



# THE COUPLE BEHIND "LEMON"

*"Lemon" is a comedy of disconsolation. A dark comedy that features a man named Isaac (played by Brett Gelman) whose own life unravels in a series of disappointments and dissatisfactions after he is left by his girlfriend of 10 years. Directed by Janicza Bravo, the movie kicked off the 2017 International Film Festival Rotterdam and has received great reviews ever since. Star Showbiz brings you an exclusive interview with director/writer Janicza Bravo and her life partner Brett Gelman, who also wrote the movie and acted in it.*

**Why the name "Lemon"?**  
**Janicza Bravo:** Lemon, as we all know, is a citrus fruit. But there is meaning beyond that. "Lemon" is also a word that is used to describe something that doesn't work, is built improperly, broken, or not as it should be. In this movie, Isaac, the character played by Brett, is broken and he isn't as productive or efficient as he should be. So that is where I related the word "Lemon" to the portrayal of the character Isaac.  
**Mr. Gelman, you are a rare face in the Hollywood industry. Have you acted or worked in any other movies before?**  
**Brett Gelman:** I have worked mostly in American television. Recently, I've been in one British TV show called "Fleabag" and then a few films in between. So you know, (laughs) I'm not that famous. However, I've had the privilege to work in movies namely "30 Minutes Or Less", "Jobs", "The Other Guys" and "Eagle Heart".  
**Tell us more about this film. How did you guys come up with the idea and the execution that lead to this wonderful movie?**  
**Janicza Bravo:** Brett and I wrote the movie together. I directed it all by myself. How the movie came to fruition is an interesting story. A little over 5 years ago, we had been talking about working together on the same project and we were basically looking for an opportunity to work together. So, I came up with this gem of an idea. At that time both of us were at a

similar point in life where everyone around us was speeding past us. Our friends and colleagues were busy getting married, becoming successful, getting jobs, having children and fulfilling their dreams. We were worried that 10-15 years from now we would not be arriving at a point where we want to be. We felt like we were being left behind, so the film is an exorcism of that feeling. We thought that if we wrote it all down; all our insecurities, all our fears which was to not have been loved, to be terrible at our jobs, to have our families be deeply disappointed in us and more, it would seem to us as if all of these problems didn't happen to us in the first place.  
**Considering this is your first ever directed film how was your journey as an amateur film maker? Was it hard for you?**  
**Janicza Bravo:** It has been really hard. I've been trying to become a proper filmmaker for quite some time. This movie is not your typical American movie, so when you are pitching a movie like this to an American financier, they perceive it from what the American audience wants. It was especially challenging since our film is not the typical straight standard comedy. It's really dark. It's strange and uncomfortable. The character Isaac is basically a man who is at the end of his road in life, and we very much conclude the movie in that notion. There's neither a happy ending, nor any cheerful and exuberant content. These are things that you would see in a

typical American movie, but not in ours. This can be very distressing to American audiences. But right now, we cannot afford to be cheerful. The world around us is at dire times, so I like to think things a bit differently. I want to be challenged. I want to be upset because I am upset at the state of our world right now.  
**Do you think your financiers are happy with the movie?**  
**Janicza Bravo:** I think they will be very happy once we sell it. In terms of filmography, this movie is completely different than the ones they've made before. I think their opinion of this movie is derived from how other individuals reviewed this movie. This is the difference of dynamics between the financier and the artist or the maker. Nevertheless, we stand by our film whether it receives good or bad reviews.  
**Do you think the audiences from developing countries like Bangladesh are ready for this kind of movie?**  
**Brett Gelman:** Of course! Like I said before, this is not your typical American style movie. We feel it's a universal movie and I think everyone can relate to the concept of not accomplishing the things they want in life and wanting to be somewhere else. This is something which everyone can have a rapport with no matter which part of the world you're from. Moreover, a lot of the comedy in this movie is physical. Thus, any audience can apprehend the concept behind it.  
**Apart from being co-workers, both of you are**

**also life partners. Could you let us in and apprise us about your personal life a bit?**  
**Brett Gelman:** (Laughs) We've been together for 8 years. We're very good at fighting and we're very honest with each other. We have a tremendous amount of respect for each other as well, both personally and artistically. The first time we met was in a commercial. She was in costume production and I was acting, so yeah, that's where it all started.  
**Janicza Bravo:** It's very challenging to maintain a healthy professional and personal life together. But I think we've gotten better at it since we're very comfortable with the constant intensity and challenges that we have to face everyday. However, we try our very best to not bring work life to our personal life.  
**Any projects you are currently working on or planning for the future that the audience should know about?**  
**Janicza Bravo:** I'm working with a company here in the US for a feature movie that takes place in Panama, which is also a dark comedy genre film. It's about these American nurses who travel to Central America to make a difference, but no one wants them there.  
**Brett Gelman:** I will be acting in some TV series here in USA. I will be appearing in the second season of the popular Netflix show "Stranger Things" and in the third season of "Love".