



KLAUS AT
GUNPOINT
FOUR

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**Comments? Submissions?
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Editorial - Christopher J Garcia

Dear God, this has been a strange summer! From politics to photography to pornography, everything has gotten a little weirder. That may well be why this year's crop of Summer Movies have been so... well, so summery. There have been bombs like *The Lone Ranger*, and unexpected hits, but mostly, it's been weird. I've got my faves, *Star Trek* being one of them, and I'm sure you do, too. So, I'll just let Twitter deal with that!

This issue's got a lot of stuff, which is part of why it's been so often delayed! I'm so happy to have the debut of Christian Fitzharris, a guy who's love for life has inspired me since High School. I could think of no better individual to review *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone*. We look at a staged reading and the 48 Hour Film Project. The meat of the issue is a look at some of the works of Mr. Kurt Kuenne.

We're going to be putting together a significant interview with Kurt for a future issue. The next two issues are going to be a little more free-form, though we'll be looking at Music Videos & Concert Films, the National Film Registry, and Genre Short Films!



Art from Mo Starkey

[Ayi Muallam-Conde](#) @ayimuallamconde

The Abyss + Transformers + Real Steel + Iron Man + Godzilla
+ Voltes V + The Iron Giant + Power Rangers + Perfect Storm
= Pacific Rim

#PacificRim

Shadi Petosky @shadipetosky

Actually watching Pacific Rim removed all of my criticisms of
Pacific Rim.

[Trish.W](#) @trishweeeee

People who are complaining that Pacific Rim is ridiculous.
Dudes, it's a movie about people fighting kaijus with giant
mechs.

Andrea L. Peterson @andrael

If you want Eva, watch Eva. If you want an entertaining film
about robots punching monsters to cheesy power chords,
watch Pacific Rim.

[Patton Oswalt](#) @pattonoswalt

9 Jul

Saw PACIFIC RIM earlier today. It's all right if you're into
movies that are awesome and gut-punch you with brilliance.

Mike Perschon @SteamScholar

I loved Pacific Rim, but I still like the '90s Gamera movies'
battle scenes better. And Gojira remains the greatest kaiju
eiga.

Mind The Mainstream - #TwitterReviews

[Shelby Cooke](#) @shelby_cooke

Channing Tatum didn't take his shirt off in White House down.
I was extremely upset.

[Ryan Sandoval](#) @ryandsandoval

insider tip on "White House Down" sequel: "White House Up - terrorists attach balloons to historic building, sending it to deadly heights"

[Adedoyin](#) @lekdo

"@ScarletVirgin: Jamie Foxx was a joke of a President. No Charisma at all. He was just concerned with making us laugh." White house down?

Jeff Schwartz @jschwa7883

I couldn't believe Roger Ebert gave White House Down 2 thumbs up! Until I realized: Rigor Mortis

[Mono Bear](#) @stillmellow

Every time R. Emmerich, director of Independence Day & White House Down passes a monument, he makes exploding sounds.

Oliver Howlett @Howie1214

If you are planning on seeing white house down. Don't.

manishalakhe @manishalakhe

#MomReview #WhiteHouseDown send dad and teenagers to watch the destruction. Catch a few zzzs. Watch it on tv.

[Lacie Price](#) @raceylacie

That movie was funny, but there was no story line. And Santa threw the whole tub of popcorn at me! Haha #grownups2

Steven Herren @herrensw

Ok, just realized something...Where was Rob Schnieder in #GrownUps2?? Too busy laughing to notice his absence

Not Not Peter @peterock141979

Violence against Zimmerman isn't the answer. However, he should be forced to watch #GrownUps2. #justice

[ConvictedCinephiles](#) @ConvictedCinema

The fact that #grownups2 is going to beat #PacificRim at the box office is proof this world is going to hell #nojustice

[Terry Woods](#) @mrpenisbottom

You people disgust me. Seriously can't believe I'm part of this human race. It's a great injustice that #GrownUps2 is beating #PacificRim

★(h@y!e@)★ @BuchanHaylee

Soo what's the point in putting Taylor Lautner in a movie whenever he doesn't take his shirt off? That's dumb. #GrownUps2

[Rich Sloma](#) @RichSloma

It took 20 years, but Shaq can finally act. #grownups2

Mind The Mainstream - #TwitterReviews

[Hey There...](#) @DopeDrizzyBiebs
#FruitvaleStation I think this movie theater is racist, they're showing this movie in a nasty ass, smelly ass theater.

[Jessica Ramsay](#) @JessicaRamsay
#FruitvaleStation is the saddest movie. But it's a good one.

[Shawn Cisero The II](#) @ShawnCiseroJr
I can't even talk, just contemplate. With all the current events today it just hits hard. #FruitvaleStation made my summer

Jason Maclovio @JaeSweet510
Bout to watch #FruitvaleStation pray that I dont see a cop on the way out of the theater!

[Mr.HNIC](#) @D_Wood87
I'm tempted to see #fruitvalestation but at the end of the day I wish more movies had positive portrayals of African American life.

