

# Writer-director Ryan Kruger chats bold new genre-bending film *Fried Barry*

By  Daniel Dercksen

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The genre-bending, cult-style South African film *Fried Barry* marks the feature-length directorial debut of Ryan Kruger and has been distributed internationally in over 50 countries and garnered 23 awards from the festival run.



Ryan Kruger with Gary Green and Sean Cameron Michael during the filming of *Fried Barry*. Photo credit: Graham Bartholomew

Cape Town-based actor, director and writer Ryan Kruger has been making movies since he was 14 years old. As a winner of Sama (South African Music Awards), MTV and Goema awards, Kruger is widely celebrated for his outstanding work as a music video director, having directed over 100 music videos.

As a director of dozens of short films, Kruger is known for his distinct visual style and character-driven stories. *Fried Barry* marks his first independent feature film, and will premiere on DStv Box Office on 26 October.

■ ***Fried Barry is described as a first in the history of South African cinema: a bizarre tale told in a genre-bending onslaught of sex, drugs and violence. A spectacle that pulls you in and won't let go as every expectation is subverted in this boundary-pushing tale of alien abduction. Tell me more about this?***

In South Africa we don't make these types of cult films. We are known for our dramas, comedy and historical movies. Over the past few years there's been more genre movies coming out of South Africa, which is great. Even in the past two years there's been a major difference. It is exciting to finally see South Africa stepping out of its comfort zone.

The great thing about *Fried Barry* is that it's a genre-bending film. It has elements of horror, sci-fi and a lot of dark humour. This film is definitely not for everyone. It's quite out there and it's a very bold film. You will either love it or hate it. It's designed to take you on a journey. It's a road trip movie without the car. Barry is the car.

■ ***Have you always wanted to be a filmmaker? Where did it start for you?***

It's been a lifetime to get here, but I've been working 23 years to get to this point working in film. I started young and never wasted time doing anything else but film. I first got into acting and then making short films with my friends in the UK during the holidays or weekends. My childhood was very much like that film *Super8*. It's all about sticking at something you know that you will never lose interest in.

■ ***What inspired this story of an alien assuming control of a drug addict's body and taking it on a bizarre joyride through Cape Town?***

As a filmmaker you have to think out the box. We sadly live in a generation of remakes and reboots. Filmmakers try to change things we have seen before, just adding a different name, change the location from snow to space or desert, change guns to lasers, and so on. It's hard to find something new and unique.

When I came up with the idea, I realised we have never seen a drug addict being abducted by aliens in cinema. That really intrigued me. This film was born out of total frustration. I went through a lot before I made this film. *Fried Barry* was my medicine and got me out of that dark place. Even though it was the worst time of my life going through depression, I am so grateful I went through it because it brought me here. Something great will always come out of darkness. I just used it.

■ ***The story of Fried Barry began with the 3-minute experimental short film of the same name, shot in 2017. Tell me more about this?***

During my depression, I decided to make eight experimental films – where I could do what I wanted to. It's now five years later and I have the last two in post. It's some of my best work I have ever done. After each one is complete it does the festival run overseas. But I will release them as a collection very soon.

■ ***You managed to secure funding from private financiers within a month and started shooting. This clearly***

**highlights the importance of collaboration during the process from page to screen. Your views on this?**

We actually didn't get investors on board until halfway through the film. Me and my co-producer James C Williamson put up all the money from the start of filming. It was only later on where I showed a director some shots from the film that he wanted to invest. So there wasn't any collaboration on what I wanted to do. He just truly believed in me and wanted me to do my thing. Which I am truly grateful for.



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Daniel Dercksen 7 Oct 2021



**■ You also have a collaborative and improvisational approach to directing, allowing the best ideas to rise to the surface through creative discussions with your cast and crew.**

As an actor myself I love to improvise, and I like giving freedom to actors to add stuff and make it their own. Filmmaking is all about collaboration. The only person that didn't improvise in the film was our lead Gary Green. He isn't a trained actor and comes from an extra background. I cast Gary because I love characters and I knew I could get what I wanted out of him.

I knew from the start for this whole film to work it had to be the right character and right story in every aspect as the movie relies on Barry. I needed a clean slate to work with him every day and be in the moment with him. But Gary did an amazing job. He was always willing to do as many takes and never got frustrated with that. No one but Gary could have done this part. He trusted me and we both had so much fun.

**■ Your views on the future of filmmaking in South Africa after the impact the pandemic had on the industry?**

I truly believe it gave people a chance to reset and think about what they want to do in life. I think the industry is going to boom again and be better than ever. The content coming out of SA has risen an incredible amount and the standard is higher than ever.

**■ What do you hope audience will get out of experiencing Fried Barry?**

Have fun. Be open-minded. It was designed to take you on a trip and for you to have an experience that you will never forget. Even if you love it or hate it, you will remember this film.

Read more about South African films and filmmaking [here](#).

## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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