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Klaus
at
Gunpoint
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First, please welcome our new Editor - Vanessa Applegate!

So, of late, I've been working hard on a number of things. I'm coming up on 40, which means I flip out, like I do every ten years, and I come to decisions that may or may not pan out. This time around, I want to get more and more into Film History. I've got the PhD, and my background is not in the area of Film History, so it's an up-hill battle. I love film, I love the history and the present, and future of film, but I've often been told that it's not an arena in which one can wade into and expect to find work. I've got a PhD, just not in Film, or any film degree, actually. I'm well-versed in some areas, I don't think you'll find anyone who understands the impact of computer technology on film better than I do, but also I'm one of those guys who gets the emotional side of the film world. The connections between time, location, space, audience, filmmaker, and equipment. I think I'd bring an interesting frame of reference to the Film History world.

So, I'm keeping **Klaus** going, and no I'm not going to be turning it into a paysite or putting ads and Google adwords and such. I really don't wanna have to deal with money, and I don't want us beholden to anything. We're making printed copies available, and if you want one, contact us at journey-planet@gmail.com

So, in this issue I look at a couple of final pieces of Cinequest, the Sonoma International Film Festival, our prep for the next Office Supply Pictures work (@TheCanvas) and short films reviewed.

And, for those of you who know what such things mean, I'm now an 18-time Hugo nominee, having got one for the zine I co-edit with James Bacon *Journey Planet*. Sadly, I won't be in England to be a part of the fun, but at the same time, I'm so happy we're nominated because James is amazing and I love working on *Journey Planet*. If you have never seen it, take a look at <http://journeyplanet.weebly.com/>. Issue 16 is, without a doubt, the best thing I've ever been a part of, dealing with the works of Philip K. Dick, including *Blade Runner*.

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EDITORS

VANESSA APPLGATE

CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

Amber Montoya @MexxiSwagg

I still can't get over how awesome Winter Soldier was! #captainamerica #wintersoldier

Barbarella Barnes @youthinkmemad

Sometimes you think you're over #WinterSoldier feelz then something on Tumblr just brings them all back.

HiddlestonedEducator @HiddlesEducates

Bedtime was delayed tonight because my kids insisted on getting #CaptainAmerica and #WinterSoldier tattoos applied before they would sleep.

Curt Mega @curtmega

The questions it raises are profound/eerily timely by playing out the moral ambiguity of "freedom vs. security" masterfully. #WinterSoldier

Yaya Han @YayaHan

Holy craaaaap #WinterSoldier lived up to the hype.
I can't believe it.

Ming-Na Wen @MingNa

Huh...interesting. RT @misplacedshadow So according to #WinterSoldier Cap and Black Widow are level 6... BELOW MAY AND WARD #goteabus

Tom Bamford @Doodleplex

#WinterSoldier was awesome! #Falcon is badass!
#IWantOne of those wingsuits =D

Estevan Balderrama @edbalder

#GrandBudapestHotel #grandbudapest was so good! Much worth the wait! !

Starline Hodge @starlinex

It's been a while since I was looking forward to a movie, and was that disappointed. #wesanderson #grandbudapest

Kim Huston @KimHuston

If people can parody your style to an unsettling perfection, you've lost style all together & are just a template of yourself #GrandBudapest

genevieve @genevieveriou

Cheers to the only director that's able to make unreal movies with a bunch of big actors #GrandBudapest #WesAnderson

elise @elisemeetsworld

i said i was tearing up in #grandbudapest bc of how pretty it was but tbh it was because i had too much wasabi at the sushi bar right b4

TNT @ElisabethTNT

Went to see #grandbudapest for the second time last night and loved it even more! #WesAnderson #rocks

Christopher J Garcia @johnnyeponymous

There is a sadness to #WesAnderson's beauty.

Losing their way, a drive leads a couple into the deep forest. Once there, they make a terrible mistake, and battle over how to deal with it, and the consequences of those choices.

The Fall is a film that plays with what is unseen and unsaid; a film that relies on nuance and simple, largely static, camera shots, allowing two actors at the top of their craft to explore the intensity of the situation.