[ThatGirlAtTheParty](#) @tgatp
My cousin was #michaelstewart murdered by transit police 26-yrs before #OscarGrant. This needs to stop. #FruitvaleStation #JusticeForTrayvon

Mind The Mainstream - #TwitterReviews

REVIEWED - THE INCREDIBLE
BURT WONDERSTONE
BY CHRISTIAN FITZHARRIS

This film directing debut by Don Scardino must have been a big opportunity for this well established television director. The casting is impeccable with Steve Carell, Steve Buscemi, Jim Carey, Olivia Wilde, James Gandolfini, and the respected Alan Arkin. The story claims to revolve around two magicians (Carell and Buscemi) in Las Vegas fighting to stay at the top, while an up and coming magician provocateur (Carey) is nipping at their heels and wants to take their spot on the Las Vegas Strip. Burt Wonderstone (Carell) digs deep within himself to save his career and his lifelong friendship with his show partner, Anton Marvelton (Buscemi). Carell is predictably smarmy and perfectly suited for this role. He accurately satires the ego and attitude of many “legends” of the Strip and he’s easy to watch while doing it. (To show the importance of casting, if this film was made with Will Ferrell instead of Steve Carell, I most likely would not be writing this review because it would have been just another Will Ferrell movie that happens to have magic as its topic.) Unlike Sir Anthony Hopkins in the 1978 film, “*Magic*” directed by Sir Richard Attenborough, Steve Carell actually performs sleight of hand, and actual magic. Though Hopkins claims he learned magic and ventriloquism in six weeks he does little magic in the film and even less ventriloquism since all of “Fats” lines are over dubbed in post. Steve Buscemi is consistent with the ease of which he endlessly delivers interesting likable characters in every film he does. Your time will be well rewarded if you just watch him alone onstage for the scenes of their show in Vegas. Light, easy, fun character work that feels almost like you are in on the joke with him. Olivia Wilde is great as, “Jane” the love interest/ behind the scenes girl who is out for a paycheck in show business, but secretly does magic on her own. Jim Carey is obviously having fun with his character, “Steve Gray” the David Blaine meets Criss Angel amalgam.

If you heard that there was a movie coming out starring Jim Carey and Steve Carell skewering magic and the Las Vegas Strip, I think the bar is raised pretty high. And this, I believe is one of the main reasons why many

didn't get what they wanted from it. I had at least four, non-entertainment industry people say they paid money to see it in the theater and they hated it. (I knew I'd like it because it revolved around a lot of the world I've lived in for the past thirty years.) The rest of the cast does a respectable job, but the big laughs that were expected weren't delivered in the end. People want funny parts in the trailers and bigger surprise belly laughs throughout the film. It is hard to live up to that ideal a lot of times, but the cast and topics in this film were more than sufficient to deliver up to the moviegoer's highest expectations. I'm not sure of this movie's lack of popularity is due to the subject of the film were more than sufficient to deliver up to the moviegoer's highest expectation. I began writing this review judgmental of Jim Carey, but upon further viewing, I think that he did the best he could. The sleeping on hot coals scene is hysterical and the drilling a hole in his head scene is committed to in the utmost. His commitment is always one hundred percent. I can't blame him or the other cast members. Sadly, I think the only component left to place blame upon is the topic of the film itself. Being a lover of magic for over thirty years and a professional comedian for over twenty years, it hurts me to admit that, yes; magic may not be a big enough draw for the money paying public in 2013. Whether it is misinformation, lack of understanding, or just plain disinterest in the topic of magic itself, apparently magic is not a firm enough stronghold to cement the backbone of this film. Each time I rewatch this movie, I find new things, which I like about it. And yet, the ticket sales don't lie. Twenty seven million dollar worldwide. The lowest earner for Carell or Carey individually! The anchor must be the topic of the film itself. Perhaps, if they skewered *American Idol* instead the numbers would have been better.

In addition....

The Real Hope for Humanity and Art is concealed within, "*The Incredible BURT WONDERSTONE!*"!

Let it be known that I'm biased against reality television. I have made my living as an entertainer for over twenty years. I am aptly appropriated or placed to be in a position to analyze this film on all sides. I've practiced magic for over thirty years. I've performed on the Las Vegas strip and been close to magicians and rivals of the people satired in this film. I continue to hold magic close to my heart as a viable, dynamic art that is open to growing with the future or being respected from the past. I've performed on cruise ships with magicians and great ventriloquists. And I've toured as a featured performer doing magic show after show on tour with a company mocked in this film (Cirque du Soleil a.k.a "Cirque du So Lame") Under the auspices of being aptly equipped to comment on this film, I was in attendance of the last complete show by Siegfried and Roy at The Mirage in 2005. At that time, another magician told me that I

should go see their show. His exact words were, "They will perform until they die." Since Burt and Anton's characters are based on the relationship of these two greatly respected magicians, I hold that in view as well.

