

KLAUS

2

GRUND  
INZENT

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**ART THIS ISSUE BY MO STARKEY**

So, we're at the second issue! It's a good feeling to have launched, and I'm happy to say that had a wonderful release at Cinequest! We'll be talking all about the festival in these pages, with reviews of the movies and the good time. As one of the shorts programmers, I can say that I can't think of a year that was more successful for us! We had several programmes that sold out, one of which turned away a couple of dozen people! The Docu-Nation program was a special victory as far as I'm concerned. It was one of the most varied programs I've ever seen a festival do! I'm especially happy because I was the primary programmer on that program. There was the exceptional Cardboard Titanics, the funniest film I saw in the entire festival, and the heart-breakingly beautiful Sky Burial about the Buddhist practice of exposure burial in Mongolia. There were two animated docs, one that used a variety of techniques. And of course, there was one that I didn't actually select, Taxidermists, which was my favorite in the program. Go figure...

This issue features that long look at Cinequest, our regular look at the offerings you can find in your local HyperGlobalMega-plex. It's sad to report that we lost one of the greatest filmmakers in the history of the Bay Area film scene, Les Blank. We'll be doing a Les Blank special in the next few weeks.

And thus, delayed, but now with us, welcome to **KLAUS AT GUNPOINT** Issue 2!

**Comments/Content? Send to [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)**



**maria tredway @jackietred**

Saw #ThegreatandpowerfulOz! It was #Amazing. I loved every minute of it. #michellewilliams was breathtakingly beautiful!

**Sage Owens @SageyMae**

3d movies make me feel like I'm on LSD  
#TheGreatAndPowerfulOz

**Diego medrano @diegggzzz**

There's a lot of bosom in this movie!  
#thegreatandpowerfulOz

**Stephanie rose smith @PinkiesCupcake**

Saw #TheGreatAndPowerfulOz today & a character looked like it was @BillCosby & Morgan Freeman's child xD

**Denise Keila @denisekeila | 305**

mila kunis is the best lookin wicked witch I have ever seen #thegreatandpowerfulOz #plottwist

**Wisty @WisteriaSky233**

I have missed Danny Elfman music. Was great listening to the #TheGreatAndPowerfulOz score today. Very cool movie

**Gary Baker @GBtmSF**

How is it that no one else's pointing out that #TheGreatAndPowerfulOz Totally stole the story from #TheThreeAmigos?

**Caroline @carolinemayhew**

The day the great gatsby comes out on dvd will be the happiest day of my life

**Ohhh Lizzy @GucciWithaT**

I didn't know how to pronounce "Buchanan" until I watched The Great Gatsby

**ROSES & SUNSHNE @\_NEXXA**

Leonardo DiCaprio in the Great Gatsby was just sooo damn perfect

**AJ Ewers @ajewers**

I enjoyed The Great Gatsby however I had a distinct déjà vu feeling throughout the viewing. #MoulinRouge

**Jasmin Jane Brown @Jazzbro17**

Eventually got to watch the great gatsby and loved it, wish I was around in the 20's, love the fashion #TheGreatGatsby

**Diana CumberTen @Dyana\_**

I'm crying just remembering... Luhrmann's films get me. I'm always the Carraway (#TheGreatGatsby) or Toulouse-Lautrec (#MoulinRouge) of life

**Lily @LilyGodwood**

Quite disappointed with The Great Gatsby, preferred the book

**Tyler Bucci @Tylerbucci**

The music from the great gatsby is so sick

MIND THE MAINSTREAM - TWITTER SPEAKS...

#THE GREAT GATSBY

**Ned Is Superior @Sinestroll**

#TheAvengers & #IronMan3 rank as 2 of the top 5 grossing films of all time, collectively earning over \$2.7 Bn [cost of American Revolution]

**CJRNZ @CJRNZ**

Just noticed some #exadata product placement by #oracle in the new #ironman3 movie... No Apple or Sony products to be seen for a change!

**Mr. President @KingAbrahm**

Disney (owns ABC, marvel) just raping marvel as much as they can with shit movies #agentsofshield #ironman3 #avengers

**Fallenboyscout @jecardon**

Finally saw #ironman3 last night... Meh+, better than 2... Barely

**GigglingPenguins @Gpenguinz**

#IronMan3 tut tut, what did you do? why kill off an awesome 2 films with 1 film i found meh?

**alikalimalguven @alikalimalguven**

#ironman3 was sophisticated, layered & entertaining. in short, it was everything #manofsteel wasn't.

**Compel Me Damon @HeGotTheGirl**

I just saw #IronMan3. It was amazing! And the end .... "I'll always be Iron Man." Just WOW!

**Shane West @shanewest\_1**

Finally saw #StarTrek Into Darkness and #ManOfSteel  
.... Star Trek continues to impress and be fun. Superman  
= bummer. :/

**Kiran Sanghera @\_kiransanghera**

Man of Steel wasn't that good, but Henry Cavill is hot  
hot hot.

**Christen Fossan @ChristenFossan**

@ManofSteelMovie Holy hell, this movie is AMAZING!  
I think I have to head back to the cinema. Had  
goosebumps all the way through.

**Nicholas Yap Bin @Nick\_YB**

The estimated cost of the damage caused in Man Of  
Steel was \$700 billion whereas 9/11 cost only \$55 billion  
in damages.....yay Superman.

**Adam Beechen @sonnova**

Man of Steel: Fun. Had to duck a few times from all  
of the symbolism thrown at my head, but a good time.  
Michael Shannon rules.

**XANDER DAVIS @XanderDavisLive**

In Man of Steel, Faora was hot has hell: black hair, smokey  
pale-blue eyes, & Final Fantasy / Street Fighter warp-  
speed melee combat. Uffff.

