



*Klaus at Gunpoint 19  
Cinequest Part 2*

The 25th annual Cinequest Film Festival is over and it was great! I had a ton of fun, and while I wish they had done more to celebrate their history, it was a great line-up of films and parties and WHOA!!!!

The highlights for me included receiving the Volunteer Legacy Award (which is gorgeous!) and getting to meet so many wonderful people. The films were all fantastic, some more fantastic than others true, and the parties were great. I can't wait for next year!

We lost Leonard Nimoy. That's a terrible sadness.

These are more of my reviews, and the next issue will feature reviews from some of the other Cinequest regulars!

Comments? Send 'em to [journeyplanet@gmail.com](mailto:journeyplanet@gmail.com)

Klaus  
at  
Gunpoint  
19  
~  
March  
2015

Chris  
and  
Vanessa  
Garcia,  
Editors



# The House on Pine Street

Directed by Austin & Aaron Keeling

There is a difference between horror and the psychological thriller. It wasn't always there, it developed between the 1950s and 1970s, exemplified by films like *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist*. A well-done psychological thriller is fantastic, and when you mix in paranormal aspects, it gets more awesome. Of course, no matter how great a genre can be, you still have to have all the elements a good movie needs. *The House on Pine Street* is an excellent example of gorgeous filmmaking within an intelligent genre.

Jennifer is pregnant, and recently tried to end her pregnancy on her own terms. Her husband has moved the family into the 'burbs, into a lovely house on Pine Street. As soon as they move in, strange things start to happen. Doors open and close on their own, and so few others see things that folks think she's just nuts. We see the things happen, but we also catch glimpses of other things that may, or may not, have happened along the way. This leads to a disquieting sensation, as if we can no longer trust what we are seeing, which is exactly what people are saying about Jennifer. As the story unfolds, no matter how much we buy into Jennifer's vision of what's going on, we're forced to form theories in our heads. If you're thinking that Jennifer is crazy, you're thinking of how she caused all the stuff she sees. If you believe that she's really seeing all the stuff, then you're trying to figure out what the spirit, or whatever, is trying to do.

The shooting of *The House on Pine Street* is straight-forward, not showy, and that allows for the drama to come through fully. The camera loves Emily Goss as Jennifer. She's expressive and almost dead-reactionary. She interacts with her environment in a very natural way. She delivers every line well, but it is the way she deals with the house itself that really



sells the entire film, and allows us to come into the situation like Jennifer herself does. The setting and the design is straight-forward as well, and that makes the abnormal more striking. There are a couple of horror stings, slammed doors and so forth, but it's really the power of the script, and the performances, that set this film apart.

Of course, I couldn't take Vanessa to see it: not until our kid is delivered!

This is a film that looks and behaves like a big studio picture, and I could easily see it showing up in a multiplex. It's an impressive picture and one that I hope a lot more folks will get to see!

“The House on Pine Street is both a well-crafted traditional horror story, and a modern exploration of what haunting and haunted actually mean.”

Ric Bretschneider



# Bad Exorcists

  

## Directed by Kyle Steinbach

You don't see a lot of teen comedies at film festivals. They are typically the kind of fare you might find at the local AMC multiplex, not among foreign masterworks and hard-hitting documentaries. *Bad Exorcists* takes place within one of my favorite sub-genres – the Paranormal Teen Comedy!

Three kids at a local Catholic High School are aspiring filmmakers. Matt is the only Jewish kid at a Catholic high school. He wants nothing more than to make a horror film. Charlie is an awkward teen who has a massive crush on the lovely miss Lisa, even though he has a girlfriend; albeit a girlfriend who is controlling and mean. Dana is the weird friend. He's weird, a touch OCD, and not too bright, or so it would seem. They 'borrow' a book used in actual exorcisms, and manage to locate a possessed kid, before somehow inviting a demon to take up residence in Lisa.

It's that kind of movie.

The film is funny. REALLY FUNNY! It's less *SuperBad*, and more *Ghostbusters*, as it were. The way they deal with the situations they're put in is hilarious, and they're constantly dealing with each of their own problems. Charlie just has to no idea how to deal with women. Matt is just trying to break out. Dana is... well, he's weirdly obsessed with the idea of rappers being the ones who define what dances catch on. They're all funny, but they're all human. There's almost no Apatow-esque humor in this one, but what Judd does best is giving us strange characters who are real. That is what writer/director Kyle Steinbach gives us. The story is funny, and it flows well, the shooting is pin-point accurate, and the visual style is a really smart signature for the film.

