



Klaus at Gunpoint 7

# Klaus at Gunpoint

December 2013

Issue 7

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## Contents

Page 3 - Editorial by Christopher J Garcia

Page 4 - #twitterspeaks

#TheHobbitDesolationOfSmaug, #AmericanHustle,  
#Anchorman2, #Dhoom3

Page 8 - American Hustle - A Review in 5 Acts  
by Christopher J Garcia

Page 19 - The 2013 Additions to the National Film Registry  
by Christopher J Garcia

Page 27 - Genre Short Films

Except for Us - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

The House at the Edge of the Galaxy - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

LiFi - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Spin Control - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Last of You - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Present Tense - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Disarm - a Haiku Review by Adam Beaton

Fubar & Fubar Redux - Review by Ric Bretschneider

Another Happy Anniversary - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Cochemare - Reviewed by Chrie Garcia

A Night to Remember - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Well, that's the first year of Klaus at Gunpoint! I'm happy with what we've managed in that year. Reviews and looks at fun films, a bit of funkiness, and some good writing from some good writers. Interestingly, I'm all over this issue more than any other I can think of!

The next issue will feature a look at Cinequest's short film program, which we just finalized the other day. It was a LONG process, and one which went very well. Every year it gets easier, and every year we put it off later and later! It's a very good crop, and one that has films from around the world. In particular, I'm proud of what we've managed with a program of Science Fiction films!

The Retrodome, a wonderful film/theatre group, has taken up residence in the wonderful Century 21 theatre in San Jose. Go to <http://Retrodome.com> for info on their film series. So far, they've had success showing classics like *The Godfather*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *The Sound of Music*, and a bunch of Disney. The Domes are threatened with demolition, so we should all enjoy them while we can!

Art in this issue comes from me (The Cover), Mo Starkey (That picture of me below), and Michele Wilson on Page 26.



**Marco Lorenzo Ferrer @marcoferrer9**

Creepiest thing was Smaug speaking human language. Like wtf dragons can human too?

**mo @dahnisnotonfire**

its been 24 hours i still cant get over desolation of smaug

**Mari @LmsMari**

When I watched Desolation of Smaug I actually forgot there would be a third part...imagine my reaction when it just ended...

**Jam Pascual @elijahpascual**

Desolation of Smaug with @jessiearrrrr ! —witness of intense fan-girling

**chipmunk @JillianSalem**

I swear to god if I don't see Desolation of Smaug because of this snow I'm going to flip shit

**Jordan Grise @JordanGrise**

The Desolation of Smaug, although quite unnecessary at some points, was so much fun. Smaug was the definition of BEAST!

**Jenn Reese @jennreese**

I must have seen a different version of The Hobbit than the rest of the world because I only liked about 30 minutes of it.

**Jenn Reese @jennreese**

Parts of The Hobbit I liked: everything with Tauriel (an actual character), Thranduil, 5 minutes of barrels, 5 minutes of Smaug.

**Paul\_Cornell @Paul\_Cornell**

That actress from Game of Thrones who tells John Snow he knows nothing really should have got the chance to pronounce 'Smaug'.

**Lloyd Kaufman @lloydkaufman**

“American Hustle” is very good!

**Julius Sharpe @juliussharpe**

“American Hustle” is the best movie based on the clothes in my dad’s closet.

**Ashley Webb @AshleyWebb\_3**

American Hustle got my head spinning for over 2 hours but I’m certain I still love Jennifer Lawrence

**Andrew @SAndshrew13**

So I saw American Hustle! I like this idea of releasing the rough cut of your movie first, then the full thing later. When does it come out?

**Brandon Nall @BnallSays**

Just saw American Hustle...starring fat Batman and Amy Adams’ boobs. Great movie.

**Bilge Ebiri @BilgeEbiri**

Watched AMERICAN HUSTLE again. We’re not talking enough about how good Christian Bale is in this movie.

**Michael Moore @MMFlint**

Wow -AMERICAN HUSTLE was awesome. David O. Russell=genius. That rare film you want to see again, now! “Don’t put metal in the Science Oven”

**Christopher J Garcia @johnnyeponymous**

I saw a movie about the corruption of the American Dream by men in polyester. I forget if it was #AmericanHustle or #Anchorman2

**Mi’ley Lambert @mollylambert**

attracted to everyone in American Hustle

**Adrian Nazarett @Naz\_MIA771**

Maybe too much anticipation...#Anchorman2 funny but falls wayyy short of expectations

**Rachelle R. Williams @RachelleRW**

Dylan Baker is the new Ed Helms for when Ed Helms isn't available. #Anchorman2

**c hatz @happyfan17**

Saw #anchorman2 this morning. Parts of it very funny, but some parts too long or over the top. So many cameos, lots of great lines.

**Alexa Carlin @AlexaRoseCarlin**

Sorry to say but Anchorman 2 was a total fail. Not nearly as good as the first. #Anchorman2

**Libby Cudmore @LibbyCudmore**

#Anchorman2 might be the strangest film I have ever seen

**Brad @BradsoHood**

No orgasm will ever come close to the climax of #Anchorman2

**Lori Sebulski @lasebulski**

Anchorman 2 in one word:Awful. #Anchorman2

**Hugo Lopez @HLopez36**

Saw #Anchorman2 but don't know what to think of it...

**TheBloggess @TheBloggess**

Anchorman is the funniest movie ever. So naturally I'm terrified about Anchorman2. This is what I do instead of football.

**Jennifer Gullick @jennifergullick**

#AmericanHustle and #Anchorman2 double feature with my guy tonight. Pretty surreal. :) congrats to all the other actors!! Nice job!! #Proud

**Dip Purohit @d\_purohit101**

The twist at the interval stroke of Dhoom 3 is a master stroke... makes u damn curious n excited 4 the second half.... #Dhoom3

**Muhammad Anas @Muhammad\_Anas87**

Better to avoid watching Dhoom 3 if you have seen the prestige ;)

**Krishnation @Imkkittus**

What an incredible movie, #aamirkhan is a real #hero and a great way to finish #2013 with a #dhoom

**Jahangir Shah @Jahangi09340097**

A moment of silence for all those who are gonna watch Dhoom 3 in cinema and waste their money. RIP #Dhoom3 #AamirKhan #Doom

**Vishal Nair @VishalNair15**

Unbelievably hammy Dhoom 3 should be avoided at all costs. Not worth its money. Avoid. #Dhoom3 #AamirKhan

**GAURAV @IKumarGaurav**

I went to watch Dhoom 3 with my girlfriend. She paid. Now i am single. :)

**Nikita @Nikitamaharaj2**

Dhoom 3.....Was #epic enjoyed every moment of it. Sooo much of fun just watching it.... We all knew der was a soft side 'jai dixit', lol

**Rofl Indian @Roflindian**

BREAKING: Thousands fall below poverty line after watching Dhoom 3 with their families and consuming snacks and cola during interval.

**Joy @Joydas**

Fool me Once, Shame On You. Fool me Twice, Shame on me. Fool me thrice - Damn You Dhoom Franchisee



American Hustle:





# A Review in 5 Acts

by Christopher J Garcia

## **Christopher J Garcia @johnnyeponymous**

#AmericanHustle - An absolutely breath-taking train wreck. Easily my favorite mainstream movie of the year.