Attention spans changed with MTV. We lost guitar solos in heavy metal and meticulous step-by-step story development. What we gained was fast editing, shorter attention spans, and the groundwork laid for David Blaine and Criss Angel. Both Angel and Blaine grew up as earnest nerds of magic, who have loved it from the beginning. But they wanted to make magic "cool" and this has been a refreshing wave over magic. It was needed and welcomed openly by the magic community by the youth especially. They brought magic to the streets and the people in an unpretentious way that was packaged in a way that no one had done before. One magician delivered his magic in a mystic god like psychologically shattering style, David Blaine, and the people ate it up with shovels. He hit the common public on the streets without a cover fee and rocked their worlds on the most base level, catching their reactions, and marketing them to the fullest. The other, Criss Angel, hit the television schedule and brought edgy rock 'n roll television magic to the edge of what's acceptable or allowed on television. Both pushed the envelope on multiple levels and reaped the rewards of energizing an ancient art that could have been relegated to the armoires of history. Both of these magicians, Criss Angel and David Blaine, are summed up in the personage of Jim Carey's "Steve Gray". Except for the fact that most of what this character does is more than half *Jackass* and shock value and not artistic skill developed through years, if not decades of skill and practice.

One quarter magic, seventy percent *Jackass*. The basis of reality television is the audience laughing at the participant rather than with them. The real sub story of this film is not Burt Wonderstone "finding" himself, but is actually what will win in entertainment in the long run. Reality television or the skills and art of magic? While reality television has lasted, I still hold out hope for the Burt Wonderstone's of the world. People who practice a skill for years, decades, and lifetimes and give their talents to those who can't work such wonders as make a coin appear from a child's ear. But reality tv will not go quietly. I was moments away from winning ten thousand dollars on a reality television show.

I was performing an act that had done command performances for royalty and was a respected variety arts staple. I lost to a guy who stuck a bunch of firecrackers to his chest and lit them on fire. Pauli Shore said the act was "tired". I'll repeat that for those not hip to the absurd. PAULY SHORE called this respected act tired. The audience chortled gleefully at "The Weasel" and I crawled back to the hotel to replenish my soul in the writings of Kerouac and Hemmingway. Papa, please wash away the filth. My point is that this film pits this battle right in front of our noses, but draws no attention to the fact. Subtle and dubious indeed.

THE 48 HOUR FILM PROJECT
SAN FRANCISCO
BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

For the first time ever, I'd been asked to serve on a jury.

That's right, I've never been on Jury Duty, so when the good folks from the 48 Hour Film Project in San Francisco asked if I'd be interested in being one of the jurors, I was exceptionally excited. I'd participated in the 48 Film Project back in 2005 and 2006, winning Best Screenplay in 2006 with Steve Sprinkles, Jason Schachat, and Justin Torres for *Not Just Any Body*. It was a lot of fun, and I was glad to be involved again since I've slipped out of actually making films.

So, the premise of the 48 Hour Film Project is pretty simple: you have 48 hours to make a short film. To make sure you don't just make a movie over a period of years and then submit it, they give you 4 elements: a genre, a prop (This year, a Sno-Globe), a character (This Year: a Teacher named Matthew or Marilyn Parafino), and a line of dialogue ("I don't think you're supposed to hold it like that.") All the competitors gather and are awarded their pieces and then are off to make their movies. I've seen a great many of these come across my eyes during Cinequest short selection, and many of them have had serious problems; both technical and storywise. I had an idea of what I'd be looking at when I signed on.

And, of course, I was wrong.

The crop of short films I was asked to view were almost entirely great. Hardly any of the technical problems or poor acting that marked so many of the others I've seen over the years. Films were of a high quality, the acting was especially good, and the writing was far less gimmicky than I was expecting. When you're given so many elements, the tendency is towards gimmickry, and it takes confidence to over-come that instinct.

Judging happened a few days ahead of the final screening at the Delancy Street Screening Room; a location I'd never been to but turned out to be quite lovely and comfortable for a screening that size. As a setting for 48 Hour Film Project, it allowed for a

closeness between the audience and the films, as well as having clean projection and decent sound. The method for the actual screening was smart - you'd get to watch a movie, then you'd get a brief talk with the team that made the film, and us judges would say a few words to the team. This gave me a chance to make some jokes while talking about the movies, which is always fun!

The films? Awesome. I shall highlight my personal Top-Five...

Detention by Moderate Hike Production

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yvt9YplhMVw>

Animation is a tricky thing to attempt in 48s, no doubt. In this one, the film is simple animation, no in-betweens, which allows individual images to land with impact. The story is of the *Twilight Zone* variety. A girl is missing, a pair of young girls are taking flyers around to the houses trying to find her. While passing the house of one of the girl's former English teacher, the girl's hat is seen, and then the strangeness begins.

This was a beautiful use of the required prop, it formed a large part of the story, actually providing the entire basis for the turn of the story. It is a stronger film for going so directly into the Prop. It couldn't have happened with a live action film in such a short timeframe. It was fun, and dark, and incredibly well-made. The sound design was great, in fact winning the Jury Award for Best Sound Design.

The real fun was the script. As the two young girls are walking around showing the flyers around, they're talking about school, the most banal kind of talk that we associate with school girls. It's so epically real, and then the action changes and it's done. Well-done, in fact.

May-December by It Donned on Me

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_R7yVjrZjo

There are few psychologist jokes that don't work, and while this wasn't one strictly speaking, it certainly falls into the same category. Here, we see a young man visiting a relationship coach, Marilyn Parifano, to work towards getting himself a girlfriend. He's a freak, no ability to make social connections, and it ends up being a kind of cute little story that gets really brutally dark on the way.

