

JUDGEMENT DAY PRODUCTION THOUGHTS

By Andrew Richards



“Clean and Bright”

For me, *Judgement Day* is a song of courage. While the title might suggest comeuppance, the words never lend themselves to retribution, only hope.

The words “clean and bright” kept pressing in on me and I began to think of birth. It is the hardships of life, the pain and suffering, the injustices that tempt us to forget our truest nature, our highest selves. Flaws and all, we are all loved in the eyes of God. As we encounter great pain and suffering we have the ability to view everything through the lens of courage and hope for a better day.

“Don’t be afraid, ’cause you ain’t dead.”

Going into the shoot, I had witnessed some really lovely rehearsals of Jeanne-Minette and Justin in our home. Justin is confident, always smiling, and very personable. As we’ve seen him in other videos, we know his smile can light up a room. And of course, I knew how compelling his pianist is. :-) They are polished performers. And in recital they complement each other phenomenally.

This piece was the second song we recorded, after [*When the Dove Enters In*](#), a song of peace and wisdom and community. In it we see Justin and Jeanne-Minette doing exactly what they do in real life, completely at ease. Just making great music together. But through the day I became convinced I had to bring discomfort into the process. I began to think that being uncomfortable physically was the only way ‘in’ to *Judgement Day*.

I’ll admit here, at the moment upon making the request to have Justin take his shirt off to evoke *Judgement Day*’s pathos and courage in the face of vulnerability, I was unaware of the problematic implications of such a request. But after asking if it were something he would do, he quietly walked me through some of the history and painful aspects of filmmakers capitalizing on the visually striking Black Form. He saw how powerful the proposal might be, but we had to weigh how it would come across, given its historical context, and subject matter.

To which my dear wife suggested she also appear topless to also embrace the discomfort of the subject matter for the sake of balance and partnership. Fears embraced. Artistic choices pursued. Courage on display. These

two really just went for it and of all the recordings we did, this is my favorite. They chose to go the ‘dangerous’ path and faced up to fear and vulnerability together.

I must also note, the audio portion of this video is one complete take. Some of the video is from alternative takes for the sake of visual impact, but this is exactly what it sounded like in the room. This piece was not lip-synced or edited in any way. They performed the piece six times. I only tried to stay out of the way of them doing this thing live over and over again. (You can imagine how hard it is to sing and perform with camera’s half a meter from your face.) We chose the 2nd audio take in the end, mostly because I had a hard time being silent as I filmed. Now I understand why too often music videos are ‘performed’ to playback. Listening back to it all, I feel like the richest man in the audio world, every single take is gold. But as with all the videos in this series, we felt it was important to do everything live and create the recital experience within the video medium.

This is the outcome. We hope you’ll find it as moving as we did.

-- Andrew Richards, March 2022