I couldn't watch *Bad Exorcists* without a few films coming to mind. The 1999 comedy *Idle Hands* was the first. *SuperBad* (or anything with Jonah Hill,



really) also popped up, but oddly, it was *Ghostbusters* that hit the hardest. It wasn't that it was about people trying to fight spirits, it was that it was about a group of fascinating people dealing with incredibly strange situations, but also retaining the humor. That's a difficult thing to play, but they do it so well!

There is a certain sweetness to the film. It's weird, but somehow it's charming and strange and darkly humorous, all at once. In the best of all possible worlds, *Bad Exorcists* would end up in the Multiplex, and it should make all of the stars into big names. The film is so good, and even if you have to hack through the jungle that can be the layers of difficulty surrounding films on the Festival circuit, do it; It'll be worth it!

“In the end this film delivers a lot of laughs, mixed with just enough shocks and scares. And that's exactly what I was looking for.”  
Ric Bretschneider



# The Last Resort

by  
Stephanie  
Blakey

Of late, animation has been going through a bit of a rut. We've seen animation programs at festivals around the world go from 90% traditional animation to 90%+ computer animation. This is not a bad thing, as I'd argue that the stories that are being told are far better now than at any point in the history of animation. Even if I miss traditional stop-motion and cell animation, there's a lot to love about the digital stuff. Nowadays, when a more-or-less traditional animation comes through, you pay a little more attention. *The Last Resort* managed to pay for that added attention with an INCREDIBLE experience!

Director/Animator Stephanie Blakey created her animation using cut paper. Her characters and backgrounds are pretty damned detailed. She then animated the piece using tweezers. Gotta love detailed work! Blakey's figures are adorably cartoony, showing influences from *The Simpsons* to *Maakies* to Tomie dePaola. The figures are great, but they're far less impressive than the story that is acted out by the figures.

Princess is four, and while her parents are away, she's been left in the care of her teenaged, twin sisters, Jo and Alex. The girls pay far less attention to Princess than their parents, so Princess comes up with a plan that involves poison, and the only guest at the Resort Hotel the family runs.

And, and did I mention that the Resort is on a lake frequented by a likely-mythical water monster?

After Princess enacts her Machievellian plan to garner more of her sisters' attention, that's when the fun really begins. It's just so much fun to see little Princess make her sisters jump through hoops. Plus there's a ghost, *Twin Peaks* references, and a whole lot of homage to horror films! It's just about the perfect short animation for Pop Culture junkies!



What if the gift horse wouldn't let you look it in the mouth?

That's the premise for one of the most hilarious short films of the last decade. *Grand Zero*, by Kevin Oeser, tells the story of a family man named Peter. He's a good guy, hard-working, a former wrestler, and he's not an orphan after his parents died in a car accident. When he takes his family to Grand Rapids to deal with his parents' estate, he discovers that he is now the proud owner of their downline – the growing number of people who were selling Amway under them.

Well... not Amway, but similar enough!

Peter doesn't want it. He wants nothing to do with the company, or the guaranteed opportunity that comes with accepting his parents' downline. The entire city of Grand Rapids is trying to get him in to the fold, even his own family. As the story goes on, we discover why Peter's so adamant against it, and that makes for even funnier moments.

The cast here is just about perfect. Brian Huskey, who I love in *Children's Hospital*, plays Peter with frustration and pin-prick precise timing. Thomas Lennon as the lawyer David Van Vleck, is as good as he's ever been, but it's Janie Haddadd Tompkins as Peter's wife who really steals the show with her big-eyed wonder and nearly-hypnotic smile as she falls under the spell that has already enveloped Grand Rapids.

I watched *The Center*, a deadly-serious (and excellent) film about a cult that also played at Cinquest. *Grand Zero* takes many of the same concepts and turns it into comedy gold. Watching how amazing actors take great material and come out the end with an amazingly effective short is one of the best parts of watching shorts. This one should turn into a cult classic!

# Grand Zero

Directed  
by  
Kevin  
Oeser





# The Anniversary

Directed  
by  
Valerie  
Buhagiar



Tone. It's the heart of so many films. When films can play with tone, swing from one point to another on the emotional spectrum without missing a beat, that's when movies get really good. *The Anniversary* is one of the best example of tonal swing, and how it makes viewing that much more impressive.

Sam went for a jog on the morning of his 20th Anniversary with Teresa. It's a year later and he's still not back. His wife, having cancelled the previous year's festivities, decides to go ahead with a 21st Anniversary party, or maybe it's the first anniversary of his leaving, and invites the same guest list. They arrive at various times and strange interactions begin between the attendees.