**Alyssa Rosenberg @AlyssaRosenberg**

Don't tell me you can't give me a female superhero  
who will be a thrill to watch in fights when Faora's on  
the big screen. #ManOfSteel

# CINEQUEST 2013

*In many ways, Cinequest is the annual Silicon Valley Film Fan Family Reunion. It's a good time with good friends. I've been a part of the Cinequest family for more than a decade, as a volunteer, as a short film programmer, as a theatre manager, pre-film speaker, and once in a while, I even go to watch movies. This year, I watched a lot more movies than the last few years, largely because I didn't have as much time to just hang around the festival, which meant I had to pick and choose my spots, so I would tend to plan my film viewing much more tightly.*

*This year, we were all there, all having a great time, and the biggest deal for me was that we all got to see so many amazing movies. I saw no film that I thought was true trash. This is very rare for ANY film festival. I remember Sundance 1999, when folks called it the Year of Competence, because they seemed to be picking safer choices, better produced, more professional. This wasn't that. Cinequest 2013 was very good, fewer films shot poorly, fewer Mumblecore-esque films, and a few films that were on the edge where one group of well-thinking people could love it, and another group of well-thinking people could hate it. That's sometimes a wonderful thing, largely because it shows that folks are trying things that are right on that line.*

*We've got several Cinequest regulars who are here talking about the World of Cinequest. It's always good to hear more and more about the festival. You can read more of Jason Wiener's thoughts on films at <http://jasonwatchesmovies.blogspot.com/>, and Phil Castor's at <http://philsfilmadventures.blogspot.com/>. And Chris Garcia's are here, but you might wanna look at his Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/johnnyeponymous](http://www.facebook.com/johnnyeponymous) or Twitter (@johnnyeponymous) and the #Cinequest hashtag.*

# CINEQUEST™



## Jason goes to Cinequest--Opening Night by Jason Wiener

Woo hoo, the biggest party in all of San Jose started last night, and I...am totally not ready for it. I'll be lucky if I can figure out what I'm seeing today by...tomorrow.

But none of that mattered. I left work early to get down to San Jose 2 hours before the festivities began. I got my press pass, hugged a bunch of my fellow Cinequesters, had a few drinks in the VIP lounge, hugged more Cinequesters, and then headed to the fabulous California Theatre, where I hugged more Cinequesters and soon enough was occupying my traditional front row center seat.

Eventually when everyone else had taken their seats and we'd all been treated to a rousing performance on the mighty Wurlitzer, Halfdan (isn't it about time he was promoted to Threequartersdan?) Hussey came onstage for some brief introductory remarks.

They did, of course, play the [festival trailer \(http://www.cinequest.org/film-festival\)](http://www.cinequest.org/film-festival), which I'm sure I'll be sick of after seeing it a few hundred times over the course of the festival, but for now I'm in love with. My friend Roy and I officially decided that the official audience participation during the trailer is to raise your wand to help create the magic of Cinequest--so go find a nice, wand-like stick everyone (my wand, in keeping with my Cinequesting experience, will probably be a swizzle stick.)

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## WOO HOO, THE BIGGEST PARTY IN ALL OF SAN JOSE

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More thanking of sponsors. We officially love them all, but extra special love for the Gold Sponsors, and we got to watch commercials for AT&T U-Verse, HP, and Sony. I know, commercials aren't cool...but I freakin' want a Sony 4K TV!

Then they introduced the [Cinequesters \(http://www.cinequest.org/meet-the-categories\)](http://www.cinequest.org/meet-the-categories). A quick, easy, and fun way to

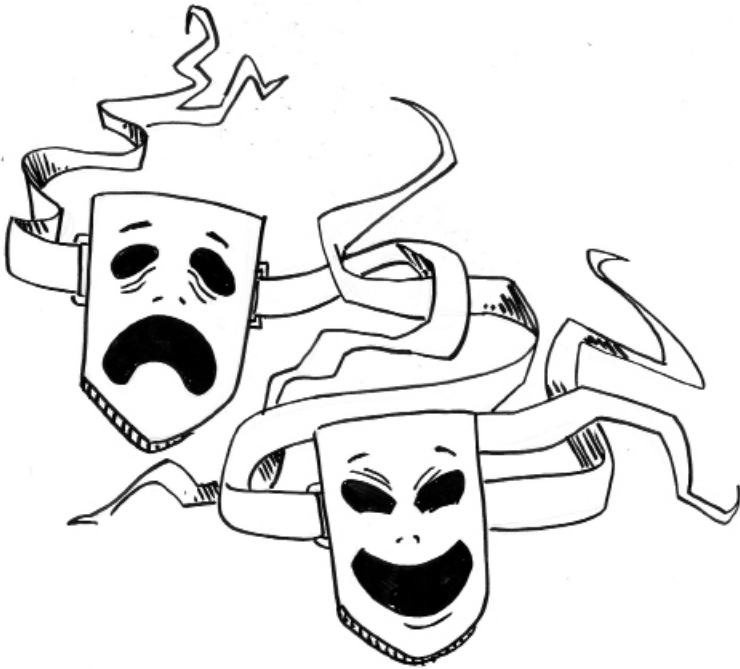
categorize your festival plan. Halfdan did mention that fans had already taken to calling themselves Cinequesters. Now I don't want to make too much of this, because I'm not sure it's actually true, but I've heard a rumor that I have actually been credited with coining the term, "Cinequester." I don't know if that's actually true (that I'm being credited with it, or that the credit is deserved.) It feels like one of those things we started doing without knowing whose idea it was. In any case, the important thing is don't confuse it with "sequester."

Then to celebrate and illustrate the Cinequesters, we got to see some (nearly) naked painted people, courtesy of Trina Merry's [Art Alive](http://www.facebook.com/ArtAliveGallery) (<http://www.facebook.com/ArtAliveGallery>). Really beautiful, but is it Burning Man already?! Then we got a yoga demonstration--seriously, is it Burning Man already!?