It would be incredibly easy to dismiss David O. Russell's *American Hustle* as either an American Masterpiece or a trashy mess of a film. Neither is the answer, neither is the truth. Both hit the mark, or at least come close to it. There are too many ways to view *American Hustle*, none of them easy, none of them clean. The film falls into cracks, slogs itself through a swamp, and in the end, comes out both filthy and fresh as a daisy. There is much here to like, and much to condemn, and thus, I look at it in a structure that Russell would reject out of hand as hackneyed and of another age... though I think Ira Glass would approve.

### **Act One - Drama**

What Russell does so well is let actors inhabit space. To do so, he must do three things. First, is give them space to inhabit, and to do that, you must write a script that allows for actors to find the walls. Russell and co-writer Eric Warren Singer produced a script that was either incredibly detailed and ran something like 400 pages, or one so sparse that it could have fit on a napkin and still have space for a lipstick blotting. The script here details a convoluted series of scams and twists, love and lust, but it is told either through voice over or hammered with heavy dialogue punctuated by actors giving us a kind of hopped-up, almost Malkovichian intensity on all emotional levels. Every actor in this film, with one exception, plays with their roles in ways that could never have been included in a script. Watch Jennifer Lawrence's eyes while she interacts with her way out. They're darting, back-forth-back-forth, like a 70s kid with an over-driven Pong console. She's looking for what else there is even as she believes this is her ticket out. Pay attention to Jeremy Renner's hands; to the way he is constantly using them to pull people in, or to put the attention onto another character. Christian Bale is famous for his methods, and here he plays with his hair, which can only have come from a screen-writer, but more importantly, he has a thing for pockets. Watch how he interacts with them, how his hands seem both desperate and terrified of them. This is the power of acting, and they are a group of powerful actors.

After the actors have explored the space, they must create a

storyline that can be followed, or at least backtracked through. Here, Russell has brushed out every footprint almost as quickly as they are laid. He wants no trace left for any viewer to be able to go back over, to follow into the dead-ends that they have created. There are plot points that fly up like pheasants flushed from a thicket, only to have a flurry of fire after them, the fallen birds then left to rot on the Earth. The story makes sense, but only if you stay with the mainline and don't let those fascinating concepts and possibilities of moments such as the introduction of an FBI Agent's family or a young wife's demonstration of sex as a weapon. Even when we think that the entire plot is leading to a crash that will send head rolling, we are given only a moment of possibility and an hour of wondering whether it really happened.

Finally, characters. The actors had to create their characters within a framework, and they did so in the most difficult of situations. They had to take a script that contained so many traps and contradictions, and form characters that are often contradictory in their own right. Look at Christian Bale's portrayal of Irving Rosenfeld. He is supposed to be the smartest con-man in on the project. The problem he constantly finds himself painted into a corner, largely because of his own choices. Where he succeeds is in showing a character whose facets are brilliant, who delivers incredible amounts of nuance through mass quantities of bluster. It's an incredible performance; he finds gentility only by going through the stratosphere with his performance. This is just one of so many contradictory points of *American Hustle*.



AMERICAN  
HUSTLE

## Act Two - History

*American Hustle* is based on the ABSCAM operation of the late 1970s. All sorts of political figures were tied up in it, most significantly there was the first Senator put in jail in the twentieth century. The actual story is nowhere near as complex or as interesting as the what were given in *American Hustle*, and for good reason. Irving Rosenfeld is based on the schlub called Melvin Weinberg. He was a hustler, and as a hustler, the Government knew that he could see a good play and had him help organize the operation to bring in corrupt public officials. He wasn't a big fish, not at all. He was smart, and he had been convicted for fraud previously. He was small-time, and not nearly as interesting as Bale's Rosenfeld.

What Russell does is takes the framework from History and bends around it characters.

The actual ABSCAM investigation started out targeting public officials. In *American Hustle*, it ends up nailing public officials, but starts with an idea that for getting caught pulling interesting confidence schemes, Lady Edith Greensly (played with suitable amounts of turn-on-a-dime by Amy Adams) and Rosenfeld have to bring in four bigger criminals, and then as it goes, their FBI agent, Richard DiMaso (played by Bradley Cooper), keeps going up the chain and they end up bringing down political figures and dangling hooks for Big Time Mobsters. This is a part of the convolution that ties up the drama so tight. The deeper DiMaso and Rosenfeld go, the harder it is for them to keep it all running, especially with DiMaso getting little support from his immediate supervisor. In the actual operation, they went all out, gave them all sorts of support and much of the action took place all over the East Coast. What Russell has done isn't so much improved on history, but made it a story that lives in a place.

New Jersey.

The main action is Jeremy Renner's character, Carmine Polito, trying to bring back Atlantic City by bringing in investment from a Sheik. The funny thing is Polito is a far LESS interesting character than the actual character he is based on: Angelo Errichetti. Errichetti was involved in the payoffs, and took a fair share of money himself. He was far more aware of his role than Polito was in *American Hustle*, and he was far less a Good Guy caught up in Bad situation, which is more-or-less how Russell presents him in *American Hustle*.



What's most interesting is that the ABSCAM thing did change the way the FBI handled business, and the FBI's methods were far more questionable that they are presented in *American Hustle*. Hell, every one of them could have made a decent case for entrapment. The best part of ABSCAM was the way it changed the concept of Federal Sting operations. We're still dealing with that fallout, but we don't get any of that in the movie. It would probably only appeal to freaks like me, though...

Of course, the history that the film gets absolutely right is the attitude. There is the out-in-the-open vice and sex. There is the costuming, which calls up that era so well. Adams, in particular, has the look of a 1978 woman who is living out in the open, and her costumes, some of which making me wonder who she didn't die of exposure in Jersey winters, make the point that she is in charge far better than anything she says. If you look at Renner's hair (which is very reminiscent of the 'do favored by politicians like Jack Kemp in the 70s) or Rosalyn (played by Jennifer Lawrence) and her defining herself by her nail polish, and you'll see that attitude of early 80s consumerism and identity. That part of History Russell gets 100% right.

The most historical thing in the film is DiMaso. Bradley Cooper is presenting him as Roman Legate. He's even got the curly hair. He has a vision, a grand vision, and he keeps bumping up against his general, but impressing Caesar. He drive his force deeper and deeper, increasing the Glory of Rome through his conquering, bringing great amounts of plunder for Caesar himself. The way that DiMaso moves forward while using his forces to do the front line work is very Legate-like.

### **Act Three - Film Studies**

*American Hustle* is NOT the child of *The Sting*. It is NOT the child of *Wild Things*. It's closest living relative is probably *The Great Gatsby*. This is not the story of an elaborate heist, or a crew working an angle. It is the story of a flawed character in search of a way out with what he wants.

But that is not adequate either.

