



Written by Chandler Maness  
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Pictured: Raffi Asdourian enters left side of frame in this still from set of *Ai*.

When asked about the biggest problem facing our industry today, director/writer/producer Raffi Asdourian responded, "Studios don't need to simplify films for audiences, or judge each film's merit on its calculable gross, it's like they forgot how to take a chance."

His films certainly stand by that statement, and in fact, Raffi's films are the antithesis of the Hollywood model. A director with remarkable vision and brilliance, Asdourian shot each of his films in a different language. *Kuragannon* is his sole film in English, while *Stranger* is in French, and *Ai* in Japanese. Asdourian said he chose to make these films in different languages "to stay as true as possible to the source materials." Commercial appeal didn't even cross his mind. He doesn't water down his films for mass consumption rather he keeps them as true to the story as possible and lets the audience decipher the messages.



with his GI Joes.

During our two-hour interview, Asdourian gave IFD his take on the industry and the evolution of the digital distribution movement, and shared his favorite filmmakers and inspirations.

Asdourian graduated in 2004 from New York University with a Bachelor's degree in Film and TV. His ambition to make films stretches back far beyond his college experience, and he fondly told me how when he was eight years old he used to create storylines and movies

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**Pierre: A Hole with a View** was the recipient of the Grand Prize at *SXSWclick 2007*. This romantic and lyrical short is one of the most acclaimed of 2007. Don't miss Dan Brown's charmer about a French mouse who falls in love with a human woman who moves in the apartment he inhabits. Ceci est l'amour! (6 min 40 sec)

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Asdourian's work is not limited to directing; he is also a writer, editor and web designer. In addition to submitting his film **Ai** to the **From Here to Awesome** film festival, he is also the senior editor for **Pangea Day**, a global film festival aimed at connecting the world through film on May 10th, 2008. He explained that these festivals are different because they emphasize the "indie" filmmaker, instead of the "Hollywood indie" filmmaker (ahem, **Sundance**) Asdourian is also pitching a TV series about assassins titled **Silencers**. Asdourian expressed faith that the new digital distribution movement would replace and revolutionize the old distribution models. We here at **IFD** are right with him.

All of Asdourian's films take chances and push boundaries. **Kuragannon** follows the protagonist as he awakes and realizes he is dead. The dark imagery and creepy atmosphere create an interesting and fascinating picture. The style of the film seems inspired by the works of Lynch and Tartovsky. All three of Asdourian's films are filled with dark subjects and disturbing concepts. When I questioned Asdourian why his filmography doesn't include feel-good romantic comedies, the filmmaker informed me that he makes movies about what intrigues him. He expressed his admiration for the writings of Albert Camus (his second film was based on **L'Etrangere**) and the existential questions raised by the dark side of humanity. It comes as no surprise that Asdourian is an avid fan of Asian cinema (Japanese and Korean), which also frequently contains dark ideas and subjects.

Asdourian said the toughest challenge facing new directors finding their audience. Thanks to the new social networking tools and other forms of internet media, new filmmakers can come into contact with their audiences easier than ever before. When questioned about his favorite filmmakers, his list was a who's who of brilliant risk-takers including Tartovski, Kubrick, Herzog, Lynch, Miike, Tsukamoto, Von Trier, Haneke and Kurosawa. In fact, Asdourian's favorite novel is Tartovski's masterpiece **Sculpting Time**. His three favorite films last year were **No Country for Old Men**, **There Will Be Blood** and **Sweeney Todd**.

His second film, the Camus-influenced **Stranger** is another interesting work. Asdourian speaks and reads French, which he picked up from his mother. His latest (and best, in my opinion) work is the samurai period piece **Ai**. Despite its short running time, the film creates a **Rashomon**-type atmosphere filled with classic themes such as loyalty, honor, and sacrifice. The imagery is beautiful, and some of the shots are absolutely stunning. The viewer feels like he or she is actually in the forests of Japan as the protagonist crunches leaves underfoot. The fight choreography is also top-notch. It really is a wonder how he managed to create this film with such a small budget. It doesn't fall into the "just to look cool, wish I was Tarantino" pattern of filmmaking that has been so prevalent since **Kill Bill**. Asdourian wants **Ai** to boost his transition into the world of feature filmmaking.

Asdourian embodies all that we stand for at **Independent Films Direct**. He is an upstart filmmaker who believes in his art not the almighty dollar. All of his films are committed to their source and his actors give fantastic performances.

Expect to hear more about Raffi Asdourian as he has four completed screenplays that he hopes go before the cameras. He is currently working on **Traces**, a feature-length film set during the 1915 Armenian genocide, and true to his nature, it will be in Armenian and Turkish. Thanks to the explosion of internet opportunities for indie movies such as **FHTA**, we get the chance to see films that normally wouldn't get distribution for lack of a big name or budget. That's something we all can get behind.

#### RAFFI ASDOURIAN LINKS

Official Site: <http://www.zaffi.com>  
 Blog: <http://raffiasdourian.blogspot.com/>  
 Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zaffi/>  
 Twitter: <http://twitter.com/home>  
 Youtube: <http://youtube.com/user/kida101>

<http://fromheretoawesome.com/aimovie/> (**From Here To Awesome** movie link)

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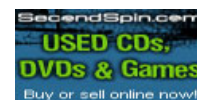
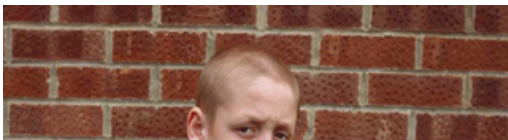


#### TRAILER PARK

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Winner of BAFTA for Best British Film 2007

**Synopsis:** Mods, New Romantics, and Skinheads are the youth sub-cultures of this very English summer of 1983.



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##### CAREY CHICO - Composer

Carey Chico is an experienced composer for film, theater and video games. His most recent film was the horror film **Boo** which debuted on the SciFi network in 2006. He has been in the music industry for over 10 years. His compositions range from orchestral, to ethnic (Asian, African, etc) to ambient styles.

[Click here to learn more about CAREY CHICO](#)





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