Oh yeah, and finally we actually saw a movie, too. That would be the Cold War, young woman drama *GINGER AND ROSA* starring Elle Fanning (as Ginger) and the first feature film role for Alice Englert (as Rosa.) Two girls born in London in the shadow of the atomic bomb. Their mothers were close friends, going into labor at the exact same time. Ginger and Rosa grow up as best friends, sharing a bond nearly as close as twins (I guess as close as could be without being actual sisters.) Director Sally Potter (*ORLANDO*) does a great job of creating the early '60s, a time when young women wore jeans in the bathtub to custom shrink them, ironed their hair, and actively rebelled against the boring domesticity society expects of them. Of course, although their respective mothers are examples of that boring domestic life, you have to sympathize for them. Rosa's father is absent and so she had to raise her as a single mother. Ginger's father...is even worse. A pompous, self-aggrandizing, philandering pig who glorifies his selfishness by claiming he's taking a moral stand against authority. He was a conscientious objector in the Great War, and went to jail for it--and now thinks refusing to fight against Hitler makes him a moral hero. I so wanted to reach into the screen and punch him in the face. Especially when it's clear that he (as a college professor) is routinely sleeping with his students. And especially when Rosa starts taking an interest in him. Meanwhile, Ginger is becoming politically active in the "ban the bomb" movement and

is following the philosophy of Bertrand Russell while trying to become a poet in the mold of T.S. Eliot. But let me go back to Rosa sleeping with Ginger's father--that is not good. All this seething tension comes to a head during the Cuban Missile Crisis, with some explosive results (well, not explosive in that way, but emotionally explosive.)

And with that, Cinequest 2013 is officially open. I was off to the opening night party where I had more drinks, hugged more Cinequesters (not the naked painted people, the fellow fans.) I think at some point I picked Michael "Hambone" Rabehl off the floor. It was a weird night. And here's to the start of a weird and wonderful Cinequest.



## Congratulations - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

I lay a lot of love on absurdism. Absurdist comedy films are a personal favorite. These tend to play less well in the mainstream, but on the festival stage, they can be smash hits.

So it is in 2013 with *Congratulations*.

I walked into it expecting one thing: a police procedural about a missing kid. I love *Castle*, so how could it not be a good thing? What I got was a cop, Detective Skok actually, who is the lead detective on the case of the disappearance of young Paul Ryan Gray, 8 years old. The story of Detective Skok's dogged investigation is the central vein of the story, and that's the charm. He's equal parts Agent Cooper and *Castle*'s Detective Beckett, in that he seems to be operating on a different plane, but he's got that pitbull's jaw when it comes to holding on to a case and not shaking it loose. John Curran's take on Skok is pretty spectacular, not to mention that he's got exactly the face for a detective.

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...HE'S GOT THAT PITBULL'S  
JAW WHEN IT COMES TO  
HOLDING ON TO A CASE...

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Now, Paul Gray disappears from his living room, with his family in there with him. Detective Skok arrives with his team to interview the family. The family who has already started creating flyers less than an hour after his disappearance. The flyers slowly start to conquer the house. Skok suspects that Paul is still in the house, and his team sees their police work as valuable as helping the Grays do their laundry and clean-up around the house.

The family is wonderful. Robert Longstreet plays Paul's father with a slightly distanced and often questioning stance. He slowly comes around, but it's often off of his reactions that Detective



Skok's skewed views are played. Rhoda Griffis plays Paul's mom, and she's amazing. She's reacting to the events with an intensity that could power Belize for a month. She's fantastic, and I really don't understand why she's not a giant star. She's like Gillian Anderson crossed-up with Glenn Close. While Mrs. Gray provides the intensity that keeps it a missing persons story, the interactions of the family with Skok and his team is what makes it absurd.

This is a film that could only be appreciated by the audiences of today. This is a film that almost requires an understanding of the police procedural, or at least a fleeting acquaintance. Unlike Agent Cooper's arrival in *Twin Peaks*, Detective Skok comes into a home which is almost completely normal, but he brings the weird with him. The disappearance might be the strangest thing that has ever happened in the Gray home, but it is far from the strangest thing that Detective Skok has been a part of. It's as if he's infecting the house with his strange methods and quirks, but at the same time, they give into it, not just playing along, but actually believing that this deadpan mad man might be able to crack the case if they just give in.

The direction of Mike Brune is so solid, and the script is clean. If there's any problem with *Congratulations*, it's the last twenty minutes. I get why it's there, because it's the story of Skok and his decent into his own nuttiness, but at the same time, I wanted it to be the story of Paul, so it felt as if it went a little too long, a little beyond the surreality and into real reality, which is a bit jarring. Still, the overall effect of the film is one of brilliant timing and a pace that flow smartly between all the characters and the story. It's weird, it's smart, and it's absurd, which is a combination I totally embrace.

## Sparks - Reviewed by Phil Castor

I made my way across the street to the California Theatre to attend the world premiere of *SPARKS*. The film was written and directed by Christopher Folino, who based the film on his own cult comic book. Set in the comic world of the 1940's, this cool superhero/film noir thriller is about a man named Ian Sparks (Chase Williamson from *JOHN DIES AT THE END*), who has no superpowers but becomes the costumed superhero Sparks after losing his parents in a horrible car accident. Upon arriving to the big city, he meets other superheroes and soon falls in love with female superhero Lady Heavenly (Ashley Bell from *THE LAST EXORCISM*). But after the duo meet with the villainous Matanza (William Katt from *CARRIE*), the results are so traumatizing that it sends Ian Sparks on the deep end, living a life of regret and self destruction. Can he rise up once again and save his beloved Lady Heavenly from the hands of the dreaded Matanza? Also making appearances in the film are Clancy Brown, Jake Busey, Marina Squerciati, and the legendary Clint Howard!!

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YOU NEED TO SEE THIS FILM PEOPLE!

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This was such a fantastic film that it literally blew my mind! The film had everything going for it: an amazing cast, awesome special effects, great story with nice twist and turns, tragedy and redemption. The plight that Ian Sparks had to suffer was so tragic that you had to feel sympathetic, which makes you root for him as he picks himself back up to once again become the hero that he is. Chase Williamson was great as Sparks. Ashley Bell was superb as Lady Heavenly, bringing strength, class, and vulnerability to her role. William Katt as the evil Matanza was just that: evil! Katt gets my vote for the most vilest villain in a comic book based film! After the screening, the entire cast and crew came up onto the stage while the audience stood up and cheered! This is so far one of my favorite films at Cinequest! You need to see this film people!

