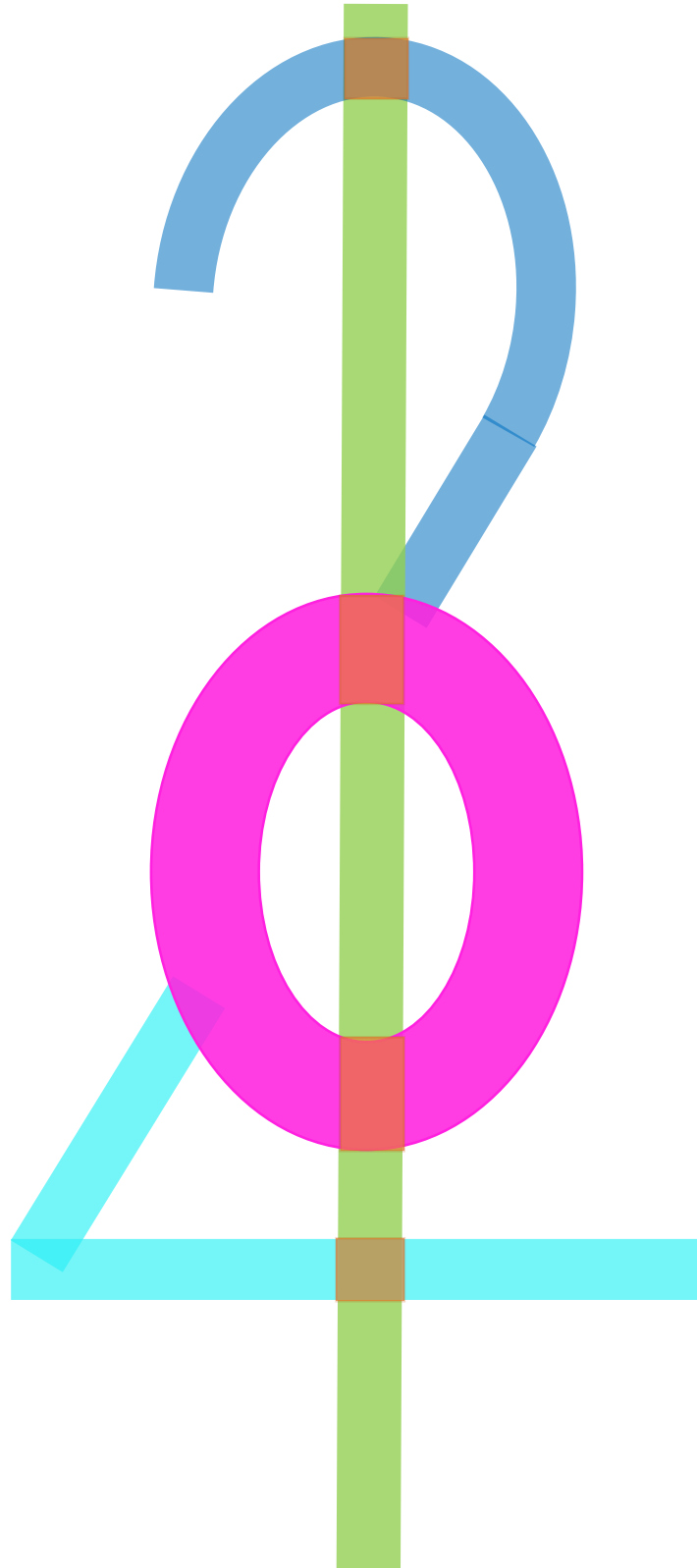
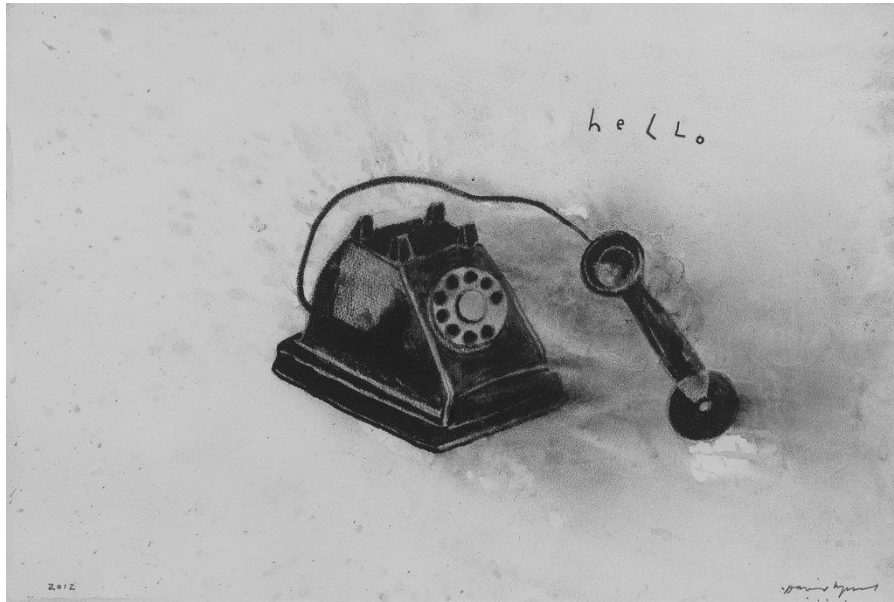