That's the short form for this emotional masterwork. The real business here is the interaction between the actors, the cinematography, and their environment. Geert Van Rampelberg and Natali Broods are both electric playing off each other. Real chemistry, but that's not even the best part. The connection between the performances and the shooting is incredible. They allow the long takes to drip off of them, to come into them, and that is the mark of an incredible actor.

The Belgian forest setting and the acting are what's most amazing, though. The trees, the road, the inside of the Range Rover. These characters expand into all the available space. Two people in a Range Rover is nothing, but somehow, every inch is filled by the two of them. Their relationship is heavy, even before the action, and the silences between them all along is as telling as the actions taken after their fall into fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

Kristof Hoornaet's direction is flawless, showing huge amounts of trust in his actors and his crew. They shot the whole thing in a single day, which takes huge amounts of guts, but can pay out in glory. *The Fall* is one of the most remarkable films of its type ever made.

Kiss of Vengeance by Fernando Barreda Luna

This is the kind of film that I want to see with Vanessa after a long day drinking Ghost Pepper Vodka and dinin' on Carnitas. I would have died to have this available when I was in High School and the kids would gather up in my living room to watch whatever cinematic bee I had in my pretty floral bonnet. This film combines elements of so many genres, and gave me the feeling of *Six-String Samurai* at the same time as those Tarantino classics. that were atually directed by Paul Rodriguez.

The story is dark - a beautiful (and I mean three shades of sexy straight out of Sedona) warrior woman wages war on a Mexican drug cartel. She is Vengeance personified, issuing her reciepts for the murder of her family. She is played with precision and a lusty sort of violence by Angelica Celaya, who should have along and awesome career. The cartel she is up against is strong, and though they can't hold a candle to her in any arena (and honestly, none of the actors have Celaya's intensity mixed with charisma) they fight like wounded gunslingers trying ot take some townfolk with 'em.

This is a gorgeous film, and one that plays the scenery with the action very well. While there are some moments of less-than-stellar effects, and a couple of moments of the fight choreography didn't resonate, the entire package is not only enjoyable, it's downright addicting!

The biggest hting to look for in this one is the style and influences Everything from Kurasowa to Sam Fuller, Peckinpah to Tarantino, it's all there!

You can find out a lot more about *Kiss of Vengeance* by going to www.kissofvengeance.com!

There are a lot of great documentary filmmakers, and the idea of a comedic documentary is no longer strange. Following *The Aristocrats*, and then works like *The Relationship Doctrine of Don Blaquito*, there's been a growing trend towards funny docs.

The master of this form is a fellow named Sam Frasier, Jr.

Last year at Cinequest, he killed with *Cardboard Titanics - Smart People Doing Stupid Things*. His doc *The Ghost Pepper Eating Contest of Jefferson County* was a favorite of this year's Cinequest Comedies program.

The film *Why I Make Movies* is one of those faux slide show films. It's impressive in the fact that it's just a series of static images that tell the story of a filmmaker and his trials, leading up to his appearance at a film festival where he is KING OF THE MOTHERFUCKING WORLD!!!!

I'm paraphrasing, of course.

This film, more than any other I've watched in recent years, tells why it is good to make movies, but more importantly, why a filmmaker puts themselves through the difficulties just to get a chance to shine at a film festival.

And it's a lot of funny in a tight little package.

Yes, films about festivals run the risk of falling into that category of Celluloid masturbation, but here, Sam brings out the comedy, and just a touch of pathos, which makes it all a little easier to swallow. When he makes a point, it is with crystal clear levels of joy and heartfelt gratitude, not to mention his tongue practically poking through his cheek!



I'm turning 40.

I'm wallowing in a sense of "Last Chapter Approaching" and finding that little things are setting me off. Walking through a park I used to frequent during my youth can bring about thoughts of how much I've lost because of the simple and unstoppable passage of time. A simple dinner can become a mine field.

And so, it is not difficult to understand why I love *The Brunchers* so much - because it's a document of an age I am just now leaving.

Our hero and heroine, neither given names, are in need of Brunch. She's tired of the same old thing, wants to be trendy (or hip) and see how the young live.

