

Weird wacky film analysis and evaluation

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The short documentary *Ryan* is an animated documentary about the life of a Canadian filmmaker named Ryan Larkin. Larkin is renowned animation film maker who, after hitting a creative block, turned to cocaine and alcohol. The creation of the film began back in 2001 by Chris Landreth after he met Ryan at the Ottawa International Animation Festival.

Soon after meeting, Chris was deeply impacted after seeing Ryan's current condition, relating it back to that of his mothers, and became inspired to make a film about his life. *Ryan* is essentially a mashup of interviews that are talking about and giving background information into what Ryan's life used to be like along with what it's like now.

Chris Landreth is an American animator, working out of Canada, and is well known for his use of psychorealism, which adds a surrealist style to his work. Instead of just saying the thoughts or emotions, Landreth portrays it by disfiguring the characters, making them metaphors for their feelings. He has created a few different films, most have either won awards or have been nominated for different awards. For example, one of his first ever films, *The End*, was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 1996. Although he has plenty of well known films under his belt, he is best known for his work on his multiple award winning film, *Ryan*.

While creating *Ryan*, Landreth did not use a storyboard base line like what is typically used in the creation of this type of documentary. Instead, he collected hours of seemingly random interview footage and sifted through until he found a plausible story line, his downfall from a creative block, resulting in a drug and alcohol addiction. He also accessed some archival

footage of a few of his films. It took around 20 hours of interview footage and a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, to round up a small production team which included a few graduates and a handful of undergraduates from the Animation Arts Centre at Seneca College in Toronto. With the help from the production team, the film was completed within eighteen months.

In the beginning, Landreth starts off the film by explaining some of the psychorealism that he had used. He began by introducing himself in a washed out, water colored bathroom where he talked about some of his disfigurements that showed up when he looked into the mirror. He stated that the sparkly scratches on his face and neck were from when his romantic views were shattered and that the indented smiley face on the side of his head is from when he lost the ability to manage his finances. The disfigurements to Ryan's character are meant to physically show non visible emotions such as fear, pain, and creativity.

Ryan is missing most of his skull and half of his face, his muscles in his arms. After going through a series of interview footage of Ryan, Landreth started the script from when Ryan began talking about one of his inspirations for a film in his earlier career days; ending with how his life was, being an alcoholic and living on the streets of in Montreal, before he passed away on Valentine's Day in 2007. Landreth showed him some archival footage of two of his famous original films, *Walking* and *Street Musique*. Along with interviewing Ryan, Landreth also interviewed one of his ex partners, Felicity Fanjoy, and one of his old film producers, Derek Lamb.

After the interview with Derek, Landreth then tried to confront Ryan about his alcohol addiction, saying that he should try to beat it the same way he beat cocaine, which only resulting in an angry outburst. Ryan stating, there is nothing that I enjoy more than a good glass of cold beer, asking, Am I supposed to give it up for like tea or something.

He explains that there is nothing left in it for him and that he doesn't create anymore because he had been ripped off to much in the past. He continued to ramble on about how he had been deprived, and that deprivation is the most devastating thing. He said that he would give up booze if someone were to give him money.

When Ryan lashed out, his head morphed into a spikey blob, shattering the halo that had begun to form and light up on Landreth's head. He began asking himself why he had even brought up the subject in the first place, the screen changed to pictures of his mother, along with a lot of rambling going on to the point where you cannot understand what is being said.

Chris Landreth uses a wide range of different techniques. The major technique that I spotted right off the bat was psychorealism, where the narrator disfigures the characters in some way or another, to show. It is shown throughout the whole entire film but is only briefly introduced to what it is at the very beginning. Also, he used archival footage when he played some of Ryan's original films. Another technique that Landreth used was voice over, because even though he edited the shots, he still needed to explain somethings. The voice over helped about, especially when there was

to much noise going on, whether it was the background music or not, and there was important pieces of information that was being given out.

This video intrigued me because I had not seen this type of documentary before, and I have seen a lot of documentaries. At first I thought it was just supposed to be a crazy illusion but after the first one or two shots, I began to see the signs of what it was about. I think it is very neat that Chris Landreth was capable of using psychorealism and that I can look at it and understand what it is supposed to mean.

I also really like this kind of art style, although it takes a couple of times of watching it over and over again to understand the bigger picture, it is an interesting video to sit down to and study the reasons behind why the narrator made it like that. This video, over all, hits pretty close to home with me, seeming how parts of my family are alcoholics and how even though they look normal, they are missing a part of themselves that they will never be able to get back.