# Cinema Adrift



全カ歯ギシリ  
Let's GO!



## Cinema Adrift

### Vol. 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015

In which we make lists about the films of 2014 (pg. 11), watch genre films extra-textually (pg. 3), *Interstellar* (pg. 7), *Under the Skin*/Dance of Reality (pg. 9), have crushes on characters with crushes (pg. 13), pay homage to the divine leader (pg. 16), defend the “small movie” (pg. 14), miss out on prom (pg. 18), meet Frank (pg. 22), and tell you things to buy (pg. 24).

Please send your letters, suggestions, hate mail, death threats, cease and desist letters, money orders, baked goods, and any writings on film-related topics you think would look good in future issues to [cinemaadrift@gmail.com](mailto:cinemaadrift@gmail.com).



**CUTE CORNER:** *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*

# Letters from the Co-editors (to be read simultaneously)

Cinema Adrift marks an open expanse  
into unknown spaces  
new friendships emerge  
fondness for form and experimentation  
Cinema Adrift is an experiment in expression  
a place for film essays, comics, photos, musings  
mistakes and humor  
We play with words on the page  
like sonic and filmic cuts  
As 2014 ends we are adrift between old and new  
forms of cinema  
This 'zine is a map to mark this period in time  
looking in many directions  
forward and back, high and low

I offer my favorite quote of the year:  
"All of our days are numbered. We cannot afford  
to be idle. To act on a bad idea is better than to  
not act at all, because the worth of the idea  
never becomes apparent until you do it.  
Sometimes this idea can be the smallest thing in  
the world; a little flame that you hunch over and  
cup in your hand and pray will not be  
extinguished by all the storm that hails about it. If  
you can hold onto that flame great things can be  
constructed around it, that are massive and  
powerful and world changing; all held up by the  
tiniest of ideas."  
-Nick Cave, *20,000 Days on Earth*

HAPPY NEW YEAR ^..^  
- Mara Norman

According to the Word document where I  
log each film I have seen for the first time  
throughout the year, the maintenance of the  
document being the sole reason for my  
existence, the first film I saw in 2014 was  
*Bad Milo!* The last film was *New Year's  
Evil*. In between was stuff like *The  
Mystery of Picasso*, Jack Nicholson's  
directorial debut, the movie that *Eternal  
Sunshine* ripped off, and Kurosawa,  
Chaplin, and Tati gap fillers. In all I  
watched 300 films the majority of which  
were from the US and Japan location-wise,  
and from the 50s and the current decade  
time-wise.

Next year this document will include a  
separate list for repeat viewings so I can  
keep track of annual things like *Seven  
Samurai*, *PlayTime*, and *Cloudy with a  
Chance of Meatballs*. To get to the point  
hopefully Cinema Adrift will become a  
place for film discoveries for myself and  
for readers to aid the obsessively kept  
documents of our viewing habits because I  
hope to God that I am not the only one who  
does this.