The acting here is outstanding. Johanna Mattox as Marilyn played so well against the weird, but growing young man, played by Willy Appelman. Both were up for the Best Acting Award, and Appelman won it. He really provided both over-the-topness, and grew in a way that made the film both believable and hilarious. His delivery nailed it every time.

And part of the reason both actors did so well was they

had a script that allowed them to toss lines like “I broke it with my mouth!” The scenes were smartly paced and the interactions between the actors were simple, but both took every advantage they could. A film so simply shot was so smartly written and acted that you’d be hard-pressed to notice that fact.

Pick-up Artist by Chinese Takeout

Animation again, though this time with in-betweens. It’s a wonderful story. A pair of Sno-Globes, one featuring a neurotic penguin and the other a cool Bear Wearing Sunglasses, are on a shelf and folks are picking up and shaking the Bear and nothing with the penguin. The character design was great, with the dialogue between the two characters really funny. My favorite line, “Eskimos have 300 words for snow, but only one for winner, and that’s your middle name!” has made its way into my regular vocabulary.

This is a lovely little film, a smart animation made for adults. It’s funny, moves along at a brilliant pace, and has a cool bear in sunglasses. What could be better?

Nothing Funny About A Clown in Love by Chronosynclastic Infundibulum

I watch hundreds of shorts a year, and if I see five as awesome as *Nothing Funny About A Clown in Love*, it’s a good year. This was one of the best shorts of it’s kind. It’s genre was drama, and in structure, it was a complete and total drama, though the way the team went about it was comedic and brilliant.

The story is of a young man who is coming off a bender and goes for a walk, where everything reminds him of his lost love and previous life. A life as a clown. His lady love, Teaching Clown Marilyn Parifano, is adorable and while she plays up the stage crying and such, she’s brilliant.

In the end, after a disturbing discovery, our young man abandons his clown persona and goes on his bender, or so we are led to believe. Along the way, we see some great comedy gags, and some really touching clown-on-clown love.

And in the end, it’s about how much we tie our identities into our relationships, and even moreso, about how we have to rediscover what is most true about ourselves when we lose them. Playing for comedy within a traditional drama structure is ballsy, and *Nothing Funny About a Clown in Love* does it so well. I was extremely moved by the performances, and the writing was top-notch. This is the kind of film that I want to see more of. It took home Best Director, but was in the running for a total of 7 awards.

Snow in the City by Weird and Grimy

The most beautiful films are often the quietest. They don't necessarily take loud steps, but small steps that somehow transport them across great distances. Nuance and implication, trust in the audience to build around the framework a filmmaker presents, these are such important factors. *Snow in the City* does nothing so well as let the characters tell pieces of a story. There is a conflict that is being confronted, but only after a reintroduction. Matthew has stayed behind where once, fifteen years ago, he and Katie were deeply involved. She moved to Philly and the two haven't met since. She's back on vacation. He runs into her on her last night in town and they reconnect over roller skating and a forty shared sitting on the bumper of his car. The film ends without fireworks, though not without some confrontation, and with a message of... well, hope might be too strong a word.

The script is crystal brilliance. It hints, it points us towards ideas, and lets us roam with it. The acting, though, is probably the best you'll ever see in a short made in less than two days. There are perfect pauses, glances, even a smile or two, that change the entire emotional direction of the film. Subtlety and nuance all over the place. They split when they were 16, and now at 31, they are re-engaging for the first time and there's an awkward phase, a phase where it's 15 years ago again, and then a phase where they're in the middle of those 15 years. It's a time travel picture in a way. They're traveling through their relationship, their entire relationship, for the first time. It's a masterpiece made possible by great direction and writing intersecting with amazing acting. There's no surprise in the fact that it won Best Film, Best Actress, Best Screenplay, and Best Editing.



A STAGED READING OF
A COMPUTER SIMULATION OF
GOD - CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

Often, you are at a crossroads. You stand somewhere and someone comes to you, many someones, and they are connected by something deeper than you'd expect, and no one had any idea that it was there, and when it is discovered, it all makes sense.

This happens to me frequently. I find myself encountering people and events which are tied to many areas of my life. Such happened with the staged reading of *A Computer Simulation of God* held on June 23rd at the Computer History Museum.

The staged reading was the premiere of David Voda's script. Voda is a screenwriter and producer whose film *The Secretary* won acclaim at festivals. I'd never heard of his work before reading about the reading. What can I say, I'm not as tied in as much as I'd like. As a younger gentleman in Pittsburgh, he had worked with computers. This was an earlier time, when mainframes like the IBM 360 and minicomputers like Digital Equipment Corporation's PDP-series of computers ruled the pre-PC world. This was the world in which *A Computer Simulation of God* was set. A world which I have been witnessing from afar for almost 15 years.