Visit the film's official website at [www.sparksmovie.com](http://www.sparksmovie.com). Also follow the film on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/sparksmovie>) and Twitter (@sparksmovie).

## Must Have Been Love (En Som Deg) - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

In American film talk, *Must Have Been Love* is a Monica Potter film where she manages to attract wonderful men with her beauty and then mess things up temporarily with her quirky playfulness going a bit too far. Now, if it were a Monica Potter film, the script would have had her doing broad physical comedy, but in this Finnish/Norwegian romantic dramedy, we're treated to Pamela Tola (who looks like a Scandinavian Monica Potter) playing Kaisa, a young lady who runs into a young man she shared some moments with in Istanbul.

Or did she?

After that, she runs headlong into a relationship, and then things get complicated.

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...THIS MAY BE THE  
ONE CASE WHERE YOU  
REALLY WANT TO BE  
MEG RYAN...

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If you look at the structure of *Must Have Been Love*, it's a straight-ahead American-style romantic comedy, but it's been taken by writers Eirik Svensson and Jyrki Vaisanen and made into something with greater depth and style. Kaisa gets locked out of her apartment in Istanbul, which leads her to staying the night with the guys staying in the neighboring apartment. She's Finnish, they're Norwegian, so they speak to each other in English. Kaisa and her two friends match-up with the three Norwegian, and Kaisa and her

guy fall for each other. The scenes in Istanbul are gorgeous, it's one of the most photogenic cities in the world, and the way Kaisa interacts with it is quite interesting. The story takes her to Istanbul, Oslo, Helsinki, and Berlin, and each is different, and it's through Kaisa's eyes that we're experiencing it. It's almost like her travelogue, as if she's telling us the story with slides from her journey. Only she's choosing the moments that were both wonderful and beautiful and sweet, as well as the moments that are none of those. When she is within a group, she has a certain confidence, but still that charm. When she is alone, particularly with a guy, she doesn't find her groove, gets a bit weird and presses her luck in ways that she hopes are endearing, but turns out to drive her guy a ways back.

And perhaps that's the career path of most young female romantic comedy stars. They come in as a breath of fresh air, they draw in their audience deeply, make them love you instantly, and then over time, as they are supposedly a comfortable presence, they go and do something stupid, usually a film where they stretch their talents into a cop drama or action role, and suddenly, we're turned against them, but we might be willing to take her back a bit, a little, give her another chance, and that determines whether she's Molly Ringwald or Meg Ryan. This may be the one case where you REALLY want to be Meg Ryan...

The film's cinematography is strong, the characters both believable and realistic, and the script intelligent to a degree we'd never see in American romantic comedies. It's a film worth sniffing out.





## The Playback Singer - Reviewed by Phil Castor

My first film of the day was the comedy *THE PLAYBACK SINGER*. The film focuses on a married couple Priya (Navi Rawat) and Ray (Ross Partridge). She's a lawyer and he is a former school teacher who quit to become a successful jungle-gym architect. Unfortunately, all he does is sleep in late, smoke weed, and waiting for inspiration to come. Well, inspiration does come in the form of Priya's absent father Ashok (Piyush Mishra), who's in town to perform a show. But he's having issues as well, like being cheated out of his money from his promoter, being arrogant, and drinking a lot of wine. Soon the three of them begin draw strength from one another, in hope to better themselves.

This little comedy gem was directed by Suju Vijayan, who keeps the laughter rolling with ease and simple setups. Suju lets the camera focus on the actors, which by the way, were all great! Special nod goes to Piyush Mishra, who had the best lines in the film! I wish I could rewrite what he said, but I can't because a lot of what he said was racist, but it was so damn funny! His delivery of his lines were so straight faced and serious! Every time he opened his mouth, I just laughed uncontrollably! Afterwards Suju and her producer came down to the front and conducted a quick Q&A.

Great film to start my day off with! Unfortunately, today was the last screening of the film, but you can check out the film's official website at [www.theplaybacksinger.com](http://www.theplaybacksinger.com) and on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/theplaybacksinger>) and Twitter (@thepbsinger) as well.



## The Space Jockey Pursuit - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Quirky films often live, and sadly die, on the festival circuit. It's sad to think that if a film like *500 Days of Summer* hadn't had Zooey Deschanel and Joseph Gordon Levitt it would have never made it to the multiplex. When I see a film that is as lovely and rewarding as *The Space Jockey Pursuit*, I can only hope that distribution will finally get with the idea that it's a good story that can sell tickets if given the chance. Even without the stars.

The role of *Space Jockey* is the hottest on the Hollywood radar, and Alvin Bernstein thinks he's the perfect fit for it. A letter he received seems to say so too. Sadly, he's also been committed to an institution for a good while. Alvin's semi-estranged brother, Tom, is supposed to take over his father's automobile company by moving to Japan for four years, which he doesn't want to do. Tom and Alvin borrow a solar car and run off to get Alvin to the Chicago audition for *Space Jockey* (escaping a re-institutionalization that was scheduled for him) and along the way, they pick up Alvin's muse: former child star Cecilia. The three of them take that journey to Chicago, meeting new friends, finding out all about themselves, and trying to cross-off items from his list of method acting must-dos.

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...IT'S A GOOD STORY THAT CAN  
SELL TICKETS IF GIVEN THE CHANCE.

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The first thing that many folks seem to catch was the feeling of Wes Anderson influence. While I certainly felt that there was some Anderson in there, the quirky humor and the lovely acting in a world which is somewhat different, but I felt a lot more Neil Simon and Richard Linkletter in the dialogue and particularly in the heart of the film. The Wes Anderson film tradition is to give us characters who are detached and unable to interact with other humans forced to bounce off one another. Here, we see a character who feels nothing but connection to the story he feels that he's

a part of, a character who can't face his own role in the world in which he feels he is trapped, and a character who is clawing her way back towards the top. It's a much more human, and humane, story.

