

## Dealing with the Possessed - a Q&A with Actress Jennifer Carpenter.

Contributed by  
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{FEARSmag.com} - THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE is a compelling tale of a young woman's struggle with a desperate and inexplicable illness. Emily Rose experiences terrifying visions and endures wracking convulsions that leave her body twisted and weak. She is diagnosed as an epileptic by a neurologist, but the medication he prescribes proves ineffective. When her symptoms worsen, a second specialist makes a diagnosis of not only epilepsy, but that Emily Rose is also psychotic. However, when she turns to her parish priest, who presents the case to the archdiocese, he is granted permission to help Emily by performing an exorcism.

It is a harrowing performance that is brought to the screen with such ferocity and integrity that it sure to garner this young actress, Jennifer Carpenter, notice and acclaim. Jennifer recently starred opposite the Wayne brothers in the comedy "White Chicks." A graduate of the Julliard School, she appeared on Broadway in "The Crucible," directed by Richard Eyre, and shared the stage with actors Laura Linney and Liam Neeson.

FEARS: How do you like to work, in terms of your own training and how you prepare yourself?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I think I like to work the way that I like to drive. I like to have an idea of where I'm going. You know, I like to get, officially in this type of role I had to do a lot of research. You know, do a lot of homework. I got as much research as I could on the prosecution and the defense. So I could give each of them a solid case and hopefully keep the audience and myself on the fence as long as possible. Then looked at tapes of epilepsy and what seizures looked like. And I even looked at some Kabuki theater. I wanted to put my hands in a lot of pots so that on the day I could forget it all and go in there and see what happened. Look at Tom and see what came up. You know.

FEARS: This is an incredibly physical performance. Laura mentioned something about being able to scream fourteen hours a day. That takes a certain talent.

JENNIFER CARPENTER stars as Emily Rose in THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I don't know how I could have done this part had I not been trained. I called my vocal coach from Julliard before I started and asked for a real quick Cliff Notes version keep me healthy. You know, give me a few more things that I might have forgotten. I was really glad I made that phone call. I don't do yoga, even though I do live in LA, and I think towards the end I started looking at it more like an athlete. You know, and it's amazing what aFEARSnaline can do and where it will carry you. When I finally saw the rough cut, I was looking at it thinking, "I didn't know I could bend that way and I'm not sure I could do that for you now." I was just surprised.

FEARS: What did you know about exorcism before you did this movie?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Not a lot. I think I came at it, luckily, from a very neutral place, both spiritually and my beliefs in science and politics and such. At the end of the day it doesn't matter how I feel about this. What matters is am I doing Emily Rose justice in this movie. You know, which is all I wanted to do.

FEARS: Did you also look at things like epilepsy and such?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Absolutely. And you know, epilepsy is really interesting. That's what's so great. That's

taken from the theater to put into film. You get to learn about so many things you wouldn't normally learn about, and watching those tapes, there are so many different kinds of epileptic seizures. People's bodies contort and they have repetition in so many different ways we've never seen before. So it was really cool to pick those apart and take them to the other side and make the two mirror each other at times to confuse people just a little bit more.

FEARS: Those weren't digital effects?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: No.

FEARS: Just you?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Yeah.

FEARS: Was working these scenes out with the director like doing improv?

JENNIFER CARPENTER stars as Emily Rose in THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: A lot of it, even when I just saw the slides and hadn't even read the script, notes kind of pop out and like "yes I definitely want to play that one, but what's going to come between that one and the other one?" I know. And sometimes, lying in bed getting ready to go to sleep you think, "What would happen in front of me and would really scare me?" I thought, if Emily's will is not her own, what if she just rips her hair out? Is it the devil that's in and abusing the body he's in. And you bring that to Scott and he says we'll play or it we won't. And sometimes into the movie and sometimes it doesn't.