As a curator at the Computer History Museum, I've been working with the relics of the 1960s computing scene for almost fifteen years. I've encountered not only the machines, but the ephemera, the documentation, the software, and especially the people who defined this era. While my own expertise in the area of computers is the 1970s-early 90s, it is this era of skinny ties and pressed white shirts feeding punched cards and paper tape into hulking machines that I've worked documenting for most of my career. It is this setting, or more precisely, in a Catholic school in Pittsburgh, that young Ray Novak (read by Bo Krucik) lives out his days. It seems he has been bound for the seminary since birth, but he is a curious type; a young man who is obsessed with visions of technology, both real and imagined. He is obsessed with a novel,

a science fiction novel in fact, that details a Universe where a computer is the most powerful being of all. He is lead by these visions of computation to the lab of Dr. Weisman (Johnny Gilligan), who runs the computer lab at the local University. He is also a part of various secrets, including the fact that he writes science fiction for companies such as Ace.

If there is an area I have studied more than computers, it is science fiction. I've been a fan since birth, and have been luckily enough to meet and befriend a number of the writers of the 1960s through to today. I know many Professors of various types who have lived a pair of lives: one as a professional and one as a writer of SciFi. Norbert Wiener, the founder of the Cybernetics, wrote under the name W. Norbert, and John Pierce, the man who named the Transistor and arguably the first name in the history of Computer Music, wrote as J.J. Coupling. Of course, for ever Wiener and Coupling there are folks like Asimov or Rudy Rucker who are out and proud with their SF writing while still making impressions on academia.

The story begins with a car accident in which Ray's father is injured and ends up in a vegetative state. While Ray is dealing with this, he is also discovering computers. It is the collision between his fascination with electronic computing and his processing of his grief for his plateauing father. It is out of this combination that Ray designs a program that is *A Computer Simulation of God*. He enters the catechism into the computer and it begins to answer questions as if it were God.

Naturally, this does not go over well with the Powers that be of the Catholic school.

Few realise how often computers have been used by religious institutions. In ancient times, analog contraptions were used to determine the dates for moveable feasts such as Easter. The UNIVAC computer was used to create the *Complete Concordance of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. By the 1960s, there were many Catholic universities beginning to teach computing, which makes sense. The Church is often seen as being against technological advance, but at times the Catholic Church has done much to advance science, and computers are no exception.

This is not the only story told in script. In fact, the way the reading was broken up by an intermission divided the story into two genres: family drama to begin, science fiction to finish. In the early portion, Susan Monson, who I've seen in many productions over the years, brought a wonderful sense of determination, resolve, and flat-out exasperation, to playing Helen Novak. Her take on the character provided much of the heart of the first half of the reading. Ray couldn't actually provide that sense as he was in the midst of discovering the world of technology. His sister Dot, read by Ashley Rae, is dealign with her own life and love and the difficulties of her father's condition all at the same time. Her read on Dot is a bit spread, and her interactions with Tommy (Ian Paterson) are at times charmingly sweet and bitterly pained. She was well-cast, no doubt.

In the second half, we discover that this is not only a familial drama, but a science fiction story: a tale of the effect of a change in the level of technology compared to what is actually available. This is the kind of science fiction that is not outer space aliens and blast-

ers, but a science fiction of ideas, application. The program Ray creates is basically a Chatbot, closely related to ELIZA, a computer simulation of a psychotherapist's technique designed in the 1960s by Dr. Joseph Weizenbaum. The application to the catechism is novel, and a staple of SciFi themes. Take a technology that exists, apply it to an area where it had never existed before and BAM! An excellent example of this is Arthur C. Clarke's *Nine Billion Names for God*, in which

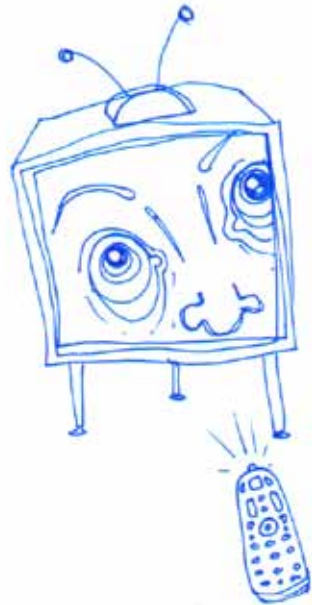


a computer is placed to a Buddhist temple's long-standing task of recording all the possible names for God.

And *A Computer Simulation of God* compares favorably with Clarke's work. It is a strong call for reason and faith to interact, and how each can provide solace. That is not exactly the message of the piece, but it hit me in that way. I've studied religion, have a degree in Comparative Religion, and I can see that we look towards mysteries for our comfort. Computers are a form of mystery, or at least they were in the 1960s, and I can understand how the unquestionable logic of the machine when seen in contrast of what the rest of the world presents, could provide the ultimate form of solace for one walking through the valleys of pain.

The script is a tough stagey, though a staged reading lends itself to the delivery of material in a stagey way. The actors read with wonderful emotion and came through with the messages of the script underlined very well indeed. The material presented, which I felt an easy connection and appreciation for, is well-researched and the accuracy of the era is remarkable, but the emotional content is just as accurate, and that is every bit as important.

Perhaps there is a force that draws like minds towards material that goes deep into their soul unconsciously. There is no other person I can think of who had as many points of contact, both concrete and conceptual, with the material that is found in *A Computer Simulation of God*. On the other hand, even without that connection, it is a remarkable piece of writing. It has won acclaim in screenwriting competitions, understandably, and is currently being produced for the screen by Smokey Pictures. When it finally makes its way to the screen, see it. It will raise questions and entertain, and ultimately that is the outcome of the best films.