Now, whenever you have a character whose hold on reality might be a bit looser than most, you run the risk of over-doing it, of making the character too big for the rest of the story. Somehow, it doesn't happen here. Barrett Doyle's performance places emphasis all over the film, no question, but he also takes it into a direction that allows the holes to be filled by the other characters. I think that Cecilia, played with exceptional quirkiness by Jonette Page, might provide the humanity that the film leaks all over the place. She's both vulnerable and strong, which is a lovely combination. Tom, played by Matthew Titshaw (who also wrote the script, might have delivered a performance that understated his sense of detachment, but I felt that was for the best. He's not the slacker with all the promise in the world, nor does he feel like he's Poor Little Rich Boy, which his character certainly is. He plays Tom like he's pulled between duty and caring for his brother and working on his own life and finding his path. In short, he's a young man who hasn't found his way. It's a role that has been a part of film since the 1950s, but here, he's a modern and modest performance. Whereas Alvin desperately wants to be Marlon Brando, Tom wants to be... well, that's the question, isn't it?

The Space Jockey Pursuit is well-shot, though not overly showy, and it's well designed and directed. The script is great, funny and sly and quirky and moving. It's not the kind of film that says "FEEL, DAMN YOU!", but it makes you feel for the characters quite naturally. That might be the greatest success of the film, that it manages to be a film that makes you feel without the bashing. Yes, the dialogue kinda feels a bit stage-y at points, maybe the delivery is a little stilted early on in the film, but it becomes more and more natural as it goes along. This is the kind of film that could easily find a loving audience, if it were only given a chance on the screens in multiplexes around the country.

## Twenty Million People - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

A film opens with a screening of a romantic comedy that even Penny Marshall would say was sacherine. After that, the main character says that it was a shitty film, and dissects the ridiculousness of the plot, and especially of the ending. It's the kind of film that telegraphs what's going to happen by giving us the kind of character who is constantly denying that the way those two characters act is how he will ever be.

Yes, it's the classic 'No Way I'll Ever Shoot You With This Gun' concept.

*Twenty Million People* is a fun film, with a concept comedic tone that delivers laughs at a maximum interval of every couple of minutes. The reason for that is pretty simple: the script is funny and the actors work with drone-strike precision. Brian, played by director/writer Michael Ferrell, is so incredibly smarming (charming smarmy), that it feels like hanging out with my good friends. He's charming, and funny, with exceptional timing and delivery. He's a filmmaker, which naturally makes him more and more caustic in his view of the world. Ashley, played by the lovely Devin Sanchez, is funny, adorable, sarcastic, and just a bit jaded, which she plays underneath a veneer of comedy. She's a stand-up, and a pretty good one. The two meet at the shitty romantic comedy movie night at the coffeehouse where Brian works, and they fall fast and hard, spend two weeks together, and then she disappears.

That's when Brian goes all stalkerocity, then goes completely Nora Ephron and is desperate to not only reconnect with Ashley, but to win her back. She's not so sure, because while she was also playing it like she wanted nothing more than the sex and fun, she left because of his constant reminders that he didn't want a relationship. She was playing along, and while she seemed to be perfectly happy with the arrangement, at least to Brian's face, she was secretly hoping for more.

And so, it seems, was Brian.

This all reminded me of the recent music video hit by Amanda Palmer *The Bed Song*, a music story of how a couple stop

communicating over time and things grow stale. Now, it seems that Ashley was in a relationship that had reached that point, and she's also tired of dating a pot-addled slacker. Brian is terrified of that moment happening to him, but even worse, he's scared of coming to the point where there is no need for talking. He's scared of the comfort, the comfort that can completely turn into complacency so easily, and never seems to in those romantic comedies that Brian so detests. Brian may actually understand that far better than anyone else. At least he understands the path that many relationships take.

And that scares him.

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## YES, IT'S THE CLASSIC 'NO WAY I'LL EVER SHOOT YOU WITH THIS GUN' CONCEPT.

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The funny thing is that his path, his journey, is that it's as ridiculous as the films that he rails against. The fact that he'd meet the woman of his dreams, then let her slip away like that just doesn't happen. Yes, people who are deep into each other may just slip away, but never without a whimper, always with a scream. He rails against Romantic Comedies because they end where it should start; at the point where the relationship is just beginning and before it's turned into Amanda Plamer's *The Bed Song* world where you're no longer callign everyday you're on teh road. The beginning, it's the easy part, sort of, where you're still learning what's what about each other and filling the gaps in the conversation with sex, dinners out, and still laughing at each others' little strangenesses.

And there's the couple at the start, Edward and Caroline. They're madly in love, and have certainly reached that *The Bed Song* phase. In fact, we first see them in a private capacity where they're in bed, and Edward is fully in the depths of his Nintendo DS. Caroline is hoping to get back to her family in St. Louis, and Edward, played by Chris Prine, who is emotionally stupid. I mean, if Brian is a cynic about the process of falling in love, Edward just doesn't understand the entire situation of how things work in the world of love. Of course, almost as soon as we've met them, they're broken up, and we get to see Edward successfully deal with what Brian can not seem to make happen: getting over it. Brian is terrible at it, at dealing

with the world he's built, and when he does finally get around to figuring himself out, it requires a turn that is only enabled by the application of those two characters from the film they watch at the beginning - *Future Perfect*.

And there's a bit of the problem. It's not until 25 minutes in that there are any unrealistic elements, in this case the application of hallucinations of those two characters from the film that led to Brian and Ashley meeting. They both have the same hallucinations, which is as unbelievable as the entire film those characters come from. It's an awesome application of the concept. They give in to the structure of Romantic Comedy, which allows them to come around and find each other.

If I have one significant quibble, it's the presence of Caroline's Christian roommate. She's well-played, and cute as hell, but the way she's treated in the script, as the nutter Christian, isn't exactly smart. I'm not one who thinks you can't poke fun at Christians (or Muslims, or Jews, or Rastafarians... wait, don't poke fun at Rastafarians), but if you're going to include a character in your film that is pointedly one religion or another, make it mean something to the story. Yes, she plays an important part, she's the catalyst to Edward's recovering from Caroline, but the detail of her religious slant does nothing to advance the story, or really her character.