This is, at its heart, a bottle episode; everything happens in a single house, and the characters bounce off each other in paired interactions, for the most part. This was a theme for several other Cinequest films in 2015, notably *Milwaukee*, and it can actually distance you from the story as there is no single target you can hit with that sort of interaction schedule. *The Anniversary* does things slightly differently, by using the central idea of every character coming from a different part of the lives of Sam and Teresa's relationship, to give an added layer of complexity to the interactions. Colin Mochrie (*Whose Line Is It Anyways?*) is excellent as Carl, a friend who wants to be with Teresa. He gets the most emotional range to play with, from deeply devoted and admiring, to confused, to flat-out tripping balls. It's hilarious at times, and other moments deeply touching. He actually does a lot of the heavy-lifting in the film, along with the cinematography, which was really good. Deborah Hay as Teresa get a bit of that, but mostly she's just simmering, releasing steam at given moments. Her

interaction with Marie-Jose (played with a combo of sexy brokenness by Lyne Tremblay, is a highlight of the middle section of the film.

Nothing is settled in *The Anniversary*. There's resolution, but you get the feeling that it's still all up in the air. The entire production has a bit of a stage-y feel, but it doesn't detract from the powerful performances, or the script's intelligence. Over all, *The Anniversary* might be the most impressively wide-ranging film of Cinequest 2015!

“I saw people trying so desperately to connect it took a year of utter disconnection in order to reconnect in *The Anniversary*.”  
Susannah Greenwood



# Plan BART

Directed  
by  
Roel  
Mondelaers  
&  
Hans Van  
Nuffe

A lot of romantic comedy made it into Cinquest this year. That's a good thing for a guy like me who likes his sweetness and has a wife who he can take to the movies. This lovely little Belgian picture was the kind of story you always want to see if you're a guy like me. It's the story of what happens the minute you realize that you can find yourself in love with lesser; that you're just as able to find love if you're a total and complete fuckwit as you are if you're the guy who has everything all together. Sarah is in advertising and she really wants to have a baby. Her boyfriend, and fellow Adman, Alex does not so much want a baby as he has absolutely no desire to have one. After he discovers her stash of used pregnancy tests, he flips out and they break it off. Sarah then runs into a guy who knew once: Bart. He's a screw-up, a lay-about. Actually, he's a guy with a singular ambition: to become the World Air Guitar champion! After reconnecting with Bart, she makes him an offer: 7000 Euros in exchange for him impregnating her and then leaving her alone to raise the baby. Things happen, and Bart develops feelings for her, and Sarah for him... though things get very complicated.



I'll let you know right now, it's a "Happily Ever After" sort of story, so don't get all hung up on the details. The story goes along and there's one connection after another that turns us away from what we really want to be true. We really WANT Sarah and Bart to get together, not just because he's the more entertaining of her two choices, but because he's actually charming and grows so much throughout the course of the film. Alex grows, too, and when he ends up back with Sarah, it's the big bend that we know isn't going to stop destiny, but it's also an open challenge: should she choose success and some growth or relative failure and a LOT

of growth. To be honest, she really can't lose. There is a moment that I have to rave about because it's so effective. The traditional 'Rushing to the Airport to Stop 'em' segment is coupled with a "Running from the Airport to be with Her!" segment. These happen simultaneously, and when they both arrive at the same traffic cam, they're both looking away at the exact wrong second. That, more than anything, would seem to indicate that the Universe did not approve, but is love stronger than fate? That's the movie, it turns out.

It's adorable, it really is, and if you get a chance to see it, do it!

“PLAN BART is a surprising departure seeing Je-roen Perceval (BORG-MAN & BULL-HEAD) in a completely hinged role. #Cinequest”  
Danny Rubio



# Meet The Hitlers

Directed  
by  
Matt  
Ogens



Don't overstay your welcome. Anyone can tell you that's the standard advice for every endeavor or you may find yourself in. Even the most engaging subjects can turn twisty and dark if you linger a little too long. *Meet the Hitlers* is a phenomenal one-hour documentary with a great ending. Sadly, it keeps on going after that ending and runs more like an hour-twenty, and sadly muddies its own waters.

The basic concept is there are people out there with the name Hitler. Some have it as their last name going back generations, some have it as a first name, and one unlucky child has it thrust upon them. This would have made for a great, incredibly engaging documentary, but it also includes the story of a reporter trying to find the last living descendants of Adolf Hitler. That takes up a lot of screen-time, and really, it doesn't go anywhere. It's with the individuals who actually carry the name Hitler (or Hittler) that really drive a compelling story. There's the old man who has had a wonderful life, and the kind of marriage that you used to see featured in 1950s TV series. There's the teenager who is popular, and smart, and really just a typical girl living in her hometown. There's the immigrant who came to the US not knowing anything about that guy named Hitler in Germany. There's a German who has been isolated in his home country, partly because of Germany's refusal to face its past. There's the young son of a Neo-Nazi who is named Adolf Hitler and who is taken away by the state. Those stories are all great, powerful, and they bring up important issues, but more importantly, they go beyond the idea of Adolf Hitler as the villain in their lives. Yes, he's the greatest monster of the Twentieth Century (though let's not forget Stalin and Mao), but these are people who are living their lives inspite of the name.

