



K L A U S A T
G U N P O I N T

CINEQUEST 2015



CHRIS GARCIA ~ EDITORS ~ VANESSA APPLGATE

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E D I T O R I A L

FILMS REVIEWED

Barco Escape presentation
Batkid Begins
Apples from the Desert
How to Lose Jobs and Alienate Girlfriends
In the Company of Women
Children of the Arctic
Sweden's Coolest National Team

YES, THAT IS NEW GIRL'S HANNAH SIMONE!

Cinequest 2015

This is the first of what will likely be 3 issues about 2015's Cinequest. This one is all Chris' reviews of films he saw over the first 5 days. We'll have the rest of the fest in a week, and then EVERYONE will get their words in!



BARCO ESCAPE - FUTURE OF FILM

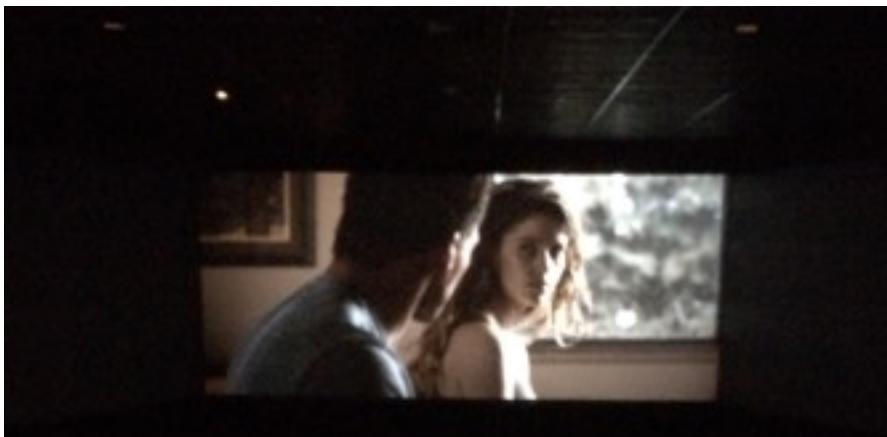
I have seen the future of Cinema and it comes from the past.

The idea of multiple screen presentation is an old one. From Polyvision used for Abel Ganz's *Napoleon*, to Cinemarama and 360 Circle-vision, the idea of more thoroughly immersing the audience into the image is an old idea, and Barco's Escape three-screen concept is possibly the most impressive of them all.

The Shorts they presented were so impressive, with Lady Gaga and Tony Bennet being a lovely concert film that used the technology to present grand, sweeping camera shots. It was beautiful, the projection being crystal clear and the shooting being immediate and perfectly edited. This is where you'll find the most commercial applications of the Escape concept: presenting films that use the area projection area to present super-widescreen imagery. And while that is awesome, it was Vijay Rajan's *Withdrawal* that really made the best use of the concept.

Using each of the screens to present an individual section of the story of a young addict's journey through withdrawal. Rajan uses each screen to present an aspect, through the withdrawal and looking sideways at other moments and influences. That approach can be confusing if you think about it, but it really works here, especially with such great acting and editing.

The needs of three-screen projection means that you need bigger theaters, and that seems to limit the potential overall adoption in the multiplex culture, but Cinema as Attraction will make fine use of the idea now that IMAX is no longer a draw on its own.



VIJAY RAJAN'S WITHDRAWAL

Presented in 3-Screen Barco Escape format



C I N E Q U E S T

PART ONE - FEBRUARY 24 TO MARCH 1



Opening Night - Feb 24th

B A T K I D B E G I N S

BATKID BEGINS

Directed by Dana Nachman
Written by Dana Nachman & Kurt Kuenne

Featuring
Miles Scott
EJ Johnston
Mayor Ed Lee
Mike Jutan
Mike DeJesus
Greg Suhr
Patricia Wilson
Hans Zimmer

THE STORY OF A
5 YEAR OLD BOY
WHO BECAME A
SUPERHERO FOR
SAN FRANCISCO

A Beautiful Opening

There was no question that this was going to be the feel-good film of the festival. I was driving to the Napa Valley Film Festival when Batkid was busy saving San Francisco from the Riddler and the Penguin, so I knew what was up, but it this was a film that I completely taken by. I also wasn't aware that Klaus at Gunpoint's favorite filmmaker, Kurt Kuenne was involved!