Also keep an eye out for the special code  
which you can enter into your address bar  
for exclusive online content like our  
interview with cinematographer Alexander  
Gruszynski. Entering this code will enter  
you into a contest. Prizes and winners to be  
determined at a later date.

Please enjoy the following 'zine,  
-Jason Suzuki

# The ~~Meta~~ Action Hero

by Jason Suzuki



For the recent horror film *Starry Eyes* (2014) it is relative newcomer Alex Essoe, who helps the film work; part of this is due to her being a newcomer. The film is essentially about career ambition and the prices you are willing to pay to get where you want to be when you're young. Sarah (Essoe) is a wannabe actress stuck working at a Hooters-esque establishment and stuck in a circle of "friends" who she only knows through her roommate who she is distant from as well. When she gets an opportunity at a starring role in a film she ends up signing herself over to a satanic cult. The body horror that follows Sarah's pursuit for her big break is successful because of Essoe and the fact that her character's dreams and insecurities are projected onto her. For a postmodern audience it's not as simple as that she is a new face and therefore we should have no preconceived notions about her as opposed to if Sarah had been played by Jennifer Lawrence, Kristen Stewart, Emma Watson, or [insert other young actress working in the wake of successful franchise gig/has achieved public persona]. We know Sarah to be a character in a film but since the portrayer and the portrayed share similarities they become an engaging hybrid that in turn has benefited the quality of the film. The same cannot be said for the above mentioned actresses and the YA characters they brought to life. This type of perception works just the same if not better with an established actor who brings more baggage to be projected onto the role. Recent action blockbusters like *The Last Stand* (2013) and *John Wick* (2014) are good examples of how this type of reading can benefit a film.

Both *The Last Stand* and *John Wick* are comeback films for their lead actors and the characters they portray. Both films feature actors, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Keanu Reeves respectively, whose major box office successes are now in the past. They are figures largely relegated to parodies that reference these works. For better or for worse these recent films cannot seem to shake the legacy and presence of their leads. Personally, I think it is for the better as these films, which are first and foremost successful at being good action films, have been given something else to engage the audience with.

Granted, the comeback narrative is fairly standard but it is a good opportunity to mirror the place these films have in the careers of their respective stars. After a stint in politics as well as maid impregnating, Schwarzenegger seems to be called back into the world of B-movie action much like his *The Last Stand* character sheriff Ray Owens is called back into the type of violence that he went from the big city to a small town in order to get away from. But sheriff Owens reluctantly goes back to his violent ways in order to stop a criminal from escaping the country, in other words for justice; whereas Schwarzenegger went back to his previous line of work because reciting a grim pun after taking the life of another man is one of his only other discernible job skills [insert another impregnating maid joke here].

**John Wick** is about a retired hit man brought back into the world of assassins when a group of thugs break into his house, beat him up, steal his car, and kill the dog that was a final gift from his dying wife. Don't worry, the film has fun with the ridiculous set up as it just goes with it in order to get to all of the smoothly choreographed action that hasn't been cut up and spit out by an editing program. Reeves has been off the radar after the Matrix trilogy so a film like this, which is directed by two stunt men who worked with Reeves on the Matrix films, is a welcome return. The moment Reeves as Wick delivers the following line: "People keep asking if I'm back. Yeah, I'm thinking I'm back," is great as it's not only the most emotional we have seen Reeves in what seems to be ever, who delivers the line with an intensity and a vulnerability, but the line also speaks to Reeves' career that in the decade since the last Matrix film has seen some under-seen gems (*Thumbsucker*, *A Scanner Darkly*), some misfires (*The Lake House* remake, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* remake), and something called *Generation Um...* But recently Reeves made his directing debut with the excellent martial arts film *Man of Tai Chi* and starred in *47 Ronin* which can be fun if only for the fact that it does not resemble the countless other *Chushingura* adaptations that exist. Basically it seems that Reeves is interested in action films that are done well and put choreography in the spotlight over fast cuts. All of this career backstory is something that the above line of dialogue gets infused with when coming out of Reeves' mouth, at least for this viewer.