So, I seriously enjoyed *Twenty Million People*, and it gave me a chance to reflect on how Brian would have thought about the various romantic comedies of Cinequest. I really think he'd have enjoyed *Must Have Been Love*, though most of the other RomComs at Cinequest this year probably would have turned him off.

And in the end, is there any other ending that would have satisfied an audience that, despite what we may claim on our OKCupid profiles, is DYING for less realism than the world around us provides?



## **Animated Worlds Shorts Program - Reviewed by Jason Weiner**

*SPARKS* was kind of like a cartoon come to life, so I kept that feeling going and saw a whole block of cartoons with *Shorts 4: Animated Worlds*

### *BUTTERFLIES*

A little girl is a promising artist, sketching the butterfly who lives with her. When a businessman sees her talent he gives her a job illustrating greeting cards. The job is on an assembly line, and is slowly killing her and her butterfly. A metaphor on how industrialization and profit motive kills creativity...or (as my friend Chris put it) a metaphor on how grants for the arts are killing industry.

### *BYDLO:*

Polish for cattle, they are brought literally up from the claymation dirt to the music from Mussorgsky's [Pictures at an Exhibition No. 4, "Bydlo"](#)

### *CICADA PRINCESS*

16 years dormant and underground, followed by one beautiful day of life on the outside. Beautifully constructed figures.

### *EXOIDS*

Slugs vs. Robots in a post-apocalyptic Los Angeles hellscape. Need I say more? (A: No, it's clearly already awesome.)

### *KALI THE LITTLE VAMPIRE*

None of the other kids will play with little Kali, just because he's afraid to step into the light. Pretty sad.

### *A KNOCK ON MY DOOR*

The sad but hopeful life of a Korean immigrant to America, based on the life of director David Chai's dad. Simple animation hides a surprising, funny, and touching story.

### *LITTLE KAIJU*

A little critter roams Tokyo at night, and a curious man sees him and follows him. Pretty and clever.

### *OLD ANGEL*

Perhaps he's too old for his wings to work anymore. Or perhaps he just needs the right kind of encouragement to fly again.

### *PRIESTS*

The funniest movie in the program, a young priest pesters his mentor with questions of life, God, stage fright, where you're allowed to stick your penis, etc.

### *SOUTH SEAS DREAM*

Lee Lanier (*BLOOD ROULETTE*) returns with this weird little composition of found footage, music, dancing tikis, and fish. Now if I can just see the "director's cut" where she's not wearing those starfish...

### *YELLOW STICKY NOTES: CANADIAN ANIJAM*

A project from 15 of Canada's best animators, all doing variations on the theme of a to-do list. Just simple line drawings on a yellow background. The cool thing was realizing I've seen so much of (most) of their works before that I could recognize their individual styles.





## **The Battles We Fought Shorts Program - Reviewed by Jason Weiner**

And then, after a brief break, I caught my first shorts program (Cinequest always has great shorts!) *Short Program 1: The Battles We Fought*. Stories of conflict, some literal wars and some are more personal battles.

### *BUZKASHI BOYS*

An Oscar-nominated short from Afghanistan. As an American, I only hear about the Afghan national sport of **Buzkashi** (goat-carcass polo) as an example of the brutality and backwardness of the Afghan people. But this movie showcases the beauty of the game through the eyes of two young boys. One is a street kid who dreams of being a Buzkashi rider, the other is the son of a blacksmith who--it is assumed--will grow up to be a blacksmith, too. But the street kid's courage and hope influences the blacksmith's son in surprising and complicated ways.

### *THE EXAMPLE*

The comedic entry in this program, a subway platform and a forgotten briefcase force a man and a woman to confront their internal battle between self-preservation and being known as rational, liberal people who aren't paranoid and don't suspect an unattended piece of luggage is a bomb just because it was left by a non-white person. Is it really worse to be seen as racist than to be blown up? Yes, it clearly is.

### *KOLONA*

A brutally traumatic film about Kosovo in 1999 and a father being forced to make a tragic decision. This one still leaves me a little emotionally scarred.

### *MATRIARCHE*

Youth, recklessness, robbery, violence...and then having to face your mother.

### NO ONE PUKES IN HEAVEN

Speaking of motherhood, in the world premiere of this beautiful film a mother and daughter play a game where they fulfill each others' wishes as much as possible before the mother dies of cancer. Really heartbreaking and beautiful.

### WHY ARE YOU HERE

German soldiers in the wilderness at the end of WWII deal with a mysterious sniper. Tense and thrilling.

And that was it. For those who study the printed program guide, you might notice that an additional movie, *HALF SHAVED*, is listed. It isn't actually playing in the festival, and isn't listed on the program guide. Hopefully it will come to the Bay Area soon enough. If you don't care about spoilers, the full (AIFF award-winning) screenplay can be found [here](http://www.screenplayfest.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/bmuresanuhalfshaved.pdf). (<http://www.screenplayfest.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/bmuresanuhalfshaved.pdf>)



## The Wound - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

Visceral filmmaking is what I wish we could all call Extreme Horror. It's so very appropriate, no? Not only is there often viscera present, but even when there's none present, it still hits you as if there's a pile of intestines laying across the scene.

And there are films like the grisly short *The Wound* that are both.

Annie, played by the wonderful Arianna Ortiz, has just had an operation and complications have meant that they couldn't suture the wound closed all the way. This gaping incision is rather gross, true, but it's also somehow subtle, as if you were expecting a sarlaac pit under all that gauze. She relies on the assistance of her in-home caretaker to keep the injury tidy, but eventually, the wound begins to change and expresses its displeasure.

Or maybe just it's hunger.

This is a short of exceptional storytelling wisdom. It doesn't go too far out onto the gore-slippery slope, but at the same time it's not overly feely. In the film, characters keep asking "What the fuck?" and receiving an answer in kind from the title maw. It leaves you with that feeling, that disquieting sensation that authors like William Hope Hodgson and HP Lovecraft mined so expertly, but also with that gross gotta-wash-your-eyeballs sensation that you might get from the ickier *Saw*-type franchises, but not in the way that feels exploitative. This is a Visceral film that plays around the viscera, to a degree, instead of giving into it fully, which is a joy to behold.