You see, this is a film that rejects the Heist. This is a film that rejects the plan. The final plan, the one that clears everything for Rosenfeld, is an obvious plan, and one that an FBI agent would never fall for. It's such an obvious plan it's a slap in the face of real con-artist plan films. The major con, the Hustle that ends up nabbing several congressmen, is a patchwork of simple moves threaded together. Watch a film like *Ocean's Eleven* and there's a seed the whole way and everything along the pay leads to the finale. That is not the case in *American Hustle*. It rejects that idea that these are men and women who see further than the end of the interactions they're involved with. Instead, Russell makes these characters adaptors. They come up with the most basic of plans, and then as they put it into action, improvising all along the way. This much mirrors the way the film itself flows and eddies and swirls. The plans, like the general plot of the film, are not straight lines and end up simply being places where fully-developed characters live. This is an actor's film, without question, and one that would not be anywhere near watchable without the quality of performance that every one delivers, and that is exactly what happens in the story of the film. Adams' Edith is a member of English nobility, only she's not, she's just another English girl, who isn't actually an English girl at all, she's just Sydney Prosser from Albuquerque. Unlike many characters playing many other characters (I'm thinking of Robert Downey, Jr. in *Tropic Thunder*, as an example) she has to navigate her role both as a person and as a character in the plot in which she has been placed. She is a master actress, Sydney, and Edith is an amazing character who does a lot of the heavy lifting for the crew. Adams does a fair bit of heavy lifting for the film as well, at least whenever Bale isn't on the screen.

This is not a Heist film, nor is it a political thriller. It's not a procedural, nor a historical epic. Period piece? Absolutely, but it really goes into a realm I call the 'liar's picture'. Remembering the flawed-but-fun *The Hoax*, the story of a talented hoaxer who has delusions of grandeur, the story unfolds and every time a stumbling block is hit, Clifford Irving

comes up with a new con. In contrast, every time Rosenfeld hits a snag, it is one of the others on the investigation that drives things back. When DiMaso almost blows a deal, Rosenfeld has to clean it up by playing his 'Hey, I'm just like you' card. This is not a story of characters cleaning up their own messes, which is a hallmark of the Heist film, nor is it the story of a team brought together for one purpose that then turns to another, more important purpose, aka The Crew film. It's also not the story of a plan that seems like it's spiraling out of control that is really under the tightest of all possible direction. No, it's the opposite. It's a story of improvisation and loose ends. This is the messiness of real life, and the story it presents is far messier than the reality of ABSCAM. It's also not about professionalism, or family honor, or any of those things that would identify a genre tradition. That makes things more complicated.

In the history of film, there have been few that have taken this route, ignoring the concepts of crime film tradition to give us a crime film of sloppy cops interacting with slightly less sloppy criminals. In fact, I can't think of another.



## **Act Four - Interpersonal Communication**

There's a line that moved my thinking, spoken by Edith. "You're nothing to me until you're everything to me." That idea, that she could snap her feelings off and play into DiMaso, into his appetites, that is a fascinating point for deep thought. Is she just playing a role, and of course she is, but is she playing the role she is playing because she is legitimately wanting a way out. She eventually comes clean to DiMaso, reveals that she is not English, and then there's the moments between DiMaso and Rosenfeld, and Sydney and you're asking who there is telling the truth. Is Edith a separate person? Was Edith actually in love with DiMaso, even if Sydney could never be? She reveals herself to DiMaso because truth is the right thing, right? She wants to be honest, right?

This is ultimately where the film gets it completely wrong. She has either compartmentalized herself so well that she has created two full characters, each completely capable of loving different people truly, or she's been playing one character and she's just playing DiMaso. Neither way works with what we're given. If she has partitioned herself off, then she'd never NEED to come clean to DiMaso, never need to explain the truth of herself, right up until the moment she kills off Edith and runs away with Rosenfeld. If she is just playing the role to capture DiMaso, then she has no need to tell him that she's not really Edith, and by telling him, she's actually telling him that she really wants him. It doesn't make much sense.

Where the film takes some very interesting twists is in the area of Rosenfeld's wife. Rosalyn's a fascinating character, and incredibly well-played by Lawrence, and there are two scenes where she either exerts power or allows herself to fall pretty to her own emotional greed. The first is her scene with Edith. The two, both attending a party where they're to meet the Mob folks who will help rebuild Atlantic City, and they end up in the bathroom together and have the kind of conversation where one character is simply trying to out hurt the other. Rosalyn gets the upper hand, but most importantly, she ends the heated conversation with a barn-burner of a kiss. She is, of course, using it as a weapon, that kiss, and it's either because she's letting Edith know what Rosenfeld fell for her, or because she's showing she can turn it on and off. It's electric filmmaking, and incredible acting, but it actually raises more questions. The second discussion is between Irving and Rosalyn at their home, after



Irving was almost killed by Rosalyn's new boyfriend. The conversation is basically Irving getting his anger out, then Rosalyn taking credit for centering him, for giving him the clarity to make his new plan. It's a strange scene, but it's the ultimate sign of how messed up Rosalyn's thinking is. She has to take credit when something goes right. She has to feel as if she's really a part of something, though she doesn't participate like Edith/Sydney. She's got to feel that it's all about her, and she succeeds in that thinking.

Perhaps no character is more personable than Carmine Polito. He's a politician, but watching the way he communicates, it's not like the glad-handing politicians of so many films. Instead, he's more like an uncle at a Family Reunion. He's only trying to do the right thing, to bring jobs back to Jersey, and he's good at it. He's not a hood, not at all, but he shares so many of their traits. Watching him work a room, you can see that he is warmth and kindness, while also being business. There's a perfect example of this while they are having dinner, The Rosenfelds and the Politos. The women sit and talk and drink and at one point, Rosalyn says "and in five seconds it's gonna be 'we gotta talk business' and the wives count down and it happens at exactly 0. It's an understanding of how men like Polito work that allowed that to happen. He communicates with everyone like he's communicating with his family, and that makes him beloved. I think this is one part the writing for Polito, but it is a serious feather in Renner's cap for bringing all of it out of the script.



## Act Five - Art Appreciation

In a way, the central metaphor of the entire film *American Hustle* is contained in the moment when DiMato and Rosenfeld are looking at a Rembrandt and Rosenfeld says that it's a forgery. Enough people buy into it, and it's real. There's no backing statement, none at all, but there's part of the reason it fits so well. Russell is making a fake. This isn't the story of ABSCAM, this isn't a history movie. This is a fake. This is a known fake, and a masterful one at that. He has used all the element of a time and created a fake, something that is nothing approaching reality. His fake is brilliantly constructed, but it's not real, it's not a story that has happened or could happen. It has a failing that will certainly give it away to anyone who knows even a bit about the actual ABSCAM events, but more importantly, it defies logic at several turns. The way the scam resolves itself only makes sense in a world where there is literally no fact-checking. The final moments only make sense if Edith is just a cover and Sydney never had any attraction to DiMato. The ending only makes sense if we understand the story that DiMato refuses to let his boss finish. The entire film is a forgery. It's not a reality created by a script where real characters are allowed to grow and develop. It is a fake, a window-show, and it unapologetically allows actors to play around in it, with no concept of whether or not what they're doing is realistic. There's no genre that fits it, it rejects so many aspects of every genre you could possibly place it in. Family Drama? No, so much of it is dealing with the rejection of family in favor of the job. It's no heist, no buddy cop movie, nothing fits. It's not a genre film, and it's not at all realist, or at all realistic.