The story is simple - Miles has leukemia. Miles is also the World's Biggest Batman fan. He loves superheroes, he loves dressing up, and he

BATKID BEGINS

“It’s basically the story of someone who played a superhero once. You know, just like Birdman.”

Chris Garcia

LOVES Batman. Like many of us, he fell in love with Batman through the 1960s television series. Through the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Miles gets to request one thing, and Miles, he wants to BE Batman.

And Make-A-Wish made it happen.

The entire city of San Francisco turns into Gotham City, and working with a number of incredible performers, and with the help of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, the entire thing blew up into a nearly-mythical event that hundreds of thousands of people were watching on the streets of SF, and on the internet.

The heart-warming aspects of the story they were documenting meant that there would be no problem with it making you smile, but the way they approached the entire scenario was great. Miles is incredibly charismatic, and you can see it when he’s in and out of the Batkid costume. He’s a different kid when he’s in the suit, and that’s the essence of the super hero concept. He’s not quite a better version of himself: he’s a different version.

Eric Johnston playing Batman shows the level of commitment that people found for Miles. He made a wrist-based projector to play the videos from the Chief of Police (who was an amazing performer!) and worked with Miles, bonding with the kid in a way that really pulls at the heartstrings.

It would be so easy to turn a documentary like *Batkid Begins* into a manipulative piece of propaganda, or a schmaltzfest, but what we get is both a celebration of the events AND a look at what the event not only meant, but how it effected the City. The Make-A-Wish soft sell is there, and frankly, it should be - They’re an amazing group going amazing things, and Batkid is the perfect example of the kind work they do.

This is exactly the kind of documentary that can get a commercial release, and if it does get a release of any sort, I’d expect it to be nominated for the Oscar for Best Documentary.



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A P P L E S F R O M
T H E D E S E R T

APPLES FROM THE DESERT

Directed by Arik Lubetzky & Matti Harari

Written by Savyon Liebbrecht, Arik Lubetzky & Matti Harari

Starring Moran Rosenblatt

Shlomi Koriat

Remonde Amsellem

Elisha Banai

Irit Kaplan

MODERN ISRAELIS
HAVE SOME OLD
PROBLEMS

Peletesque Sit Porttiror Aptent

I'm used to Film Festival far being Art Films. They stereotype of movies about Gay Cowboys eating Pudding can sometimes apply, but once a while, a commercial film from some other country will make its way to Cinequest,

AMOS LASSEN REVIEW

It is the symbolism in the film that makes it so interesting and important. The apple in history has always been an important symbol and here it represents an awakening that is not just sexual but defying the law not to eat from the forbidden tree.

This year, one of the best Israeli films of the last decade is at the festival, and it was everything I was expecting it to be.

Apples from the Desert is the story of Rebecca, a lovely young woman in a very religious Sephardic family. She's lost in a world that she's not comfortable inside of, and her father is incredibly controlling, and more than a bit unreasonable. Rebecca's mother, played by the radiant Reymond Amselam, is caught between the love of her daughter and dedication to her tradition and husband. Rebecca meets a young man, Dubi, at a dance class and a friendship develops. Meanwhile, her father is busily trying to arrange her marriage to a much older man with kids. A blow-up leads Rebecca to head off to the kibbutz where Dubi's from, and there experiences secular life for the first time.

The story is really simple, and the script is just about as clean as you could get. It's not at all a challenging script, but that is 100% fine, because it provides an incredibly stable platform for some fine actors to give us the kind of nuanced performances that you wouldn't find in most American films. Rebecca is played by Moran Rosenblatt with that lovely combination of determination and dedication. It could have easily been the kind of role that she turned into an angry young woman, but instead she pulls back just enough that you can tell she WANTS to be a terror of late teen emotions, but instead she has a tether to the world through both her religion and her mother.

But the mother. My god, she's so incredibly good. Amselam plays her caught between so many different emotions, and the way that she interacts with every other character is so very different. Rebecca's father's anger is abated by her mother's gentle concern, though she is no less questioning than her husband of her daughter's behaviour. She goes through her emotional range with alacrity, and she provides a steadiness for the relationships in the film.

Shalom Koriat plays Rebecca's father, and he's brutal at times, but in a way that is not violent. He plays dedicated father, and set in his ways, but also powerfully dedicated to his daughter. The story is as much about his unreasonable expectations as it is about Rebecca's rebellion. Irit Kaplan plays Rebecca's aunt, who is something of the comedy relief, but she's very important to the story because she provides a sort of springboard for the others. She's in conflict with Rebecca's father, she's Rebecca's release valve, and Rebecca's mother's support.

