago.

"I had always known from writing that [story] that I wanted to develop it more," said Kreitzer, 26, adding that the story quickly became about a family dealing with and confronting grief. "This is a story I believe in. It is really dealing with the subject matter. I hope it'll at least provoke discussion or raise some awareness about how we do grieve."

The plot for "The Wake" was loosely inspired by watching his own father grieve over the loss of his mother, Kreitzer said, but he said he was also motivated by how culturally death is viewed in society.

On a cultural level, Kreitzer said, "we don't deal with death well," and he hopes that his movie can in some way change that.

The family makeup of the characters in the movie also mirrors that of his own family – two boys and a mother and father – and the younger son's name is Jesse, though Kreitzer said he may change that in the final script.

"There was a point where in order for these characters to grow I had to inherit them instead of basing it solely on personal experience," said Kreitzer, a Brookline resident.

The story takes place over four seasons in picturesque rural Vermont, where Kreitzer grew up. Kreitzer's parents moved to Marlboro, Vt., from New York for the school system and raised

their two sons there.

Now, Kreitzer is seeking help in putting his first feature film together. He has already raised \$10,000 in donations toward his rough budget of \$130,000. He is now looking for investors. Next on the list is selecting the cast and crew for the project.

The script is in its third draft and it was selected as a finalist for the Sundance Film Institute Screen Writer's lab. Kreitzer said he's hoping to begin filming early next year.

Capturing moments with film is in Kreitzer's blood. His grandfather Abe was synonymous with the 35 mm camera he would carry around, he said. Abe loved the craft of capturing pictures, Kreitzer said, and it then became inherent in him as well.

"The Wake" is Kreitzer's first feature film, but he has always been a filmmaker – even in elementary school.

"I would say some of my earliest memories are being able to shout out names of actors and director," he said.

By third grade, Kreitzer's love for film became clear to his parents and teachers and he was given a camera, which he used to make movies for school projects. Kreitzer said he remembers having an epiphany about the power of film to tell a story while shooting a film on the fisher cat in the woods of his school.

"From a very young age, it was just me and a camera," he said.

He was lucky enough to be accepted into a film program, run by renowned filmmaker Michel Moysé, at the Center for Digital Art in Vermont his junior year of high school. He continued his study



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WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTO BY KEITH E. JACOBSON

of the craft throughout high school and then onto Emerson College. After graduating from Emerson, Kreitzer served a three-year stint as the coordinator of government programming at NewTV before moving on to his new position as content producer.

To help support "The Wake" make a donation through Pay Pal at <http://www.thewakefilm.com/support1.html>

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