That sounds like I'm criticizing every non-documentary (and quite a good deal of documentaries) but it's really the difference between making a film that is supposed to capture an reality, like *Citizen Kane*, which *American Hustle* shares a lot in common with), and one that is supposed to capture a mood or tone, which is where *American Hustle* lives. In a way, it's like *JFK*. There's a story, it's something of a true story, but exploring around it provides far more interest. In the case of *JFK*, it was visual and paranoia exploration. In *American Hustle*, it is room for those exceptional actors to act. THAT is the most powerful aspect of *American Hustle*, and a reason to say it's an excellent film, but the fact that it is a forgery automatically makes it something of a failure.

But what a forgery it is.



Every year, the Library of Congress announces twenty-five films that are added to the National Film Registry. These films represent our cinematic heritage, from the late 1800s through to ten years prior to the year of selection. Every kind of film is represented on the Registry. Narratives (which do make up the majority of films on the Registry), documentaries, avant grade and experimental films, newsreels, even home movies are included in the attempt to create an archival record of the history of American Film.

This year's batch is odd in my eyes. It drives the Registry forward into the 21st century (*Decasia* is the first film made post-2000 included) and fills in a few films that many have pointed to as the great missing masterpieces (*The Magnificent Seven*, *Gilda*, *Midnight*) and some wonderful documentaries. Post-1960s short film includes one that I consider to be one of the best of all-time (*The Lunch Date*). So many wonderful films, and while I might complain about a couple of them, mostly they're great. There's no obvious dog like *A League of Their Own* last year, but there are a couple of 'em that I would rather have waited for later so other really important films could make it on.

Of course, if you're interested in what I'd have put in, look at issue 5 of Klaus to read my comments on 25 seriously overlooked films!

## **Bless Their Little Hearts (1984)**

Director Billy Woodberry was the leading light of the L.A. Rebellion. No, not the Major League Soccer team, but the group of black filmmakers that rose up out of UCLA in the 1970s. It produced some very good films, including 1984's *Bless Their Little Hearts*, a film that I have seen only once and was rather impressed. It's a film full of smart performances, but more importantly, cinematography that is both subtle and impresses the viewer with emotional interplay. The black-and-white film is one of the best of the 1980s, and is a great addition to the Registry to represent not only the L.A. Rebellion, but also personal African-American filmmaking. There's an excellent resource on the film at <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/events/2011-10-22/bless-their-little-hearts-1984>

## **Brandy in the Wilderness (1969)**

I would argue that 1970s cinema was defined by one thing - the rise of the artistic genre picture. I think of it as one of the best road pics ever, *Brandy in the Wilderness*, was released in 1969, but director Stanton Kaye was always a couple of years ahead of the curve. It's not really a road picture, it's an experimental 'diary' picture where Kaye kinda looks at his own filmmaking journey with a diary-like structure, but it FEELS like a road picture. It's awesome, and I need to get it on DVD. I haven't seen it since college! There are supposedly a few sites around where you can watch it.

## **Cicero March (1966)**

Wow, this takes me back. We did a section on 1960s race relations in high school. It was an interesting section, part of US history, and while we mostly did lectures, we did see this one documentary short film. It's really good. Powerful, and it turned out that my teacher knew the guy who made it. While I was already a fan of Pennebaker by this point, the Verite style really hit home. It tells the story of Cicero, Illinois, in eight minutes better than a Ken Burns epic ever could. I watch this version - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGH5lyKQn98> - every six months or so.

## **Daughter of Dawn (1920)**

If there are three existing films I'd love to see, *Daughter of Dawn* is one of the top two or three. Shot in 1920 using actors from the Kiowa and Comanche tribes. They used their own clothes and brought their own props. It was only shown once, in LA in 1920, and then it was restored after a Private Investigator sold a copy he got as payment from a client to the Oklahoma Historical Society. It was restored, it was on Silver Nitrate film, and has been shown around. It's one of the peaks of Lost Film Rediscovery, right alongside *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and the full *Metropolis*. You can find good info at <http://daughterofdawn.com> and several short segments on YouTube.

## **Decasia (2002)**

This is, by far, the most exciting addition. It's a found footage film. Bill Morrison found decaying film from various archives and then added a bit of footage and made an incredible document of what's happening to our film history. Decaying films are in archives around the world, and *Decasia* is one of the most important documents of that decay. We like to think that all those movies that we've loved are all in vaults around the world, in perfect conditions, just waiting for the need to transfer them to Blu-Ray. This is not the case. *Decasia* is powerful for those of us who love film history. Lots of great info on Bill Morrison and his works at <http://billmorrisonfilm.com>

## **Ella Cinders (1926)**

*Ella Cinders* is a decent little movie. I think I've only seen a sound-added version that was shown on *Dialing for Dollars*. The concept is sweet - Ella wants to enter a contest which will make her a movie star. She ends up having to get the money together to get her picture taken to enter, and there's a whacky series of events. Yes, it's a retelling of Cenerella, and it's cute, but why is it on the Registry when one of the finest of all silents, Chaplin's *The Circus*, isn't on yet? And I'm NOT a Chaplin fan. I have to admit, I do like Colleen Moore, though. You can find a good excerpt with Harry Langdon at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMz2f13q5wg> and a really good review at <http://moviessilently.com/2013/02/04/ella-cinders-1926-a-silent-film-review/>

## **Forbidden Planet (1956)**

I've written about *Forbidden Planet* many times, and I thought it was already on. This is the peak of 1950s Sci-Fi. It wasn't one of the myriad B-Movies of the 50s, it was a serious, beautifully produced and shot feature film with the wonderful Leslie Nielsen in command! The music, the animation of the Id, the robot, the costumes, the retelling of Shakespeare, it was all there in a film that I'd say was one of the top ten SF films ever. You can read more of my thoughts on it at <http://efanzines.com/DrinkTank/DrinkTank281.pdf>

## **Gilda (1946)**

Believe it or not, this is probably the best Rita Hayworth film. She's awesome as she lip-synchs Put the Blame on Mame. It's a wonderful Noir, one of the best of the 1940s. I've only seen it recently, and it is a wonderful film. Sadly, it was also the end of the first Noir chapter, as what followed in 1948 through the fifties was an entirely different concept, more focused on the trappings of what Noir was than on the stories being told (in many cases, save for great films like *Double Indemnity*). Still, this is a wonderful film and a great addition.

## **The Hole (1962)**

Ha! I haven't seen this one in years! It's a wonderful animated film that won the Oscar back in 1963. George Matthews and Dizzy Gillespie talking' at the bottom of a large hole about what might happen if an accidental nuclear attack happened. This was shown all over the place and I can totally remember seeing it when I was a kid! See it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mfXyGBBYU>

## **Judgment at Nuremberg (1961)**

Stanley Kramer's wonderful film, but it's really the performance of Maximilian Schell that makes this film. I first watched it in high school, but it wasn't until I watched it a few years ago (2003 or so) that I really started to get what it was really about: the trade-offs between Patriotism and Justice.

