



Speedway

The Stuntman Takes the Helm NASH EDGERTON Directs *The Square*

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When stuntman/director Nash Edgerton set out to make his first feature film, there was some expectation that he'd embark on an action-packed cornucopia of fight scenes, car chases, and explosions. Instead, however, the Australian filmmaker constructed *The Square*, a tale of passion, murder, and the aftermath of bad decisions, wherein the excitement lies not in an inundation of sights and sounds, but in a slowly building sense of desperation and doom. Raymond Yale (David Roberts) agrees to set fire to the home of his lover, the stunning Carla (Claire van der Boom), in order to mask her pilfering of her husband's satchel of ill-begotten cash, an act which knocks the first domino in a series of terrible events to follow.

"I definitely like that feeling of knowing that something bad is going to happen," Edgerton relates. "It's the feeling where you go, 'Oh, no!' You can't help but watch the car crash and you want to see how bad it's going to get. It's a nice feeling to create." And though few people are faced with day-to-day choices of this horrific magnitude, *The Square* is a solid reminder of the karmic consequences of misplaced priorities. "His problems get more and more focused on the wrong thing," the director explains. "His life is spiraling out of control and he's stuck in this whirlpool, and his life's decisions eventually consume him."

Before *The Square*, Edgerton cut his directing teeth on music videos — including two for Bob Dylan — and short films, the latter of which emerged from his work as a stunt performer, a livelihood he began when he was halfway through his first year of an electrical engineering degree. "I got the idea that I should be a stuntman by hearing someone say the word 'stunt' when I was out one night," he recalls. "Instead of going home and studying for my physics exam, I looked up 'stunt' in the phonebook and wrote down the number for an agency that represented stunt people." And thus launched Edgerton's career of leaping from buildings, smashing cars, and taking punches, which led him to appearing in such epics as *The Matrix* trilogy and *Star Wars* episodes two and three. In fact, his performance in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* was the first time he ever invited his parents to see him work. After a back-flip that landed him on his head and broke his teeth, "I got up and acted like I was fine and told my parents it was okay to go home," he grins. "My brother walked them off the stage, and as soon as the stage door closed, I said, 'I'm hurt.' The ambulance came. I was fine, but I was like, 'I'm not gonna let my mom and dad come watch anymore.'"

The Square is actually a film by the Edgerton Brothers. Joel Edgerton, the director's younger brother and a well-known Australian television and film actor, wrote and co-executive produced the film, and also plays Billy, the movie's shady yet oddly likeable arsonist who gets in way over his head. "We're best friends," the elder Edgerton expresses. "We have skills that complement each other. He's a way more talented writer and actor than I am. If we were both trying to do exactly the same thing, I'd be afraid we would clash. He's made some shorts, himself, and I think he's a really talented director as well. We're both ultimately aiming for the same end result and esthetic, and in that way we work together really well. I would totally make another film with him." And whatever creative conflicts may arise, "We're still brothers," he declares. "We have a shorthand with each other and an understanding. It seems like a quicker way of communicating than with people you don't know. And at the end of the day he's my little brother, so I get to be the boss." ▼

The Square opens April 9th. The feature is preceded by Edgerton's jump-out-of-your-seat short film, "Spider."