This is because she no longer sees herself in their faces. She's left her youth and wants to take some of it back, even if it means clawing at new restaurant seatings.

He, on the other hand, has passed through the Valley of Youth, made it through his Khyber Pass and now has reached an acceptable level with it. He doesn't need to achieve youth again. He is happy being comfortably in his forties, with a beautiful house, and a beautiful wife, and he doesn't ask "how did I get here?" He acts as her guide through a trip that tries to find the balance between their two realities

Oh yeah, and the script is hilarious and brilliantly timed. The appearance of Rufus Sewell only adds a level of awesome to an almost overly-relatable film.

The Brunchers isn't a movie about getting older, it's a movie about accepting that you're old.



COMING TO A THEATRE NEAR YOU MAY 2nd!

After having the worst day of his life, Facebook junkie Michael Harris begins to question whether his “Friends” are really his friends. Desperate for answers, he concocts a scheme to fake his death online just to see who shows up at his funeral. Ryan Hansen (Veronica Mars) stars in this hilarious examination of friendship in today’s hyper-connected world of social media.

1) OK, let’s start with the obvious - What’s been your Social Media experience and footprint?

I’ve been on Facebook since virtually the beginning. The site rolled out to Columbia students during my freshman year, just a month after Zuckerberg first introduced it at Harvard. But like a lot of people, I’ve always been more of a casual user. I think social media is a useful surrogate for a rolodex and an incredibly efficient marketing tool, but, as you can tell from the film, I don’t think it’s a viable substitute for face-to-face connection.

I don’t engage much on most other social platforms; however, I am unabashedly obsessed with Pinterest. For me, Pinterest is less of a social experience though, and more of a creative one. I use it as a digital inspiration board; a canvas to visualize and curate content around my passions. Whether or not my boards are public or other users interact with my pins doesn’t tend to impact the value of my user experience a whole lot. In fact, I have quite a few private boards that I pin to more often than my public ones.

2) How much Text Speak ends up in your everyday conversation?

I'm not fluent, but it does come in handy at family gatherings where full fledged profanity seems inappropriate. Michael, the protagonist in *Friended to Death*, is a more extreme case than most, but people in general seem to be evermore proficient at text speak these days, both online and off. I think the film picks up on some of the blurred lines that have formed around our social vernacular and the way we communicate face-to-face as opposed to online.

3) What are the difficulties of both acting and directing at the same time? Do you even find yourself making decisions in one role that conflict with the other?

I cut my teeth on this a bit a few years ago when I directed and starred in a web series I created called "Old Souls." It's an exciting challenge to wear both hats at once. The prevailing concern, of course, is that you'll wear yourself too thin and compromise your work in both areas. But I couldn't have asked for a better team around me to help pull everything together. We were all on the same page creatively, which allowed me to transition between my roles with more ease. My DP Jimmy Lu and I had spoken in depth during pre-production about how we wanted the film to look and feel. We did a ton of storyboarding as well. When we got to the shoot, Jimmy knew exactly what we were going for, so I felt free to focus on my acting and trust his ability to assess each take based on our pre-established vision. I, of course, wanted to see playback whenever time permitted, but honestly, Jimmy's got such a brilliant eye that it's easy (and wise) to trust his judgment regardless.

This dynamic of trust and preparation played out in all areas of the production with the entire crew. As far as my acting went, I relied a lot on the fact that I had co-written the script, meaning I had created my character from nothing and lived with her for nine or ten months before we shot. Having such intimate knowledge of a character that far in advance of shooting is a rare luxury in film and it made all of my jobs that much easier.

4) Walk us through your creation process, if you could? How did it start in your brains and what path did it take to get it on the screen?

We read an article about a guy who faked his own death (offline, not on) and held a funeral service that only his mother attended. The man then proceeded to write 44 hand-written letters to his friends, chastising them for not showing up. We asked ourselves, “what kind of a guy would do something that extreme?” What you see in Michael’s character is our own exploration of that very question. Being well versed in comedy, we wanted to tackle the topic of fake death from that quite unexpected angle. Comedy also seemed to offer opportunities for irony and satiric social critique in the film, which drama did not. So we pushed the comedy hard, using the tongue-in-cheek “bro-mance” and over-the-top, man-child type characters to comment on the larger issue of social media and its influence on our real-world relationships.