And you'll notice that everything I reference is in relation to Rebecca. She's the basic element of the film. I love the way that she keeps everything flowing, and her glimpses at Dubi are so thoroughly different than those with her mother, and the daggers she manages at her father. It's one of the things that defines the film; the way that Rebecca treats the character determines how they are perceived by the audience.

If you get a chance to see *Apples from the Desert*, and it will almost certainly be out and available, you should take the time to see it!



H O W T O L O S E
J O B S A N D
A L I E N A T E
G I R L F R I E N D S

A MOVIE REVIEW MASQUERADING AS A PERSONAL ESSAY

I've been on thin ice at work for a couple of years. The main reason? I fucking hate thesis statements. To me, writing that starts with a clear and present thesis and goes about backing that is lame, lazy, the kind of writing that you should shit upon with great vengeance.

Work wants clear statements, historically-relevant writing that doesn't meander. They don't want stream of consciousness, they want cause-and-effect pieces that explore a defensible concept. I'd rather vomit. I want the journey around a topic, into a realm of ideas that I explore, and maybe, actually hopefully, muddy the waters, perhaps even completely blowing the concept I started out with.

And that is what we receive in the brutally personal and honest documentary *How to Lose Jobs and Alienate Girlfriends*.

HOW TO LOSE JOBS AND ALIENATE GIRLFRIENDS

Directed by Tom Meadmore

*Featuring The music of
Speed Orange - [https://
www.facebook.com/pages/
Speed-Orange/
375336464504](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Speed-Orange/375336464504)*

*Amanda Medica -[https://
myspace.com/
amandamedica/music/songs](https://myspace.com/amandamedica/music/songs)*

Tom Meadmore wants to make a documentary focusing on his boss, Tony, and his girlfriend, Amanda. They're both trying to make it in the music business. Tony's past 40; Amanda's got motivation problems. Amanda's got a gorgeous voice; Tony's isn't all that great. Tony's band, Speed Orange, released an album that did not go anywhere, and all he wants is to be a band they play on the radio. Amanda has had gigs, but she's still a waitress. Tom begins shooting footage, almost obsessively, and his drive to document these two, as well as his inability to let shut his mouth when anything he'd say would only hurt the situation, combine to muddy the waters. He comments on the weak quality of Tony's voice (which is OK when Tony does it earlier in the film, but not when Tom makes it a focus point of the doc) and that throws a heavy wrench into this friendship with Tony. He comments on Amanda's motivation issues and ends up hurting their relationship, as well as making the documentary more difficult to shoot. He's breaking a cardinal rule of documentary-making: don't make the subject those you love, because the camera doesn't love people: it loves drama.

The film is narrated by Tom, who doesn't really have a thesis for the film until more than half-way through. Tony, an experienced doc filmmaker, keeps asking him, "What's your story?" and Tom keeps having trouble explaining. THAT, more than anything, had me in the palm of his hands throughout the piece. The film became less an "I Wanna Be A STAR!" pic and more about discovering the story, and dealing with how actually looking at the issues of those people around you can bite you in the ass. The approach is great, especially when he's turning the camera on Amanda. At times, it seems like he's really shooting a documentary about Tony and Amanda's just his test subject to stay sharp on his shooting. Other times, it seems that he's trying to use the constant shooting as a motivational tool. It's not 100% clear whether he's trying to motivate her for her own good, or the good of the documentary. I have a feeling it's both.