## **King of Jazz (1930)**

I've never seen this one, there's no official DVD released, but it's one of those stage revues that were popular in the early days of talkies. Lots of songs, with skits in-between. It's the kind of film that was perfect for the early 1930s because it didn't ask much of the audience, but there was also a huge number of them made, and that led to many becoming box-office failures. It's also one of Bing Crosby's earliest appearances. I think I've seen one of two segments, most notably an animated segment done by Walter Lantz, but I'm not 100% sure. There's a weird segment of Rhapsody in Blue up at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mfXyGBByOU> and you can find other clips there too.

## **The Lunch Date (1989)**

A wonderful short film. A wonderful STUDENT film. That's right, director Adam Davidson was a student when he made this one. I find it distressing that a filmmaker who is almost exactly 10 years older than me has a film on the National Film Registry! Madness! Still, it's a wonderful film, telling the story of a woman who gets off a train and experiences a series of amazingly entertaining misunderstandings. It's at least somewhat from a Douglas Adams story. Watch it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eputZigxUY8>. It's gorgeous!

## **The Magnificent Seven (1960)**

Damn straight! My Pops always said this was the Manliest film ever made. I think I agree. When you've got Steve McQueen, Yul Brenner, Charles Bronson, Robert Vaughn, and James Coburn, you can't argue the *Expendables*-ness of it all! Famously, this is a Western version of *The Seven Samurai*, and it's on the same level as that film, as I see it. One of the greatest moments in American film history is the last words of Calvera, played by the fantastic Eli Wallach. "You came back, to a place like this - Why? A man like you. Why?" and then he's gone. A great movie.

## **Martha Graham Early Dance film (1931-44)**

Film has made it possible to record dance, and more than almost any other kind of performance, it has finally given dance a way to exist beyond it's moment. There was never a good way of recording a dance in the past. Yeah, there was choreographic notation, and descriptions, but

film allowed for the record of the actual movements made by an individual. Martha Graham is possibly the most significant American dancer of all-time. These are apparently four films that were put in as one set, starting with 1931's *Heretic* up through 1944's *Appalachian Spring*. I've seen the latter and it is AMAZING! Noguchi's sets combined with Graham's dancing and Copeland's music makes it one of the great American Arts works. You can see *Appalachian Spring* part one at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmgaKGSxQVw> . If i had to recommend one YouTube channel to follow for Dance lovers, it would be <http://www.youtube.com/user/danceonfilm?feature=watch> where you can find all of *Appalachian Spring* as well as Paul Taylor's *Esplanade*.

### **Mary Poppins (1964)**

I could probably write a book about how I feel about *Mary Poppins*. It's one of my favorite Disney live-action films, one that has unbelievable amounts of joy (Dick Van Dyke dancing with cartoon penguins!) and the saddest song in all of film for me (Feed the Birds) which never EVER fails to make me cry. It's a wonderful film, with great songs, and the performance of Julie Andrews is spectacular. It was also the basis for one of the best musical episodes of *The Simpsons*.

### **Men & Dust (1940)**

Lee Dick produced this film which is more than a little depressing. That's the point, of course, when you're making a movie about Cave Lung, right? It takes a powerful series of images and uses powerful narration and sound design. It's a film that had a real impact back in 1940, and when I first saw it, as a part of a program of social welfare docs, it still held power. You can see it up at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPEtKTBoAog>

### **Midnight (1939)**

I'm torn. I love the fact that we've got a great Claudette Colbert romantic comedy on the Registry, and that it was written by Billy Wilder and Charlie Bracket, but there are other films from the era that would have been my earlier choice, and there are a lot of later RomComs that need to be on. Still, it's a lot of fun, and seeing it at the Stanford ages ago was great!



## **Notes on the Port of St. Francis (1951)**

I will say little about this short documentary masterpiece about The City, save that you must go to <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/208804> and watch and listen to Vincent Price's wonderful narration. It's a wonderful film and it's on that line between historical documentary and modern day travelogue.

## **Pulp Fiction (1994)**

Quint's second great film, though i will always consider *Reservoir Dogs* to be his finest work. *Pulp Fiction* changed a generation of film students. A generation that I was at Emerson with. Tarantino's impact on film is undeniable, and he's never quite recaptured his state again. In *Pulp Fiction*, it's an amazing script, good acting, and a remarkable editing job that turns it into one of the most important movies of the 1990s.

## **The Quiet Man (1952)**

I love a good Western, and especially a good John Wayne/Maureen O'Hara western when it's directed by John Ford. Wait... it's not a western? It's a romantic comedy? Really? Set in Ireland? I guess that makes sense. I've never seen it, but I understand it ends with a great funny fight at the end. I'm looking for it!

## **The Right Stuff (1983)**

Tom Wolfe's novel is made into an amazing movie by the great Philip Kaufman. I really believe that it surpasses the novel, and quite possibly the reality of the Mercury 7. It really is an excellent actor's film, especially for Barbara Hershey, Ed Harris, Scott Glenn, and Fred Ward. The structure is great, the script is great, the direction is great, the movie is great!

## **Roger & Me (1989)**

Note: I dislike the politics of Michael Moore. A lot. And too often his political message overwhelms his filmmaking. Watch *Bowling for Columbine* and follow it up with *Sicko* and you'll see what I mean. On the other hand, I love *Roger & Me*. It's so well-done, and when you watch it a few times and look at how he actually makes his point and that there's a method that's beautifully mapped out, it really makes you appreciate Moore's abilities. There are some dark moments in this one, but they all work.

## **A Virtuous Vamp (1919)**

Another silent I've never seen, but it's Constance Talmadge, so there's no doubt that it's good stuff.

## **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf (1966)**

Speaking of Actors movies, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe* is probably the ultimate example. It's got four powerhouse performances, and I'd argue that its Liz Taylor's best work. George Segal's a genius, as is some guy named Richard Burton. But Liz playing Marge with all of her beauty and, in this case, commitment that seems to border on a personality disorder, she's the real star!

## **Wild Boys of the Road (1933)**

A Social Consciousness drama from 1933 and it's OK. I could think of a half-dozen others that should be on first, including the masterful *Home of the Brave*. Still this is a good little movie about teens living on the rails. It worked, but it's not nearly the film that I'd want on the Registry before a number of other similar films. There's a good clip at <http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/273067/Wild-Boys-Of-The-Road-Movie-Clip-He-s-A-She-.html>.



# Genre Short Films

**Except for Us**  
**Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

Time travel is one of the few science fictional subjects that regularly gets the romance treatment. From Richard Matheson's *Time After Time* to the exceptional short *Conversations About Cheating With My Time-Traveling Future Self* (which I reviewed at <http://amazingstoriesmag.com/2013/01/a-conversation-about-cheating-with-my-time-traveling-future-self-by-pornsak-pichetshote/>). Time Travel has an immense amount of romantic possibilities.

But this isn't a short about time travel. It's a short about time travel and lying.