As we approached production, I began to hone my vision for the look of the film. I wanted it to look cinematic to underscore Michael’s narcissistic grandiosity. That’s why I opted for the more epic-feeling 2.39 aspect ratio and why we prioritized production value. Now that I’ve seen the film on the big screen a few times, I’m glad I made those choices. I will say that I learned a lot about how decisions you make early on in the filmmaking process come to bear on the finished product. That’s not to say that I would change things about the film, but rather that I’m more aware now of the tools I have at my disposal.

5) You’ve got an amazingly talented cast. No question here, just wanted to say that.

Thank you, and I agree! I can’t say enough about the professionalism, openness and raw talent each of our cast members brought to the table every day. Even as we wrote the script, we knew we needed actors who could nail the film’s quirky characters and distinct tone. Not only that, they needed to have chemistry with each other. Fortunately,

we had an incredibly talented and resourceful casting director, Nicole Arbusto, who helped us pull that off.

6) Since you've lived the film for so long, how does it feel now that it's premiered? Can you watch the film and not get caught up in the feelings from creating it?

To be honest, I still can't watch the film without laughing out loud (LOL). There's always something new that I pick up on with each successive viewing. I'm obviously fond of the script, but I think the film's replay value is also a testament to the impeccable timing and improvisational skills of our cast.

7) What do you want audiences to walk out of the theatre thinking/feeling?

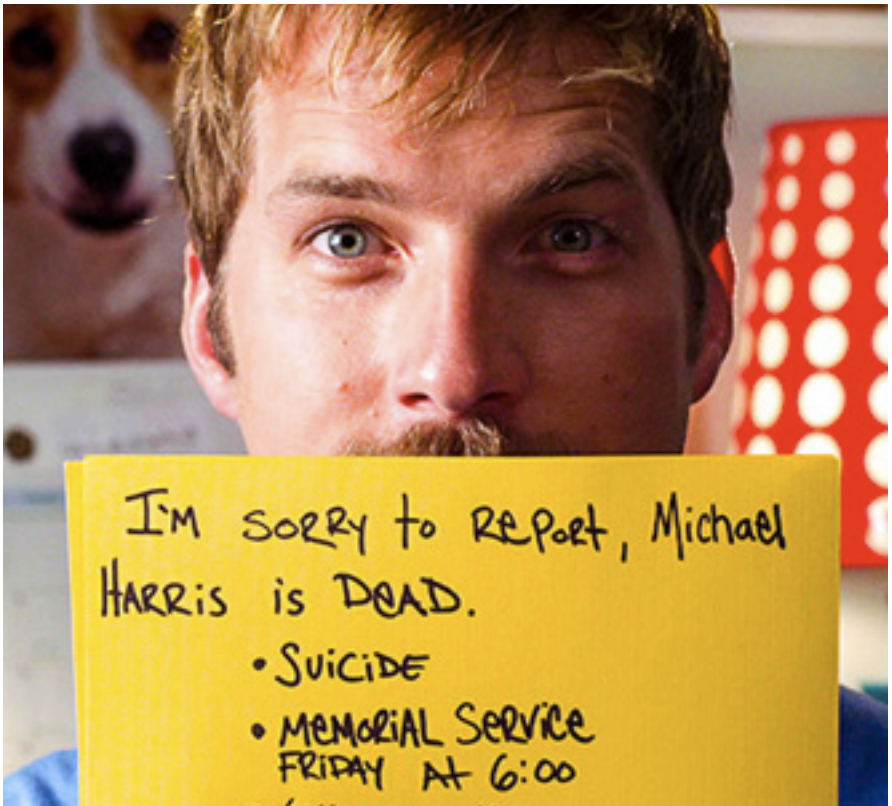
I want the audience to feel genuinely entertained, and since the film does have heart, I hope people can connect emotionally to it as well. In addition, and just as importantly, I'd like viewers to read between the lines and detect the social media commentary that's woven into the film's subtext. The characters are so overtly flawed and over-the-top, and their humor is so off-putting at times, it's hard not to detect some level of irony on the part of the filmmaker. My hope is that people will sense that irony and what it's saying about our culture, rather than take the film at face value as an endorsement of offensive jokes or a glorification of the "man-child" phenomenon. Social media has shaped our culture in profound and dangerous ways. The characters in this film, their pathos and their damaged relationships, are a reflection of that reality. I hope audiences think about that and how it might be playing out in their own lives.