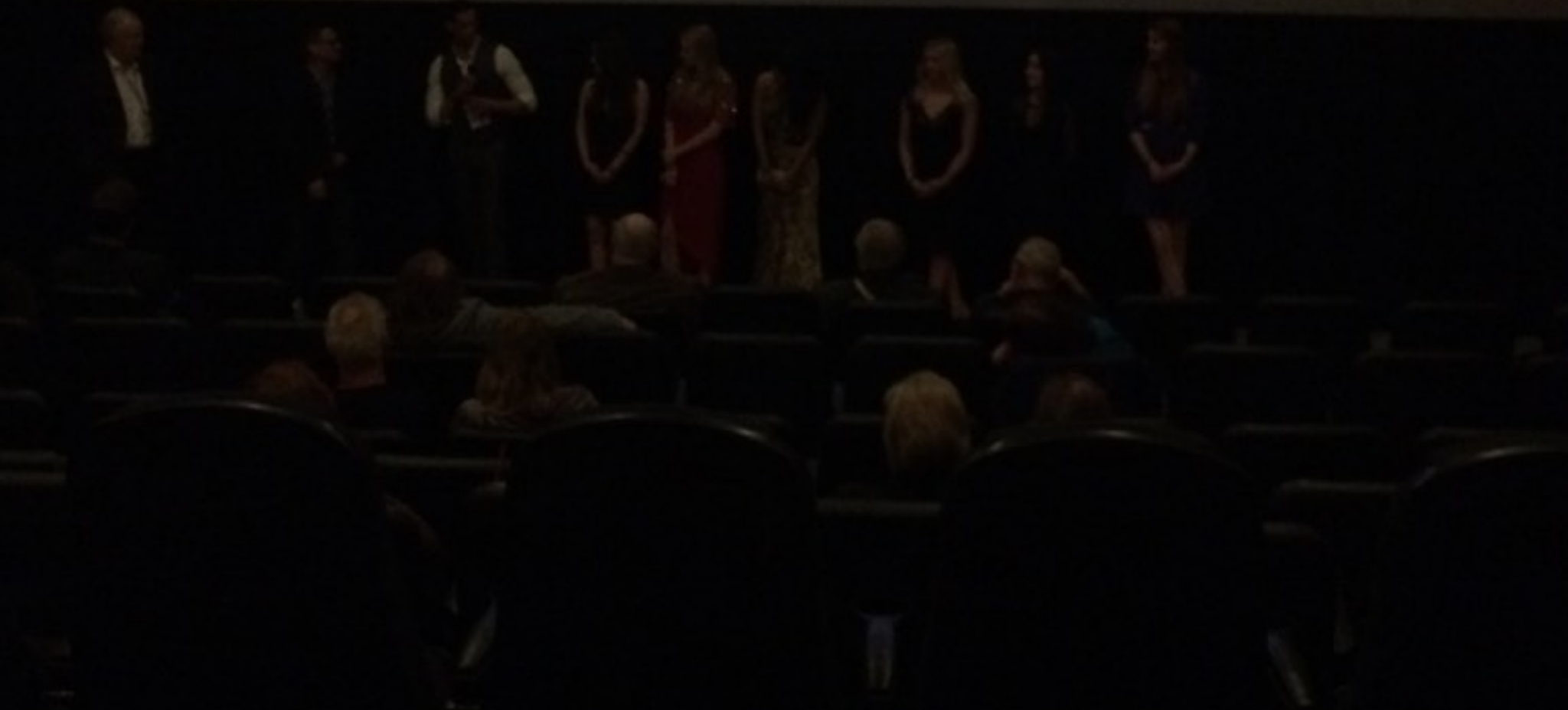
And that's what sells this to me. It's the story of a filmmaker making a movie with a motivation that he may not actually see himself as having. It's about the idea that shooting a doc isn't where the film is made: the film is made on reflection of the footage. Tom ignores what he set out to do and created something much more powerful, much more personal, and much more engaging. It's so thorough, but at the time, it never seems to hang up on the details.

If there's one segment of glossing it's Tom's breakup with Amanda. We're told it happens, we're given a touch of Tom's reaction, and that's it. Break-ups such, and documenting them is hell, and it felt like there was something we missed as far as what happened between them. Admittedly, Tom isn't the only one involved, and it wouldn't necessarily be fair to present someone else's dirty laundry on screen.

This is a documentary that forces you to watch it's development. The shooting of the original footage is more of a conceptual pitch than an actual doc, and as you watch it, what you're seeing is the development of the project. We're not really shown the doc that Tom was making; we're shown Tom making the doc, and since he didn't have his thesis, we get a sort of bouncing idea that develops, and it was marvelous to see wheels turning (and, as a cinematic masochist, I loved seeing Tom having to face up to his fuck ups)

The music of Amanda Medica and Speed Orange is actually pretty good. Amanda's a good songwriter and Speed Orange is a power-pop combo that reminded me of Dogs Die In Hot Cars or The Smithereens. Either of those acts would make for a great documentary on their own, but *How to Lose Jobs and Alienate Girl-friends* isn't a doc about them; it's about what you find when you obsess in many directions at once, and especially about your own failings.