The first words of the short, as our two characters are laying in bed, are "Your name's not Mark." From there, they talk, bringing up the awkwardness of the situation (a falsified blind date and a one-night stand), followed by the revelation of a time machine in the corner. The conversation is strange, and it sets the stage for a time-travel film.

We see our hero, John, interacting with his time machine, which seems to be influenced by George Powell's 1960 *The Time Machine*. It's not a flashy, extensively CGI-ed beast of a time machine, but a modified stationary bike with bits and bobs. It's decidedly lo-fi, recalling some of my favorite shorts which rely not on knock 'em out design, but on humanity and the audience's ability to accept that sometimes, flash ain't required.

As the short goes on, we see John and his 'blind date', Kim, go

through the date that preceded the opening, and then the replay of the date, and Kim discovering the truth about John's time machine, which he considers more of an "Art Piece" than a practical tool.

What we are actually witnessing is a tour of the formative portion of a relationship. John plays the scenes over and over, with different scenarios and outcomes, in almost an anti-*Groundhog's Day*-esque series of dates between John and Kim. Is John trying to perfect their relationship? No, not at all; or at least not very well. We are encountering what happens when two people meet, under false pretenses, and the way a relationship is like a mountain road: one false move to either side and that is where disaster lies.

There is a certain murkiness to Christopher Ventura's script. We don't get a lot of explanation and no resolution at all, which is a choice I whole-heartedly endorse. We are left, dropped on the ground, having to figure out how the couple goes forward. The dialogue is wonderful, the pacing exactly what you want in a short like this. It's slow enough to allow the characters to fill all the available space, while it moves us between interactions with a wise eye. The actors make the most of every line, especially Patricia Zeccola as Kim. She plays a combination of naïveté and almost come-hither bluntness in her interactions with John, and later with his time machine. John is played with a certain detachment by Andrew Ridings (and if you get a chance to see *The Layla Project*, which he's in, do it!). He's awkward, stiff, and somehow seems out of place in every situation. Even as he and Kim are deep into their enjoyment of a night of passion, he seems a touch lost. Maybe it's only his time machine that he understands? The short is a bit chatty, but it works and holds you all along.

*Except for Us* is beautifully captured with a precise sense of purpose to every shot. Interiors and exteriors glow, at times, and at other points, it's a flat wash of light and shadows. The handheld work and the locked-down shots are all well woven into the story. The music, by Pontus Gunve, is wonderful, and not over-used. Too often, shorts will get great music and thread it through the entire film. Here, it's well-placed and stays exactly as long as it needs to, providing a strong sense of the moment's importance.

This is a film that I really hope makes the rounds. It is another project funded through Kickstarter, and a solid science fiction film at

that, though you could argue that it's not science fiction at all, that it's a relationship drama. The entire metaphor of the film could be contained a simple exchange.

John - "It's not easy."

Kim - "What?"

John - "Time travel. You have leave behind everything. Everyone."

Kim - "Except for us."

That is the story of a relationship, no? You have to drop everything off, leave all others behind, and jump into it with that other person. You're traveling through a new set of experiences, a new timeline, with a new person. You are traveling through a new stream, a pair of chrononauts, and it's not easy, in fact, it's often really hard. Of course, you don't get the chance to go back and make things happen over and over...

If that's what really happened.

You see, we're not sure if what we're seeing is the effects of time-travel or merely John's reading of the new situation he's found himself in through the lens of his own personal time-travel fantasies. It's left kinda ambiguous, though a reading of it being all in his head makes the entire film a bit sadder, but also explains why he hasn't used his powers for more nefarious purposes. Or maybe he's just a bit shattered and can't come up with a better use for his time machines.

Or he's just nuts. These are all possibilities, and that's what I loved so much about *Except for Us*. It left it up to us to figure it all out.

## **Gleb Osatinski's *The House at the Edge of the Galaxy* Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

First appeared on Amazing Stories blog

A lonely child is the saddest of all possible conditions. We all remember our childhoods, right? We remember the wonder or the terror, the joy or the pain. We remember the feeling of it, and though the days and years that have passed, we have had those feelings multiplied, amplified, distorted; ether positively or negatively. I can remember the feeling I got the first time I rode a roller coaster: that feeling in the bottom of my stomach. The world was strange then, right? There were new things everywhere you looked, and some things were magic.

A short film that touches on that feeling is Gleb Osatinski's *The*

*House at the Edge of the Galaxy.*

The story, when broken down for dinner party conversation, is delightfully simple. A cosmonaut lands at a house where a young child lives alone. The kid says he has no name. The cosmonaut has been out in space for a long time. The two of them converse and the cosmonaut gives our child a star seed to plant in his garden.

To say much more would put down that child in all of us through over-abundance of information.

This is a story of absolute beauty. The ramshackle house is set in the middle of a forest and every shot that shows it is nearly breathtaking. It brings about that feeling you get from things like *Twin Peaks*: as if between the trees are captured spirits that inhabit every frame of the picture. The cinematography of *The House on the Edge of the Galaxy* is beautiful, and more than a bit haunting. The way the interiors of the house itself are shot lives you wondering what's the reality of this kid's world, and why are there so many pictures, so many reminders of a world that is obviously long gone, far away, on the other side of those trees.

The score is also of note, because not only does it seem to haunt, but it feels as if the gentle piano is coming from within the house, out the door falling off its hinges, into the forest. I was reminded of some of my favorite scores, particularly, and possibly for no good reason, Phillip Glass' score for *The Hours*. It was beautiful, the kind of score you could listen to outside of the film itself. It helps establish this scene, this house in the middle of the woods, as another place.

The Cosmonaut is odd. He arrives with no fanfare, no great crash of his ship into the woods, no powerful moment of entry into the atmosphere. At least none that we see. We are led to believe that he has traveled from far away, that he has put millions of miles on that orange spacesuit.

But has he?

Is he really a cosmonaut? That might be the central question of the film. If he is, why has he landed, what does he need? If he is not, why does he claim to be? The multiple viewings I made of this short led me to several different readings. At times, he is a cosmonaut, his ship just on the other side of the rise, near the birch trees. Other viewings, he's a fraud, come for some purpose we never get to understand. Some viewings, he is not a cosmonaut, but something greater; greater than man and prob-

ably closer to gods or monsters. And in others, he's just an imaginary friend the nameless child has invented to keep himself company.

But always, there are those pictures.

The walls of the house, even with all the peeling wallpaper and chipping paint, are covered with framed photos. Why? If there are so many others out there, even if in some distant past, why is the kid left there, alone? Who are they? Has the kid simply come across this place and turned it into his home, or has he always been there, always alone; alone with the images of a past he can have no connection to. Is that the message? The cosmonaut is no less distant a figure than the people in those pictures. The kid is so distant from the world, stuck in that house, that he may well have been in space for longer than that cosmonaut. He is so distant.

And though I'm not sure if it was an intentional choice or not, a couple of the exchanges between the cosmonaut and the kid pulled me slightly out of the film. This is the first role for Grayson Sides and there is a lot to learn from it. While he played well with the camera, his presence and charisma felt throughout, some of his lines felt distant and alienated. While it was Sides' job to play lost and found in time and space, perhaps these lines had to feel more attached to the present. Still, when you are acting against a cosmonaut, to hold your own is an admirable task. I'm excited to see what he follows this with, as there is obviously talent in the kid.