FEATURED FILMMAKER
KURT KUENNE
INTRO BY CHRIS GARCIA

The first I heard of Kurt Kuenne was in a film he did not direct. At the first Cinequest I was a part of, the film *Preston Tylk*, later called *The Bad Seed*, was shown. It's a decent movie, Luke Wilson does a really good job in it, but to me, it was the moody cinematography and the powerful ebb-and-flow of the music. The score went from intense to gentle, swung between the kind of music you' hear in a late Noir to the impacting sort of Goldsmith stuff that always moves me. It's an awesome score, one of those that stands up even without the film. It's a great work and it was composed by Mr. Kurt Kuenne.

In a way, I consider Kurt Kuenne to be the finest filmmaker who has ever been associated with Cinequest. He's shown several films; features and shorts, narratives and documentaries. He's an audience favorite, and that shouldn't be ay surprise: he's a local boy! Raised in beautiful San Jose, California. Much like M. Night Shaymalan, at age 7 Kurt started to make Super8 movies. After graduating high school, he did a bit of time at DeAnza College, the community college that has what is easily the best film program in the Bay Area. Kurt then headed on to USC, where he was highly successful, even earning the Harold Lloyd Editing scholarship. He made the film *Remembrances*, which received a lot of attention and earned him a place in Telluride's The Fimmakers of Tomorrow program in the 1993 festival.

Kuenne's first feature was *Scrapbook*. He edited, scored, directed, and produced *Scrapbook*, a film that played several festivals. Lael Lowenstein of *Variety* said *Scrapbook* was "Inspired. This arresting indie takes familiar themes and handles them in fresh, inventive ways."

Something I had no idea existed until I started down the process of creating this issue was Kuenne's new score for the legendary silent *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It's an incredible interpretation, one of the most impressive new scores I've heard for any silent film. It's available on the Image Entertainment's 2000 DVD of *Cyrano* and is well worth seeking out.

Kurt Kuenne: Documentarian. He directed two very different feature documentaries. The first was *Drive-In Movie Memories*. Based

on the book by Don and Susan Sanders, it's a look at the drive-in; that soon to be lost relic of the peak of American film consumption. We look at it slightly more in depth later, but it is a wonderful film for those of us old enough to remember piling into the station wagon to watch *Star Wars* in the open air.

The other Doc was *Dear Zachary*.

The film was created as a document of Kuenne's friend Andrew Bagby, who had appeared in many of Kurt's movies in their youth. Following his murder by his former girlfriend, Kuenne began working on the documentary as a letter to Bagby's son Zachary, where he used footage from their films and interviews with Bagby's parents. Sadly, Bagby's ex ended up released from custody and killed young Zachary, as well as killing herself, in the Atlantic Ocean. The film is heart-breaking, the kind of work that lingers in the air of any room it's just screened in. It is not just the emotional impact of the story on the real humans who are detailed, but the editing is so precise, at times cut with the kind of rapidity of Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike*, and at other times, it lingers. Few other editors understand the power of variation as well as Kurt Kuenne, and he uses it beautifully in *Dear Zachary*. Eventually, the film got a limited release, and later was shown on MSNBC. It's easily the mod emotional documentary of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Where I really became a fan of Kurt Kuenne's work was in the world of *Rent-A-Person*. Starting with *Rent-A-Person*, a short starring James Haven, who happens to be Angelina Jolie's brother. It's a wonderful film, a musical shot in glorious black-and-white. He followed that short up with another set in the same universe called *Validation*. It's become a favorite on YouTube and is one of the best shorts of the last decade. Starring TJ Thyne of *Bones* as a parking validation guy, it's another beautiful black-and-white short. Two other films, the adorable *The Phone Book* and the photo-based *Slow*, the Kuenneverse gave viewers a wonderful view into a world a bit more magical than our own.

Kuenne's feature film *Shuffle* also stars TJ Thyne and is, perhaps, the most Capra-esque time-travel feature I've ever seen. Touching and joyous and produced with a pin-point precision, *Shuffle* plays in magnificent black-and-white without feeling gimmicky, something that has been happening more and more. Here, the story is the king, and Kuenne's direction is as solid as you'll ever find.

Following are a few views of Kurt Kuenne's works. We'll have an interview with Kurt and another article or two on him in the pre-Cinequest issue set for February, and of course, as soon as we are gifted with another of Kurt's spectacular works, we'll give y'all every review we can!

DRIVE-IN MOVIE MEMORIES
REVIEWED BY - CHRISTOPHER
J GARCIA

Review first Appeared on FanboyPlanet.com

As usual, Cinequest knocked loose a few things that had been rattling around my brain. One of which was the memory of a documentary I had seen a couple years back directed by Kurt Kuenne (*Rent-A-Person*) called *Drive-In Movie Memories*. I ran into Kurt and asked for a screener so I could rewatch the film that I remember as one of my favorite docs of the last two years. I'm glad he remembered to bring it for me because this is one of those docs that both manages to do the documenting of reality right while not skimping on making a nice piece of innovation.