In The Company of Women



A DARK NIGHT, A POWERFUL PERFORMANCE

Acting. it's not easy. Acting is an art that is not only difficult to perfect, but also nearly impossible to fake, which is odd as it's merely the art of faking things in the right direction.

In the Company of Women is, without doubt, the finest example of a single actor conquering a film while also not completely devaluing the performances of the other people on the screen. It's so difficult, but Paul Eenhoorn manages to do that very strange task.

Eenhoorn plays the role of Peter Boyle, a guy who wants nothing more than to meet a woman who he can build something with. We meet an escort, a male, who is forced to do one last job before he's forced out of the city by his broker. At first,

PAUL EENHOORN

*“It’s been so long
since we shot it, it
hit me like it was
brand new. I
cried.”*

our escort is not interested, he only works with women, but in the end, he takes twenty grand to help start his new life, and tries to teach Peter what it takes to catch the eye of a woman. The script and dialogue is clean and smart, and the production is beyond competent, but Eenhoorn is so good, he catches the eye every moment he’s on-screen. Perhaps the best example of that is his mock debate with the escort over monogamy v. polyamory. The escort talks and delivers his portion with pointed power and intelligence, but also a swagger that you can tell actor Shoji Silver is having a bit too much fun playing the swains of *The Escort*. Peter’s delivery of his argument in favor of monogamy is so intelligent and powerful, you’re watching *The Escort* deliver his bit and you’re just waiting until Peter will pounce and drop mad science on the chump. That’s the power of Paul Eenhoorn’s performance.

They encounter several women who provide differing views on the world of dating. The women are, in a way, window-dressing. They are the focus of Peter’s attention and intentions, but they also only play the role of the desired. As the film moves forward, we realize that the idea of a woman to be with is what Peter is trying to find, and in a way that’s what is never going to be found. He could probably land a woman, but he’ll never be able to BE with a woman. Not anymore. We discover this along with *The Escort*, and it becomes sadder and sadder.

There are a few hiccups, the production was solid, though some of the handheld extreme close-up shooting was a bit distracting, but overall, it was a very very good film. It wasn’t all Eenhoorn, but he was a shining star in the film.



C H I L D R E N O F T H E
A R C T I C

A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT BARROW, ALASKA

CHILDREN OF THE ARCTIC

Directed

Edited

*and Cinematography by Nick
Brandestini*

You can not determine the state of a place by the images of its people. At the same time, you must take into account the imagery of the place itself. Barrow, Alaska, at the extreme north of Alaska, is a city traditionally inhabited by the Inupiat people. There are about four thousand people living there, more than 300 miles into the Arctic Circle. The young people of Barrow are a fascinating lens through which to view the village, especially those young people who want to get out.

And there's the tension of life within Barrow, and that's the focus of the documentary *Children of the Arctic*.

It is a beautiful place, but every one of the young people we follow wants to get out, in one form or another. We have Josiah and Flora, a young couple who are just graduated and heading off to college. There's Maaya, who is half-Eskimo and not Inupiat, who wants nothing more than to get out of Barrow and go to Arizona. There's Josiah's brother Samuel, and Ace Edwards, the achiever of his class. The crew is interesting, but by featuring these individuals, the film somewhat limits our experience of the city, which is both a positive and a negative. The positive is that we experience the city through the eyes of young people who hopes and dreams, but at the same time, we catch only glimpses of those who have CHOSEN to remain in Barrow.

Well, at least at first.

The people of Barrow participate in what they call their Culture - the traditional Inupiat way of life. They don't do it entirely in the traditional ways, but they still hunt whale, caribou, seals, wolverines, and walrus. The scenes of the hunts are limited, but we get a look at the butchering of a whale, and of a couple of caribou, and that is actually what draws me into the most. It's not an overly grizzly doc, but the example is important, not only because it's a part of their culture, but because you need to understand the process to understand how it effects the way of life.

There are a few minor problems - there's a bit of scatter to the focus, and that hurts a bit, and when you're trying to connect with individuals on the screen, you need a little time, but at the same time, if you over-stay the natural length of your view, you're held a bit back. At times, it's both too lingering, and too fleet in it's approach. That's tough, but the power of the film is in the filming itself. Long shots, flying shots, and nature shooting all make visual impact, but in the end, it's stories about the people that are the focus.

The stars of the film are Maaya, something of an outsider who is a talented video artist, and Josiah and Samuel's apa, Simeon. He's AMAZINGLY fascinating! He is mostly used to show the continuity of culture to the younger generation, and he takes over the screen.