## A Night at the Office - Reviewed by Chris Garcia

I grew up watching *Creature Features*. It was a late night show where host John Stanley (or, for slightly older kids, Bob Wilkins) would introduce films as the most down-to-Earth horror hosts you've ever met. I saw so many great old timey science fiction and horror films. *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers*, *Day of the Triffids*, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *Freaks*...

Then again, I also had to sit through *Them*, *The Milpitas Monster*, *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, and *The 30 Foot Bride of Candy Rock*. You take the good with the bad, I guess. *Creature Features* was an important part of my film education, and it gave me an appreciation of Bug-Eyed Monsters that I carry with me to this day.



Also on Channel 2, though in the afternoon, was *Dialing for Dollars*, hosted by Pat McCormick. It was a show that had the gimmick that you could win money by watching, but they showed great old films, including some old silents. I saw my first Keystone Cops, Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd films on *Dialing for Dollars*, not to mention a ton of 1930s and 40s talky comedies. Bob & Crosby, Laurel & Hardy, Lewis & Martin, and on & on. This is where my appreciation for film comedy came from.

Now, when a film can combine those two loves, like the wonderful Eric Eppinger short *A Night at the Office*, it's a bit of magic.

The story is of two co-workers who have to deal with having dated and being stuck in a nearly-deadend job in an office where there are semi-regular Office Monster attacks mixed in with the tedium.

You can see how the two filmic loves of my youth collide in that one, no?

The leads, our formerly dating couple, is so intensely into their own stuff that they give almost no reaction to the terror that is the Bug-Eyed Office Monster who is going around eating their co-workers. They have a conversation where they're complaining about the dead-endedness of their jobs, about the narcissism they both portray, about their futures, which may or may not include Office Monsters. They are exceptionally shallow human beings.

Human Beings in a world where there are Bug-Eyed Office Monsters.

There's an absurdism to the world, where horrifying things can exist and destroy the lives of average office workers and aside from the occasional comment on it, it's just water off a duck's back. When we consider a Horror World, we get a feeling of terror, but imagine the people who have been born and grown in that world. They just do what we do when we have been steeped in horrors that have always been there: we go about mocking our former lovers and bragging about our time on the stage. That element is one of the reasons I seriously fell in love with the wonderful *A Night at the Office*, and I hope y'all get a chance to see it. You can find out more at <http://www.facebook.com/ANightAtTheOffice>

## **AutoDrive - Reviewed by Chris Garcia**

*“Paranoia is the backbone of science fiction, and deservedly so.” – Chris Garcia*

Some films grew out of concepts that are neither obvious, nor simple. When I watch a short, whether on YouTube or as a part of my selection viewing for festivals, the first thing I look for is that itch, that unexplainable need to watch and re-watch. When I find a short that gives me that feeling, I know I'm on to something. I mean, if you know you **HAVE** to watch four or five hundred shorts and you keep going back to one over and over, that says something for it, doesn't it.

*AutoDrive* by director Rory O'Donnell is the kind of short that makes you want to watch it again and again.

The story is pretty clear cut in cocktail party form – a guy's GPS starts giving him directions to where it wants him to go. That doesn't say it all and it doesn't really start to tell you what to expect. The message for help is from a woman held against her will, working within the AutoDrive corporation, and Steve, our Hero, has taken it on himself to answer her distress signal. He starts to see a world he never expected, and that is where things get interesting. There is the way that the tension ramps up, builds along character lines, and eventually into whole concept of what we take for granted everyday, as well as how we interact with things we are distant from. It's not that much of a stretch to think about how it applies to our world today. What happens to us if we allow our distant connections become personal, real? How can we distance ourselves from far-off difficulties when we understand what's going on? And what exactly is behind all our technologies? This could easily be seen as a condemnation of the ways in which major corporations use their employees, the conditions they create and the forces they wield.

Ok, that might be a bridge too far, but it did come to me.

*AutoDrive* is a fine science fiction film, is the kind of short that you can talk a lot about. Watching it, you'll think that it's a much bigger budget project than it turned out to be. And done in 4 days! This is the kind of filmmaking that might not be terribly showy, but when you're walked through it, it will shock you at how much they did with so little. Rory and producer Nicola Petrides did just that at

Cinequest, took me through the entire film shot-for-shot, showed me all the SFX shots, and I was amazed. As a guy who works in the field of Computer Graphics history, I'm usually really good finding when things have been added in post, but here, with the exception of two shots, I was amazed! There's no feeling of artificiality, no marred vision of the scene, no feeling of insertion. That's the sign of great filmmaking. What really strikes me seeing *AutoDrive* on a big screen is how successfully they fooled me. I thought they had managed to find the perfect setting, that they had done everything as a practical, but alas, this was not true. They used subtle CGI in ways that I could not detect. This was the work of a team that were not only very good at their jobs, but also who understood what Orson Welles understood about movies so well: that the eye will never be fooled by anything less than exactly right, and the effects and stunts we're presented in *AutoDrive* are exactly right.

And there's some excellent practical stuff, too. The design of the *AutoDrive* device is awesome, retro, created from an old radio (one I recognised from my years as hanging out at antique stores) with a couple of touches added on. It's a beautiful piece, and if I could get myself a GPS system that looked like that, I'd be a happy guy. There are books that are seen throughout, which is a nice touch. As are the piranha.

*AutoDrive* is a wonderful film, one which could have gone on longer and still had juice. The shooting is clean, the script well-managed, and the setting completely believable. It's hard not to see a bit of Philip K. Dick in it. There's a sense of questioning of what is real to it, and what is our responsibility when it comes to our technologies. The little touches, like motion animation in eyepieces, and row upon row of wooden cages, make this a short film that plays so smart with our interactions with devices and the possible voices calling out behind them.