The drive-in is a personal favorite of mine. I grew up attending the Winchester Drive-in at least once a week, playing on the horsie swings and watching films like *Star Wars*, *9 to 5*, and *ET*. I can remember the taste of snack bar hamburgers perfectly. This doc was right in my kitchen, but it went well beyond my expectations the first time I saw in 2002, and even beyond those on my second viewing last week.

Though based on the books of Don and Susan Sanders, *Drive-In Movie Memories* is made amazing by the way Kuenne attacks the subject with a heavy dose of original snap shots and an almost Eisensteinian love of the fact cut. There must be at least a thousand photographs used and a ton of old pre-show and intermission trailers. The fast break action between the pictures and the rapid fire editing only adds to the feeling that the drive-in was a lively place, not just another "hard top" where people went to sit and actually watch the movies. There is a great pre-movie piece, obviously done for regular sit-down theatres in the early 1960s where a spokesman tells kids to keep it silent during the entire picture. This section, with its single camera position and the barren background as the speaker warns us of the trouble of youngsters at the movies, juxtaposed with the Kuennian edit style, really plays up the differences.

As always, the sections on the failures of various drive-in owners was amazingly strong. The explorations of the various sound methods and weather deterrents may have been my favourite. There is an excellent section on carside air conditioners that would spew rats into your vehicle that just kicked my ass I was laughing so hard.

The interviews are amazing, as they hit a huge player (Leonard Maltin), a cult legend (John Bloom aka Joe Bob Briggs), a bevy of B-movie actors, American International studio head Samuel Z. Arkoff, and actor Barry Corbin, who was my personal favorite. This is a knowledgeable and interesting group, who entertain with smart anecdotes and give us the important info we require.

There is a great section on sex and the drive-in, where a woman who went to an ozoner to mess around with Elvis Presley recounts her experience. Kuenne uses an interesting technique where he sometimes allows several peoples voices to overlap, forming a confusing mass, but one where you can still pick out a single thread. It reminds me of a filmed version of early issues of *Wired* magazine.

Kurt Kuenne also has the distinction of being a first rate film composer, and the score does the work a huge amount of justice. From the very beginning, the orchestral score stirs up images of John Williams' great pieces for the films that would mark the end of the drive-in era.

Drive-ins died off due to the VCR, the multiplex, Cable TV, and Daylight Savings Time. Now that the last generation of regular drive-in kids are getting to the age of nostalgia, a piece like this is perfectly timed. Beautifully made, magnificently edited, and highly informative, *Drive-In Movie Memories* is well-worth seeking out. For more info, check out <http://www.americandrivemovie.com/>



RENT-A-PERSON REVIEW BY STEVE RHODES

Steve Rhodes reviews can be found at www.InternetReviews.com

So often a screenwriter has a good idea but one that just doesn't lend itself to being made into a feature-length motion picture. Nevertheless, they try to expand it to an hour and a half, destroying a nice concept in the process.

Writer, director and composer Kurt Kuenne's RENT-A-PERSON, on the other hand, takes a delicious little idea and milks it for all it's worth, which is twelve hilarious and imaginative minutes. And unlike most shorts, which stay one-note productions, Kuenne manages to squeeze a nice arc into his storyline.

Forget dot-coms. They are so yesterday. James Coleman, the Jeff Bezos of this tale, has a great gem of an idea, combining two of life's miseries into one synergistic success. Well-heeled commuters are stuck in life's slow lane on the highways due to the lack of a commuter buddy, while down-on-their-luck homeless have trouble making ends meet. Coleman decides all he needs to do is to sign up and clean up the homeless and turn them into Rent-A-Person employees, which will allow the nation's highfliers to fly down the freeways in the special high occupancy lanes. His piece de resistance is to equip his employees with mints and hand towels for the busy drivers they will accompany.

In no time, Coleman is named man of the year by Time Magazine and others. He's a celebrity in the business world and has more female groupies than a rock star. Since Kuenne is an excellent and prolific composer, you can expect to enjoy some wonderful songs and musical moments.

All does not stay well in Rent-A-Personland. The employees eventually revolt, leaving Coleman to find employment and happiness elsewhere. You, however, will find lots of happiness in Kuenne's little charmer of a story. And don't forget to keep an eye out for a Rent-A-Person. The idea remains a good one, even if this is a comedy.

RENT-A-PERSON runs 0:12. It is not rated but would be a G and would be acceptable for all ages.

The film was shown as part of San Jose's Cinequest Film Festival (www.Cinequest.org), which ran March 3-14, 2004.

VALIDATION
REVIEWED BY
PABLO VAZQUEZ

There are very few things that reinvigorate my faith in a medium. I usually am pretty content recognizing that most things are garbage and that every now and then I'll encounter some shining masterpiece. However, watching "Validation" honestly has to be an even rarer occasion, where I wasn't watching a masterpiece, but something that actually changed my opinion of a medium. Short film, when I first started getting into it, was exciting and fascinating to me. From the grotesque strangeness of Jan Švankmajer's "Food" to the mystical sensuality of Kenneth Anger's body of work, I delved in, drowning in the one thing that short film always exceeds at far better than other forms of cinema: Dragging my emotions and my passions and my reactions through the gutters and through the stars.