I am typing this review sitting next to the cousin of the featured characters, and she's giving me great insights not only into the film, but into the way of life in Barrow. Maybe that is the best part of seeing a doc like this at a festival: you can get closer into the meaning, the part that can't be captured. The film does a good job, but it goes into a few too many directions at once.



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MISS INDIA AMERICA

THERE IS A MOVEMENT RIGHT NOW THAT ECHOES THE BLAXPLOITATION CONCEPT OF THE 1970S. ETHNICALLY-TARGETED FILMS MADE BY FILMMAKERS OF VARIOUS ETHNICITIES ARE POPPING UP, SOMETIMES FINDING FOLLOWINGS IN MULTIPLEX SETTINGS. BOLLYWOOD FILMS HAVE FOUND A HOLD IN AMC THEATERS, AND THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PERSIAN FILMS HAVE EXPLODED. IT'S OUT OF THIS STREAM THAT RAVI KAPOOR'S *MISS INDIA AMERICA* EMERGES.

And it's really a fun little movie.

Lily Prasad is a hyper-driven over-achiever. She's much like Election's Elle Wood; she has to be the best, and she never allows herself to fail. She's played by the wonderful Tiya Sircar (The Internship) and while at times she is nothing but brutally focused and driven, she has the tinge of sarcasm and the



MISS INDIA AMERICA

Directed by Ravi Kapoor

Starring

Tiya Sircar

Hannah Simone

Kosha Patel

Meera Simhan

Bernard White

kind of timing that makes her so entertaining.

After her boyfriend puts their relationship on a break after meeting a beauty queen, Lily decides to enter the Miss India Golden State pageant as a way to win her man back. She railroads her best friend into helping turn her into the kind of contestant who can win.


The kind of contestant that is personified by Sonia Neilson, played by the absolutely magnetic Hannah Simone. She's beautiful, smart, talented, and exactly the kind of competitor that wins these sort of things.

The story moves with almost perfect timing. The contest film is always easy to pace, but here it's not nearly the story of a contest; it's the story of Lily working on herself, for ill at times.

Some of the acting was a bit pat. The perky girl is perky; the dumb girl is dumb. That's how it works. The actors were good, many of them having appeared on the show *Outsourced*, and the wonderful Meera Simhan was particularly awesome, but as sometimes happens, it felt like TV acting at times, which doesn't always work on the big screen. While Simone, Sircar, and Simhan, as well as the best friend played by Kosha Patel, are all excellent, but much of the secondary cast worked in a very simple vein.

The story is strong, and the crowd was really into it. The laughs were exactly where they were supposed to be, and that's key. It all unfolded brilliantly!

This will end up in regular theaters, and it's completely worth watching!



S W E D E N ' S
C O O L E S T
N A T I O N A L T E A M

AN UNFORGETTABLE PICTURE

MEMORY SPORT - THE SPORT OF THE FUTURE!

You can't argue with the competition documentary. There's a natural third act with the finals, and that makes the job of the director so much easier. Sweden's Coolest National Team has an added advantage - A Villain.

Before the start of *Sweden's Coolest National Team*, there was Memory Sport. In the early 1990s, Memory Sport was developed. It was about memory, and a series of competitions to see who can do things like memorize the most binary digits, and the order of cards in a shuffled deck. The 2012 World Championships are in London, and Sweden is a serious contender. The reigning Swedish National Memory Champion is Mattias Ribbing. He's good-looking, an author, and kinda an arrogant jerk. He's also a REALLY good memory player, and has some records to his name. There are two young competitors, Jonas von Essen and Marwin Wallonius, who are not even 20 yet and are doing incredible things, not the least of which is challenging all the records held by Mattias.

The film follows the team as they compete in the Swedish Nation and World Championships. Along the way, we see Mattias' arrogance and the humbleness (or maybe it's focus) of the New Turks.

We also see the amazing goofiness of the characters, and the ways in which they interact with the rest of the field.

While it's not a perfect documentary, there are a few moments where it feels like we're going over familiar ground, the characters captured are so thoroughly engaging. There's an awkwardness to Jonas that is so endearing that it makes you really want him to be the one who brings down Mattias, and as the film goes on, you see more and more of him as the star of the piece, and you fall in love with him because he's not a prick.

Over all, it's funny, it's smart, and it's a great film!