8) What can we expect from y'all next?

We've got a number of other scripts and treatments in development that we're moving on next. Most have a comedic bent to them as that's our wheelhouse, but we are always open to other genres should the right idea come along. We're looking at an interesting project in the documentary world as well, so stay tuned!

See *Friended to Death* in theatres across the country on May 2nd, 2014!

<https://www.facebook.com/events/673646496016728/> for more details!





I used to be a regular at the Sonoma Valley Film Festival, though I hadn't been back since 2008 or so until this April. Now the Sonoma International Film Festival, it still retains a lot of the flavor of those early fests I attended, though with a lot more umph.

The team has busted their ass to make this one of the most spectacular of all small fests. I guess it's not fair to call it a small fest. It's not Toronto or Sundance, but it's a fest that inhabits a small town in one of the most beautiful valleys in the world.

Every film I saw this year as shown in the Sebastiani Theatre. It's an older theatre, but seeing a film in this legend helps, usually.

In this case, *Life's A Breeze*, the wonderful Irish film by Lance Daly, It's the story of what happens when you lose something that holds on to a private fortune. In this case, it's a mattress, and it becomes part *National Treasure*. It's a lot of fun, and I'd highly recommend it. In a way it reminded me of another fine film that had played at Cinequest - *The Grand Seduction*.

The funny thing is that after the film, there was a flow of filmgoers out of the theatre and into the various restaurants up and down the street. It's a lovely thing that a festival can do, giving support to local business! The great thing about Sonoma's film festival is that it exists in Sonoma. The food and wine culture is EVERYWHERE, and the filmmakers love it. I spent a little time interacting with a few of them, mostly talking about where they could go for a good pizza (I will NEVER not recommend Mary's Pizza Shack!) and about what we'd seen.

That's what filmmakers are always talking about... well, and where to score free drinks.

The other film I enjoyed was *Belle*. The story of Dido Elizabeth Belle, this gorgeous biopic tells how Belle was raised to become a lady by her uncle. The actress who plays Belle, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, is very good, though at times it felt that her co-stars weren't giving it their all. In a word, it felt like Emily Watson was working for a Boat Payment, and didn't really seem to give it much in her performance. It's not that she distracted from the fine film, but having seen her at her best in so many films, I just didn't get it from her in this picture.

Then again, a fine performance was turned in by Penelope Wilton, whose work is always top-notch, but here, she adds a dark dose of Human Emotion mixed in with her natural motherness. I rather liked her take, though at times, I'd have liked to have seen them dwell a little more on her as an individual, instead of in relation to Belle...

Though, then it wouldn't have been her movie, now would it?

The cinematography and editing is really good, and that's no shock as the costumes and sets are just crying out to be photographed. I would not be shocked to see it make it onto the Oscar nominations for Best Costume Design, and maybe Hair-Make-up as well. The dresses alone as worth the trip to the theatre if you're a big costumehead. I would love to see those pieces up-close, because you could tell the detail was insane, but you only got so many glimpses of them in the film. More would be much better!

As it stands, the crafting of *Belle* is so solid that I can't really come up with a problem beyond some of the secondary cast, but as for a Festival film, it's so very solid. I can't argue with the script, or casting, and the direction is strong. It's got a solid release, which I almost did not expect, but I hope it will catch on because this is a story of the kind that will not only pull heartstrings, but make you think about your own understanding of history and people of color. I never would have conceived of a character like Dido Elizabeth Belle, and that's more than pity for she is a fine character who is worth exploring deeply.

So, the Sonoma International Film Festival was a grand success, a fine festival among the vineyards and wine-lovers, and while I only got to see one day, it was a really good day!