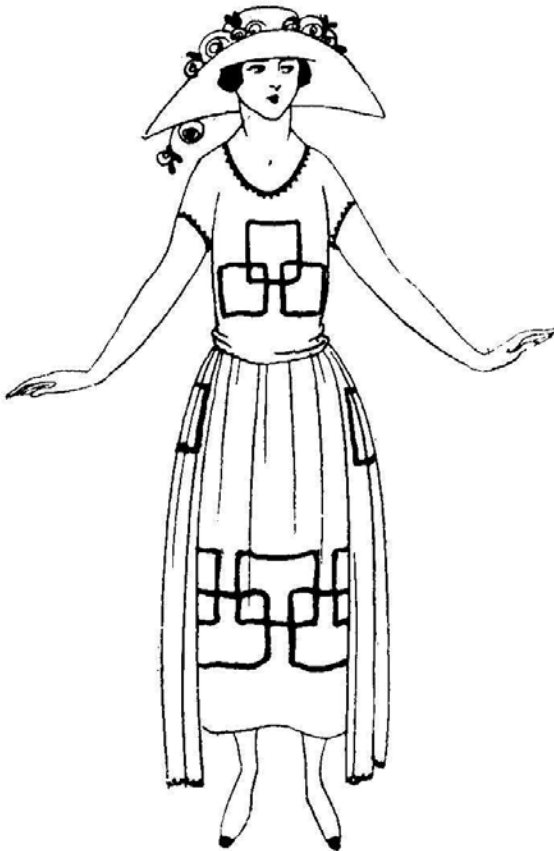
However, I became disillusioned with short film. Everything seemed a copy of a copy, an attempt to be stranger than the last guy or even outright boring. Hell, I even tried attending the local short film festivals to see if maybe I was missing something, but my curmudgeonly attitude was proven right time and time again. Short film had reached its stagnation point and, as such, I honestly stopped caring. Then, that strange wizard-jester of the fen world, Chris Garcia, threw me "Validation" when I offered to write a review and honestly, I put it off until last minute because of all the reasons listed above. However, dear reader, I was absolutely freaking wrong.

It's once in a blue moon in which I display my emotions at cinema and even less with short films nowadays, but "Validation", in its 15 or so minute glory, had me smiling from ear to ear, laughing, tearing up, rooting and cheering on characters, and feeling for them. I lost myself in this film and my emotions and my passions were no longer my own. This, absolutely, is the great and cherished sin of cinema. It is a simple and even ridiculous plot that drives "Validation" along, but it is the characters that make it. Short films are challenging, as they don't really allow for character development



in such short span of time, but that wasn't the point here. Yes, there's a message and it's a good one, but damn, I'm still smiling thinking of it. I particularly enjoyed the absurd amount of singing, the sets/locations chosen, and how vibrant and alive all of the characters seemed, even the depressing ones.

Go watch it if you want the wild ride and especially go watch it if you want one of those painful smiles. I like to go around masquerading as a pretentious prick when it comes to cinema, but really, I'm a big teddy bear for this sort of thing. As previously mentioned, things like Anger's work are far more up my alley than the feel-good short of the century, which this thing really is. I'm not saying it's a masterpiece that changes the medium forever, but it did make me want to start watching short films again and, for that alone, it deserves my praise and my recommendation. Also, it's the beauty of short film that, well, damn, everyone has 15 minutes at least to spare, especially for a little validation!



SHUFFLE

REVIEWED BY CHRIS GARCIA

What happens when we see the affect before we experience the cause? Can we live life out of order? Can we move like Billy Pilgrim, unstuck in time? This is the stuff of genuine science fiction, of novelists like Philip K. Dick, of screenwriters like Rian Johnson and, perhaps most pointedly, Rob Sirling. *Twilight Zone*, or perhaps *The Outer Limits*, might be a more appropriate comparator. The story of Kurt Kuenne's *Shuffle* is about a man, Lovell Milo (played by T.J. Thyne), who, not unlike like Vonnegut's unwitting time-travel Billiy Pilgrim or Rip Van Winkle, falls asleep and awakes at various points in his lifetime. He's a child one day, and then an old man. He has gaps in what he can remember and is trying to piece together memories of the lovely Grace. There are secrets, there are lacuna, there are impacts that we can only see played across Thyne's aging face.

And Thyne is a star here. He's always had a sort of charisma in ever role I've ever seen him in, but here it's as if he's tapped so deeply into his character that he has been thrown around a time stream himself, and Grace, played by Paula Rhodes in her adult form) is so incredible. The closest performance I can come up with to her take on Grace is that of Danish superstar Paprika Steen in her finest roles. She adds impact, and a bit of old spit-fire, to the film.

This is also a film that could easily have lived off of the production. The black-and-white cinematography owes much to Noir lighting. At times, I was reminded of the finest moments from *Citizen Kane*, with the high contrast shadows and the sfumado haze. It works so well and adds to the editing.

Shuffle's music, as should be expected from a film directed by a noted film composer, is excellent; it also doesn't hurt that Kurt wrote the music. He also shot it. This is a vision of one of film's leading lights, even if he doesn't have the exposure of the big names. He's producing works that will stand for a long time.