Save for little Adolf Hitler.

His father is an adamant White Supremacist, and naming his child Adolf, and then raising a ruckus after a local bakery won't write his full name on a birthday cake, leads to the kid being taken away. You can tell that he's a caring father, and even though at no point is he truly sympathetic, you can tell he actually loves his kid. I actually came away from it thinking that it was a good thing he had his kids taken away, but hating the state of New Jersey for not at least giving him supervised visitation. That seems just downright cruel.

And that's a key to the power of with *Meet the Hitlers*. The interviews with those folks who were directly dealing with the name 'Hit(t)ler were so much more interesting than what turned out to be what filmmaker Matt Ogens focused on. The camera stays on our journalist banging his head against a wall trying to get through to the last living members of Adolf Hitler's bloodline. It's not that it couldn't be a great documentary in and of itself, but if you want to water-down a doc, throw in something like that which is only partly related. There's an added storyline about a photographer who does art exhibitions of Adolf Hitler-themed toys and gifts, which is far better, but only because it received far-less screentime and actually has an interesting character behind it.

Maybe the thing that got me wasn't so much the lack of focus, but the way in which that focus was turned. The reporter and the artist stories are actually about Adolf Hitler – the man and the image. On the other hand, the stories of those living with the name are about people dealing with a problem: or a lack of a problem. The documentary about those folks with the name is great; the documentary about Adolf Hitler's effects on the culture is only OK. The way it was shot actually plays to the personal inter

“Meet the Hitlers weaves a remarkable narrative of disparate people linked as much by a craving for kinship as they are by the titular surname.”  
Gambit



# Meet The Hitlers

actions far better than the impersonal stories, and it does look gorgeous. Ogens' other documentary, *Confessions of a Superhero*, was great, and almost as beautiful as this one. The editing here was also fantastic, and that makes the decision to go on well-beyond the perfect natural break-point for the story so puzzling. There is a moment, where one of the folks named Hitler is walking out of a cemetery, and that's EXACTLY where it should have faded to black, gone to credits, left us with that image lingering like Joseph Cotton shuffling down the hallway in *Citizen Kane*. Alas, no, there's another fifteen minutes or so. That waters everything down. And totally could have been avoided by cutting an extraneous storyline, or even simply re-arranging things.

Is *Meet the Hitlers* worth watching? Yes, absolutely. I can't say it wasn't a good movie, even if I slipped in and out of it a few times. The shooting and cutting were so good, the characters they chose were strong, and much of it was very thought-provoking, which is exactly what a documentary should be. The quality of the production is so strong that there's no way to say it's not worth watching, but at the same time, there's a weakness that becomes more glaring as time goes on and we spend more time away from the heart, the beating heart, of the actual story.

Watered-down? Yes. Bad? Nope.



# Kill Me Three Times

Directed  
by  
Kriv  
Stenders

Simon Pegg. Man, he's great. When I heard about a film in which he was playing a hitman in a story that featured nothing but twists-and-turns, I was sold from the get-go. It's often when you have high hopes that the dashing is most harrowing. This is not one of those cases, because it was even better than I expected.

Charlie Wolfe is our hitman, and he works for Jack Taylor every now and again. He's paid to kill Taylor's wife Alice, played by Alice Braga, who is a part of a scheme hatched by her dentist and his wife. They're making a move for an insurance policy. Charlie catches wind of this scheme and starts blackmailing them. Alice also has a guy on the side, who happens to be played by Luke Hemsworth. They, in turn, are trying to kill Alice, and somehow there's a dirty cop who knows exactly what's going on. Every character has a connection to every other character, and secrets kept from each of them. This means that things are revealed and actions taken that lead to massive pain for many of those involved.

The acting is strong, and Pegg's slightly over-the-top performance is an absolute stand-out. The way he reacts to the strange events is not unlike a detective unraveling a murder plot in an old Film Noir. His delivery is so strong that you really want him to win, though as the film goes on you realize that there's no way he can.

And part of that is the structure. Much like Pulp Fiction, which provides many of the cues for the audience in Kill Me Three Times, this is a non-linear story told with highly intelligent characters acting in a world where coincidence is huge. The script forces you to pay attention and take small clues as major signposts towards future events on the screen. This makes viewing Kill Me Three Times as more than just a popcorn-and-Coke event. It's not quite cerebral, but it certainly is properly thoughtful.

This'll get a mainstream release, and that's a very good thing. It's the kind of movie we need to see more of in the multiplex.