Still, this is a short that is at once fantasy and science fiction. The markers of both exist, in some ways reminding me of *LOST*. What is the house and who is the kid? What is as it seems? It is a fool who believes everything he is shown, and a bigger fool who believes nothing he is shown. This film seems to be a sort of test of that idea. How much can we believe, and what marks the truth anyhow. The ending of the short leaves the two biggest questions I had unanswered, and that only made me want to discover more.

You can find out more at <http://houseattheedgeofgalaxy.com>

## **LiFi - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

### **First appeared in Lake Geneva**

In the old days, there was a movie called *Real Genius*. It's Val Kilmer, and really, it's a sorta half-step between the early 1980s science comedy (think a less slick, slightly smarter *Weird Science*) and a Superstar Hero teen flick (think *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*). What's funny is that trying to capture that in a bottle today is both a lot harder (the influence of the Stoner comedy with *Dude, Where's My Car?* and *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle*) and easier (shows like *The Big Bang Theory* have helped to introduce these character types much wider.

LiFi plays well in that arena.

So, there's a group of researchers who are trying to solve food problems through SCIENCE! They run out of Apples, and then they go to meat, hamburgers, and it turns out that it works. Too well. They go along the line of discovery, in their garage, and they start to bump up against the knowledge that they can duplicate life from dead material, and eventually life from life. That makes for strange problems, but as they're just guys with great power, in their garage changing the world, they may or may not be able to handle the great power that comes with great discoveries. The characters themselves ask if Humanity is ready for this power, if this sort of immortality is a good idea to present to a world where Ke\$ha is a legitimate form of entertainment. The way this is presented is so intelligent, it's process shown without much commentary on the development. That's often what happens in films like this, where they spend a lot of time dealing with the ideas surrounding innovation, or worse, simply presenting innovation without placing that innovation within a context that makes sense. That doesn't happen here, and that is refreshing.

This short raises some very interesting questions, the first being why did the filmmakers feel the need to go on for 19 minutes when it would have been a MASSIVE hit at maybe ten. The bigger, and more interesting questions that it tackles include how does science intersect with our emotional needs. What are our responsibilities to ourselves and to our emotions? And perhaps the biggest one: what would you do if you were faced with certain powerful knowledge that you knew could change your personal world, but had no idea what the external consequences would be?



The way the story plays out, our characters are presented with situation where they have an answer, perhaps, to a problem that overlaps their research. Everything they've discovered on the way has shown them that they may be able to solve this for themselves, but it might have unforeseen consequences, not only for the world, but for themselves. They are fighting against these ideas, and are found lacking. Or are they? And what's worse, we don't know if they can actually solve the problem. The film ends with no answer, none at all, and perhaps the most cliched of all ends: the pressing of a button to start the process that answers all our questions, but leading only to black screen, credits. That said, it does a great job with what it gives us, even if it takes its time.

### **Spin Control - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

Musicals can be a tough sell.

Wait, let me start again.

Political content shorts can be a tough sell.

Hold on, I've gotta go a different direction.

Sometimes, there are intersections that take you by surprise. If you'd told me then I fired up Spin Control that in less than a minute I'd be witnessing a musical number, I would not have believed you. It started out as the best of all possible worlds: a Conservative Spin Doctor, played by the wonderful Alli Brown, is brushing up on the new girl not eh Political scene: Liberty Smith, portrayed with wide-eyed vigor by Devon Perry. Shortly after things get fired up, we are presented with a song detailing how a candidate should behave in a campaign with all the advice that we expect a spin doctor to provide.

There's a wonderful chemistry between the two leads. I understand that this film is a short segment of a feature that is a love story, but alas little of that exists in this shorts. What does exist is a fun musical number, which is bouncy and entertaining, but more importantly, a dance segment which flat-out exudes entertainment and fun! The two of them are excellent, and have a physical charisma that comes out wonderfully in the dancing.

Now, of course, it's a political satire at heart, and it doesn't re-

ally have that much bite. This is both a good and a bad thing. Bad thing because we live in times where to illicit big reactions, you need to go big, but also, it's really easy to go far over-board in that direction, which is often a far-greater sin. The good is it's just a rollicking good time. There is absolute joy in the production, and going further down the political commentary rabbit hole may well have damaged that level of enjoyment.

### **Last of You - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

A world gone mad. A world at war. A world busy in the process of being destroyed. These are some of my favorite films, and if you can do that, give the feeling of a world which is spiraling inward on itself, that's a great way to go.

Last of You, a wonderful science fiction short by Dan Sachar plays with a lot of those concepts, along with a almost Philip K. Dickian approach to looking through one's memories and impacts. For the starter course, we are greeted to the reconstruction of our hero's memories. This early section reminded me so much of so many things; not the least of which being *Cloverfield*. We catch snippets of a life that no longer exists, memories of a man who is no longer able to remember these things himself.

Or is he?

There are questions raised, and sometimes answered in those glimpses. The love of his life, the times in which he lives, the fall, perhaps. It's done with science fiction staging and detailing that instantly puts you in the mindset of those paranoid Distopias of early Cyberpunk. That effect carries on throughout the rest of the film, even as it seems to fall into line with the Real World portion of *The Matrix*.

### **Present Tense - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

So, how can you tell when something has saturated the market? Well, when you do a film zine on a specific area and you dedicated almost a dozen pages to just that kind of film! I've done that here, so I know it, but the better method for determining these things is by those

films which reference those other films in comedy. Present Tense does just that,

We are greeted with the scene of a wedding, and it's pretty standard, just a bit off in the presentation maybe. After just a few moments, someone rises to make their objection, announcing that they are a time traveling version of the groom. This leads to various arrivals and reactions from those in the wedding party, the family and friends gathered, as well as the announcement of surprises from the time stream. It's all very still, but also kinda funny.

And that may be the problem, in fact. There's a lot happening. A whole lot happening, and it gets more and more convoluted, but it also doesn't give much time for anything to really land. That's a problem that a lot of films have, but here it's highly notable because it is so short and feels quite rushed. It's rare that I find we need more time for comedy, as all too often films layer too much on and the run-time balloons, but here, another minute or two would have helped.

But really, this is where we see the trend. Time-travel short films have been booming the last couple of years. There've always been a fair number of them, but never as many as I've seen in 2013, and never as many Time-Travel Comedies. Perhaps it was films like Hot Tub Time Machine, or the Oscar-nominated short Time Freak that started this rolling. Science fiction short film in general has expanded greatly as well, but Time-Travel shorts are the largest single segment, and Present Tense lampoons that kind of film by throwing all sorts of tropes at us in a funny way. They're thrown a little too fast, and a little furiously, and some miss the mark, but they're all sent.

The production values are pretty good, though some of the effects seem unpolished. That's OK, as the effects aren't the point. The point is we've seen all this recently, and that point is driven home over and over.

### **Disarm - A Haiku Review by Adam Beaton**

what can happen when  
the one who hunts is the one  
who hides in plain sight?