FEARS: That moment when you're on the floor and all contorted, did you hurt yourself?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Everybody took really good care of me. You know. But, the scene where I'm lying on the floor like that, is me. We didn't know how much we were going to need or not and they built a dummy of my body and they arranged it how they wanted it and I said, "Well I can do that so move it." And they did, and you know if it hurts for a few minutes then it's the least I could do to show Emily's struggle. But you know, I wish I could hold it for five minutes and get up and walk around a little bit and I did get a little, teeny, tiny scar on my ankle and I'm proud of it. It's like; it's more than a tattoo to remember this experience by. Not that I have any tattoos.

FEARS: You don't bring it up in the movie, but Emily Rose is spoken of as coming from a very religious background She leaves home for the first time, goes away to college for the first time, and it seems like it could be sexual hysteria. Fear of having lost her virginity in college, and she feels guilty about it. Although that's never really brought in did you take any of that into consideration in your research of Emily Rose?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: There are a lot of different things that I considered and if that's how you might have seen it, and something you might be questioning, you might not be alone. That's all I can say.

FEARS: Is it awkward to know that the real woman, who die and who inspired this story, is revered by some people as a saint?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I mean I know a lot of movies are based on a true story, and I know that this is based on a true story and true events. At the end of the day all I could do was look at this really solid script and really interesting character and try to stay true to that. And whatever, whoever has the courage to sit in these seats; whatever they're thinking when they leave, that's their business. You know, and I don't think this movie is trying to champion a certain cause say this is the right way and the only way. It's just saying, ask those questions you may have been afraid to ask.

FEARS: Have you seen the movie?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I did see a rough cut. It was odd for many reasons. I felt like I kind of had my head in a fishbowl and I was trying to look at all of it at once. Which is just impossible. I had my mom sitting to the right of me, and so I had a bruised hand and she was popping up and down and flailing in the seats and it was more interesting to watch her at the time.

FEARS: Do you have favorite horror movies?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I don't really gravitate toward a certain genre. I didn't really see, or have never seen, *The Exorcist*. I think that might have worked in my favor. Oh, I own *The Shining*.

FEARS: How did you never see *The Exorcist*?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I heard it's really scary. I guess I haven't been in the mood to be scared in a while.

FEARS: No favorite horror film from all the films you've seen over the years?

JENNIFER CARPENTER stars as Emily Rose in THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I mean, seriously, a film that scares me again and again would have to be *The Shining*. I remember being in a hotel once and thinking about those two little thin girls looking into the hall and it's still just too much for me.

FEARS: This isn't your movie debut?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: No, I did *White Chicks*.

FEARS: Who were you in *White Chicks*?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I was Letha. I played a young girl in the Hamptons who helped the Williams go undercover. I was an FBI agent. It was a lot of fun actually.

FEARS: Did you do that before or after *The Crucible* on Broadway?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: After.

FEARS: How has your theater work informed your film work?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: It's cool because they're two totally different things. I hope to always be able to do both. Not in this movie as much its definitely a challenge to be smaller for film and, but still be as loud as you are on stage. Its something I'm still trying to figure out.

FEARS: What was that experience like? Did you see it then as a pivotal role for your career?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: God no. It was the second job I had out of school. Again it was a part that I really wanted. That's all I ever want to do, work that excites me and invites me to be a player, you know, to come and help make it whatever. But, you know, Laura has been, in all honesty, she's been a guardian angel to me. Her friendship, watching her work, and being able to call her when I get a little lost or lose my footing. She's always, always, always there.

FEARS: What kind of actress is she?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Yeah, the best part about this for me was, I mean, I was lucky enough to get to work with her before. And in a weird way, this was shot like two movies. So when I was off, she was working and I got to go and watch her process and try to add mine to hers. You know, the great thing about her work, you can't look at her or Tom's work and say they do A,B, and C and that makes that a good choice. Its seamless, and she's too good to steal from. Believe me I've tried.

FEARS: Is that the same as on stage?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Absolutely, and I was really lucky too, because in the third act of *The Crucible* its Laura and Liam and myself on stage. And those were the best rehearsal days, to watch them ask their questions and get what they needed from Richard Eyre.