## Jason goes to Cinequest--Closing Night by Jason Wiener

Then...nothing else really fit into my schedule until the closing night gala. I kind of wanted to see *CHITTAGONG*, but with a delay in the schedule (due to a misprint in the guide) it was starting late and I would be rushed to make it to the closing night awards and screening of *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*. So instead I decided to hang out in the lounge and have a few drinks. And then I went to the VIP Soiree, had a few snacks, had a few drinks, and oh yeah, I met Salman Rushdie. We chatted for a little bit. I told him I was excited to see his movie. He said how great the cinematography was, making it look like it cost way more than it did. I mentioned how we have a great movie palace (The California Theatre) to play it in. Then we got to talking about Wurlitzer organs. So from now on, whenever the conversation turns to Wurlitzer organs (and I will make sure it does as often as possible), I will throw in an occasional, "As I was saying to Salman Rushdie..."

Anyway, I got to the California in time to grab a front row center-ish seat (the exact center is reserved for the photographers). Of course, one of my favorite things about the closing ceremony at Cinequest is how they get all the filmmakers who are still in town up on stage for a standing ovation, before they congratulate the [award winners](#). As is typical, no matter how many I see at Cinequest I always manage to miss the bulk of the award winners. Even seeing every shorts program (except the students), I missed the best narrative short because it played in front of a feature I didn't see instead of in a shorts program. However, my favorite of the festival--*LOVELESS ZORITSA*--won the Global Vision Award! So as far as I'm concerned, I Cinequested right this year!

And then it was finally time for *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*, screenplay by Salman Rushdie and based on his allegedly unfilmable novel of the same name. Confession--I have not read the novel (I did read "The Satanic Verses" in college, in an "offensive literature" class. I liked it quite a lot, although it was pretty digressive--a word that Rushdie himself used to describe the novel of "Midnight's Children", so I can understand how it got the reputation of unfilmability.)



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# “AS I WAS SAYING TO SALMAN RUSHDIE...”

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The story centers around two children, both born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947 (for those who, like me, don't immediately appreciate the significance of that date, it's the day India became independent from Great Britain.) But the story began years before that--with the grandfather of one of the boys, a doctor with a famously giant nose, and his romance with a patient whose family is so strict he can only examine her through a hole in a sheet. Back in 1947, the two boys born at midnight are actually switched at birth by a nurse who is inspired to “make the poor rich and the rich poor.” So the son who was meant to be a rich, privileged kid grows up a near beggar singing for his supper with his accordion-playing father. And that accordion player's son is raised by a wealthy family, but has his own pressures to do great things. And he is the psychic link to all children who were born in the hour after midnight on that date--and they all have some form of super powers (flight, magic, invisibility, strength, whatever.) That link drives a lot of the story, but isn't all of it. In fact, nearly all of the psychically linked children are meaningless, except for the love interest. But the rise and fall of the two boys is played out in parallel to the political turmoil in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. And I suppose if I knew that history better I would appreciate that more, but it is unfolded in a way that at least makes it accessible to a novice. As for the movie in general--every scene looks great, is acted great, and is never boring. What it all adds up to is harder to wrap my head around. I ended up left with a feeling that I liked it, but the book must be much better. I guess I'll have to go read that sometime, along with more of Rushdie's work.

Then there was an on-stage interview with Rushdie, which dealt not just with the movie and novel of *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*, but also of course “The Satanic Verses”, the fatwah against him, his secret identity as Robert Anton (also the title of his memoir of that

time.) It was a good interview, although the interviewer tended to talk a little too much. General opinion afterwards was that it was a good interview when he let Rushdie speak. I think that sums it up pretty well.

And then it was time for the official after party at the Tech Museum. Lots of drink, snacks, desserts, dancing, drinks, etc. (and then a few drinks.)

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## ...BECAUSE I AM A FUCKIN' ROCK STAR!

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The previous night, of course, I had a few people up in my suite until 4 am, and it was really cool. I had plenty of people passing around the word that we were doing the same thing on Saturday night. Then, about 1 am as the party at the Tech was winding down, I suddenly heard the DJ announce, "apparently we're keeping the party going in room 979 of the Fairmont!" Well, cool! But I was not ready for logistics of that magnitude. This was in a building where you needed the keycard to get in, and on a floor where you needed to use the keycard in the elevator to get there. So we had a couple of people shuttling groups up to the room. While we had plenty of alcohol, we had no snacks, no music except for the room radio alarm clock, and no cups quite a while. Next year, I'll have that better organized. Hell, next year, if all goes well, we'll have a large group pooling resources for the party and we'll reserve the whole top floor. In any case, the party did go well. Maybe about 50 people or so, and it went on until about 6-6:30 am. No noise complaints (that I know of) and only one pass-out throw-up drunk (who actually arrived at the party in that manner. She was taken home by the gentleman who brought her, and I got an update the next day that she was hungover but none the worse for wear.) A good time was had by all and no dead hookers were found the next morning, so I guess the party was successful.

And I still dragged myself out by 11 am to make it to Encore Day. Because I am a fuckin' rock star!

## Chris Garcia's Tiny Reviews on an I I pt Scale

**The Almost Man (Mer Eller Mindre Mann)** - A film that proves your relationship is ACTUALLY pretty healthy - 6

**The Kitchen** - The Lather Effect, only less so... - 6

**Midnight's Children** - Confusing, overly long, fun - 7

**Molly Maxwell** - The universality of the Lolita story set in Canadian Alternative Education - 7

**The Believers** - Cold Fusion, smartly documented - 8

**Sparks** - Comic Book tale, SyFy Original level effects - 8

**The Citizen** - Powerful story of immediately-post-9/11 New York - 9

**Mon Ami** - The darkest comedy O Henry ever could have written - 9

**The Playback Singer** - A fine family story of a terrible family man - 9

**Year of The Living Dead** - Zombies.Yeah. - 9

**Plimpton! Staring George Plimpton as Himself** - The Greatest American Greatly Appreciated - 10

**The Hunt (Jegten)** - Mads Mikkelsen at his best - 10

**Loveless Zoritsa (Crna Zorica)** - Dark, funny, strange, great - 10

**Safety Last-** California Theatre, Dennis James on the console, Harold Lloyd in the greatest silent comedy - 11

**Balkan Melodie** - Some beautiful music, beautifully shot - 11