## **Fubar - Fubar Redux** **A Review By Ric Bretschneider**

When I think of motion comics, my first thought is the incredibly cinematic way Shout Factory's studio converted the initial Joss Whedon run on *Astonishing X-Men - Gifted*. While motion was restricted by reuse of the original comic book art, the use of other film techniques, voice acting, and an adherence to the script that most movies just can't provide.

The Hasraf Dulull, Geof Wolfenden film *Fubar* is arguably a motion comic, but in a surreal fumetti/phonovel style of comic, produced in a manner that evokes Chris Marker's 1962 short film *La Jetée*. The fantastic fumetti compositions tell the story of a world where nations of Cats and Dogs literally wage war on each other with tanks, planes and bombs.

The story is told using primarily still compositions, with sparse use of figure animation and occasional background animation (primarily for explosions, fire, and other CGI crafted environments. Foreground animation is limited to cut-outs, layer panning, and lighting and particle effects. Evoking the previously mentioned *La Jetée* and the films of Ken Burns, the limited animation of fantastic photoshopped cat and dog heads into battle scenes is probably more effective in helping the watcher accept the canines and felines in combat than limited or even full animation would. It definitely lends to a documentary feel, where you could believe no film cameras could have been available in the battlefields, or war rooms. Audio effects and voice actors provide the bulk of the storytelling, and are well done overall.

The story unfolds over multiple segments, various peeks into the lives of ground soldiers, larger operations, war rooms, and the tenuous negotiations for peace. While there is nothing particularly surprising in any of the versions of the *Fubar* story, the storytelling is serviceable and not offensive to any sensibilities of those who have already accepted the dog and cat combatants.

Yes, I said versions. There were at least three that I found. What appears to be an original release, a reworking and extending of the story called *Fubar Redux* and *Fubar Redux - Director's Cut*. The last was, according to it's YouTube notes, published in August 2nd of this year, indicating that

the director continues to twiddle with his story since the original release in 2011 won the *Renderyard Short Film Festival Best Animation*.

Overall, at fifteen minutes in the longest version you can forgive the somewhat predictable endings. Yes, I said endings because they do shift in emphasis between the original's and the remakes. But overall it's a fairly original take on one of the oldest, most metaphorical rivalries around.

<http://www.fubar-movie.com/>

## **Another Happy Anniversary - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

The marriage comedy is a delicate matter. There are a lot of 'em, a lot of very funny ones, and here's a classic example of where things can go very right. Miranda Bailey's *Another Happy Anniversary* does a wonderful job of presenting a couple who are planning on celebrating their tenth anniversary. It's his turn to choose what they do to celebrate and he comes up with a novel concept: a celebratory threesome. His wife's not totally on-board, but she makes it a point to try and get into the scene, and there comes the entertainment.

Let's start with the cast. The cast is stellar, starting with the amazing Nikki DeLoach (late of the wonderful TV series *Awkward*) as Jeanne. She's wonderful as the woman out trying to find out whether or not she can give her husband what he thinks all guys want: the three-way. Hayes MacArthur, the only reason to have watched the series *Perfect Couples*, plays her husband Tom with a sort of masculine, doe-eyed wonder. He thinks he's being crafty, using the idea of a threesome to get his wife to go for his fancy dinner concept, but she plays it differently, thinking that the fancy dinner is just a cover for what he really wants. He plays into that a little, and it's actually kinda cute and endearing that he does, while also feeling just a touch sophomoric. Jeanne goes out trying to find herself, or more accurately uncover what she might want to dip her toes into, and she finds that she's got her own issues. DeLoach is great in her role, so perfect in her reactions, and more importantly, she drives the plot forward with her incredible ability to play with the awkwardness of the situation. She also pulls off a quirky sexuality at the same time. It's a tough line to walk, and she manages it perfectly. Rebecca Ocampo as the Yoga Instructor that ends up as their third in their three way, is suitably

alluring and flighty, which is exactly what you want out of that role. Kali Hawk, as a casting agent friend who is recruited to help the couple get what they need, takes no focus away, and adds a laugh at one point.

I love both the comedy and the reality of this set-up. We're seeing a double-blind experiment, if you think about it. Tom knows that Jeanne won't go for a threesome, while Jeanne knows that it's what Tom really wants. Gift of the Magi much? The idea works, and the way the actors play with the emotional tones within the relationship and situation is where the pay-off really happens. Of course, it leads to a reaction that is at once completely expected and somewhat surprising. The pair goes in opposite corners, largely because of the unexpected realities of their situation. It can only end badly, right? Or is the end uniformly wonderful because the two of them do carry the experiment out? It's a difficult question, and repeated viewings haven't answered it for me, but I've enjoyed very much trying to figure it out.

### **Cochemare - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

I almost did not include this review because the best reaction to it is "what the fuck?"

The most limited view of Cochemare is that it is a tale of a monster. A flying, monkey-like creature. It cavorts with negativeland nymph. That opening segment is gorgeous, and not just because the reversed-image nymph is all nude, and such. Then, like *2001*, we leave fantasy and head into Space. We are greeted with a sleeping, red-haired astronaut, and a bunch of snails. The Flying Monkey comes by too, and for some reason starts fondling the astronaut, then unzips her top, exposing her breasts. Then she apparently ends up aroused and pleasures herself while the snails watch and get all squarely themselves.

I think.

You see, there's a kind of film that is more about mood and meaning than about plot and understanding. There's something here about primal urges, about the monsters of intellect and vice and virtue and what-not. But it's all hidden under layers of crappy stop-motion and nudity. It's not entirely incomprehensible, but it's certainly rather opaque.

And kind of fucked up.

## **A Night to Remember - Review by Chris Garcia**

If you can define a film by a single moment, then *A Night To Remember* is defined by our hero running, trying to find his superpowers. It's a total metaphor for the film as a whole.

On the street, an amnesiac in a superhero's costume comes across a bum on the street. He's bleeding from the head, and has no memory of who he is, or what his powers are. The Bum, noting that the fellow has money in his pockets, starts to come up with ways to get some of that money off of him. Our hero goes and tries to discover his powers, while the Bum continues trying to make that money happen. It's a funny situation, though the trouble isn't the delivery of the material, but the speed with which that delivery happens.

This is a slow, slow, slow moving train.

The interaction between the two is stilted at some points, but more importantly, it's exceptionally unnatural. It's a story that is rather special in that our hero, who our Bum dubs T-Man, works to make his powers known to himself. The pay roy them encounter another as they are searching for his powers, and there we see some actual heroics... maybe.

This is either a film that explores greed, the ability of the down-trodden to exploit the naive for their own advantage, or it's s story that looks at how heroism isn't defined by a Greatness, but by a willingness to go forward without fear.

Which is a bit of a stretch, as that first concept is much, much more evident.

The pacing is all wrong, or at least it's far too slow and runs too long. The structure is weird, and they even interrupt the story to give us a sort of "Marvel Post-Credits" without it actually begin after the last of the credits or providing anything more of any substance to the film. There's always something that the post-credit scenes in superhero films add, and here there's nothing but a promise that doesn't get fulfilled.

Which may be the perfect ending as it accurately sums up the short.