FEARS: *The Crucible* was actually a story too.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Well some girls were, you know, they claimed to be possessed. I was Mary Warren and she certainly didn't believe it at first.

FEARS: Have you ever had any supernatural experiences?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: You know, I thought I might get asked that question when all this rolled around, you know. During the filming of this, I don't know if there was shortage of the wiring in the hotel or what, but like three different times my stereo in the room came on loudly and I'd put it in a different plug and it kept happening. One time, and I didn't know it until actually talking about it, but Pearl Jam came on really loudly playing "Still Alive."

FEARS: Whoa!

JENNIFER CARPENTER: And I didn't realize it, or pay attention to that song title until we started talking about this. But it's still a good song though.

FEARS: Was it turning on at three o'clock in the morning.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I didn't say it turned on at three o'clock in the morning. I was born at three o'clock morning.

FEARS: I never knew until this movie that it was like some strange time. I just thought three was a lucky number.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I was getting my chart read, which is another thing you do in LA sometimes. And my Mom had to check my birth certificate for three a.m.

FEARS: So is it important to you, having done something like this, to stay away from the genre for a while because you're so early in your career?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I know I feel really comfortable in anything. Like I said before, I'll play an old man if it's a role. You know, I just want to do stuff, hopefully I'll get the opportunity to do stuff that's exciting and that I can help better. So if that means doing a horror film next, great, if it means doing a comedy, great. I don't care.

FEARS: What made you decide you wanted to act?

#### JENNIFER CARPENTER BEHIND THE SCENES of THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: My aunt, she used to baby sit us sometimes, my sister and myself. I think she dropped us off at an audition thinking that if we got the parts they would watch us during rehearsals. And I accidentally fell in love with it and never considered doing anything else. In fact, I think my Dad really wanted me to have a backup and I told him, "If I thought I really needed a backup I'd do something else."

FEARS: How old were you when you were dropped off?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Eight.

FEARS: From then you knew.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: It was Tiny Tim. I walked in and I said, "If you need a Tiny Tim I'll do it." They said "A

FEARS: So you played Tiny Tim.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Yeah. God bless us everyone. I still remember my line.

FEARS: Were your friends calling you up when the trailer for EMILY ROSE began to turn up in theaters and on television?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Yeah, well the producers were saying, "you better hurry up and get a boyfriend before it comes out." And you know, I missed the boat because I'm still looking.

It's funny, my sister's in town too and we went shopping the other day. The woman who was working at the store said "You look like that girl from that exorcism trailer." And I said, "Well if I wasn't her, that might not be a nice th

FEARS: Since EMILY ROSE, how's the acting process been in terms of films, getting scripts, and going on auditions?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Yeah, I've been auditioning and one just ended. I did a pilot for Fox, a comedy, which was really fun and nice to go to immediately after this.

FEARS: Nothing happened with the recent Fox pilot?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: It was called "Queen Bee," with Alicia Silverstone and Danny DeVito directed. I played the brains behind the operation. We're all trend spotters and she's the front woman and I do all the work. There are a few films that I really like a lot and we'll see where they go.

FEARS: And do you know what you're doing next after this?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I just did this Showtime show called "Dexter," it's with Michael Seton Hall who's Under. And I'm very excited about it. We shoot the pilot in Miami next month.

FEARS: And who is Dexter and who are you?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Michael Seton Hall is Dexter and I play his sister Deborah.

FEARS: What's it about?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: He is in the homicide division in Miami and he studies blood splatter. I'm his sister who is just a cop in regular blues trying to get on to homicide. And he has this really dark way of solving these murders and I'm asking for his help to clue me in on some clues to get my foot in the door. Even though I may not be, its kind of comical, qualified for the job.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: No it didn't, they didn't pick it up.

FEARS: She was really excited about that.

JENNIFER CARPENTER: Yeah. She was.

FEARS: What did you play in that one?

JENNIFER CARPENTER: I played the brains behind the operation. We're all trend spotters and she's the front woman and I do all the work.