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'Elf-Man' visits the Weinberg Center

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By **Katie Crowe**
News-Post Staff

If you ask Richard Jefferies, [Frederick](#) is the perfect place to film a holiday movie -- what with its chilly winter temperatures, classic architecture and small-town feel.

These are just a few of the many reasons why Jefferies, producer and screenwriter of the new Christmas comedy "Elf-Man," chose to shoot the film entirely in [Frederick](#) County, he said in a recent phone interview from his home in Frederick.

"Most holiday movies are shot in Los Angeles, which just doesn't work because it doesn't look or feel like Christmas. We shot in my house -- the original part of which is a 250-year-old farmhouse -- and downtown," Jefferies said.

"We thought we could do something that would be an inherently Christmas movie if we shot in Frederick. The landscape here, the buildings ... everything about it feels more like a classic Christmas movie."

Jefferies and his business and writing partner Ethan Wiley, who also directed "Elf-Man," began writing the film about a year ago, and the majority of the shooting took place in February and March, he said. The original idea for "Elf-Man" existed as a one-paragraph concept, just one among many between the creative pair, he added.

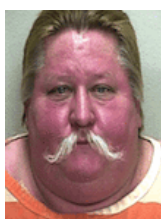
"Ethan came here from Los Angeles and we wrote the script here (in Frederick) together," Jefferies said. "It was literally a joined-at-the-hip writing process."

Both Jefferies, who worked in the movie business in Hollywood for almost 30 years before moving back to his hometown of [Frederick](#) about two years ago, and Wiley had been hired to write a lot of pieces in the thriller, horror and science-fiction genres in the past, Jefferies explained. Thus, writing "Elf-Man," a Christmas comedy, turned out to be a welcomed change from what they were typically used to working on, he added.

"It was just fun -- fun for us to contemplate and write," Jefferies said. "We were using a lot of our imagination muscles that we hadn't used before."

"So when we started writing, we discovered this untapped reservoir of goodwill -- just warm and fuzzy Christmas stuff. We had a blast getting this out and fleshing out the movie."

According to an Anchor Bay Entertainment press release announcing the film's official nationwide DVD release on Dec. 4, "Elf-Man" focuses on the Harper family -- dad Eric, played by Mackenzie Astin ("In Love and War" and "The Facts of Life") and kids Ryan and Kasey, played by Blake Kaiser and Carly Robell. On Christmas Eve, Eric is kidnapped by a gang of thieves, who seek to sell his newest invention. When Santa visits the Harper house that evening, he grants the wish Kasey makes on a magical elf doll by leaving behind one of his own elves, played by Jason "Wee Man" Acuna, of MTV's "Jackass" fame, to help save her dad. As the robbers scheme



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What: "A Night of Hollywood," featuring the world premiere of "Elf-Man"

When: 7 to 9:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 1; doors open at 6 p.m.

Where: Weinberg Center for the Arts, 20 W. Patrick St., Frederick

Tickets: \$30 for adults, \$20 for children 12 and under; \$75 for VIP backstage ticket. Tickets are available through MDtix.com.

Info: 301-500-0336; info@frederickfilmoffice.org

Several "Elf-Man" stars will be in attendance, including Wee Man, Mackenzie Astin and Mirely Taylor. Attendees will be able to "Meet the Local Cast" at one of the several interactive exhibits located in the lobby, and will have the chance to enjoy their own "Red Carpet Photo" moment, learn about local and regional film festivals and win a private meet-and-greet experience with the stars of the film. Every guest will receive a limited-edition mini-poster and gift bag, and a raffle for various movie-themed prizes will take place. Net proceeds will benefit local Frederick charities that will be announced prior to the event.

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to break into the house, Ryan and Kasey help their new friend (Acuna) discover his true powers as the superhero "Elf-Man," who then takes on the kidnappers in order to help save the family's holiday.

On Dec. 4, the film will be available on all "home cinema" services, including Redbox, NetFlix, Direct TV, and iTunes -- essentially every service that allows users to stream TV and movies to their home TVs, Jefferies said. This is in place of the film being released in theaters.

According to Jefferies, "Elf-Man" is a great story about a grumpy little elf who, after being left behind by Santa and through his interaction with these children, learns he is a superhero and never knew it.

"We try to entertain and let the audience decide what they make of it," Jefferies said. "But thematically, it's about people never giving up, and that by looking for strength in themselves, they can realize stuff they didn't realize they ever had. Particularly for kids, that's good for them to hear since they sometimes have a lot of reasons to be discouraged. It makes them think, 'Don't ever give up.'"

One of the film's executive producers, Kurt Uebersax, who has owned and operated his Frederick-based production company, KJU Productions, for about 10 years, said there is untapped talent and opportunities to create films in Frederick.

"I think we're breaking new ground here," he said. "There's a really great arts community here ... and it's a really great place geographically to support Baltimore and Washington, but I think we can build on that.

"It would be really nice to create our own little world here as well."

Jefferies agreed that it was beyond exciting to be able to film and essentially put together the entire film from his [Frederick](#) home. "Elf-Man" is one of hopefully many projects he and his creative team intend to shoot and put together in Frederick, he said.

"The fun and interesting thing was ... when I stepped back mentally, after doing 18-hour days for seven days a week, here I was, sitting at this 250-year-old farmhouse, at my computer, assembling all the components of this movie. Things were coming in from different places, all over the country through the Broadband, but I was assembling it all here, in this house," Jefferies said.

"Elf-Man" took a total of about 10 months to complete.

"You can live in a place where you love to live, take things from all over the world, bring it back and put it all together here," he said. "This is truly the brave new world of how movies can be made."

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