Aside from John Wick, the character names in these films can be pretty forgettable, almost as if the creators realize that Schwarzenegger is not only a hell of a name already but has been so ingrained into the audience's heads that something like Ray Owens will not register. Ray Owens is his character's name in *The Last Stand* in case anyone forgot. In the art-house world this same concept applies: Lee Kang-sheng and his work with Taiwanese auteur Tsai Ming-liang has created a similar effect. But in this case we don't think of Lee's personal affairs but his appearances in nearly every Tsai film which has created an overarching narrative that connects these films beyond the shared "slow-cinema" style of Tsai's films.

Since a minority of the criticism that takes place outside of the formalist/structuralist/New Criticism

modes deals solely with a text and never with the external, filmmakers can embrace this way in which their films and its stars will be seen. With no extra effort additional layers of meaning get applied to your film. Of course this will be lost on any future audiences which is normal, *Citizen Kane's* relation to William Randolph Hearst being a classic example. Barthes asked us to keep analysis pure by ignoring the author and Foucault went and complicated the notion of an author. But with this type of analysis we assume that when an actor takes on a role it is partially for reasons that go beyond entertainment and paycheck but for self-understanding or getting a kick out of mirroring oneself. These works are instances of when an author's implied reader, or viewer in this case, is one who will have knowledge of the actors and be able to recognize the parallels. Owen Wilson's suicide attempt in the wake of *The Darjeeling Limited's* release brings something more tragic to his character Francis' depression and the suicide attempt that leaves him bandaged throughout the majority of the film. Yukio Mishima's infamous *seppuku* makes us look differently at his work, from films to photo shoots, which feature him or a character ending his life.



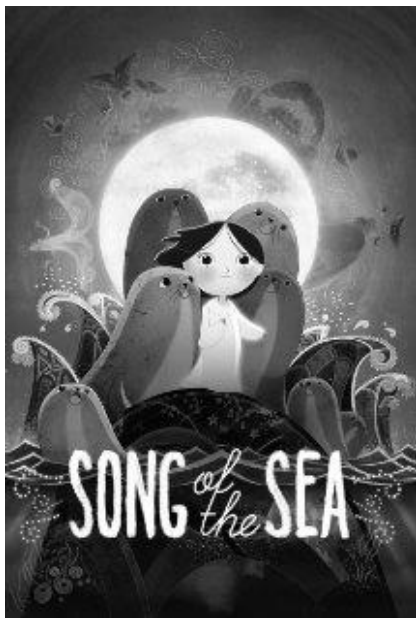


Even if we go with Barthe's "Death of an Author" and try to ignore all of this external stuff we are still left with some pretty good genre films. *Starry Eyes* is a *Rosemary's Baby*-esque take on the price of ambition; imagine if Cassavetes' character's deal with the devil had been directed at himself instead of Mia Farrow. *The Last Stand* and *John Wick* feature some of the better action set pieces in the canon of recent Hollywood action. But with other more "serious" fare these extra-textual materials are dealt with directly. Post-modernist works expect people to realize the artifice of the work through the use of direct reference. For example you need a frame of reference with Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* if you are going to read Gerald Vizenor's *Hiroshima Bugi* a work that repeatedly incorporates Resnais' abstract love story. In the more shallow postmodern waters of something like *Birdman* [insert another Barthes reference here],

part of the joke is that Michael Keaton once played Batman just like his character Riggan Thomson who once played a superhero named Birdman. But while *Birdman* is not as clever as it thinks, watching stuff like *John Wick* and *Starry Eyes* in this manner brings these works into the postmodern (maybe not so thematically) and in a way elevates the experience. It is made all the better considering that these films don't care if you take them seriously or even want to be elevated as something more than they are, something that *Birdman's* lead character is preoccupied with; on another level the film itself is preoccupied with this very same thing.

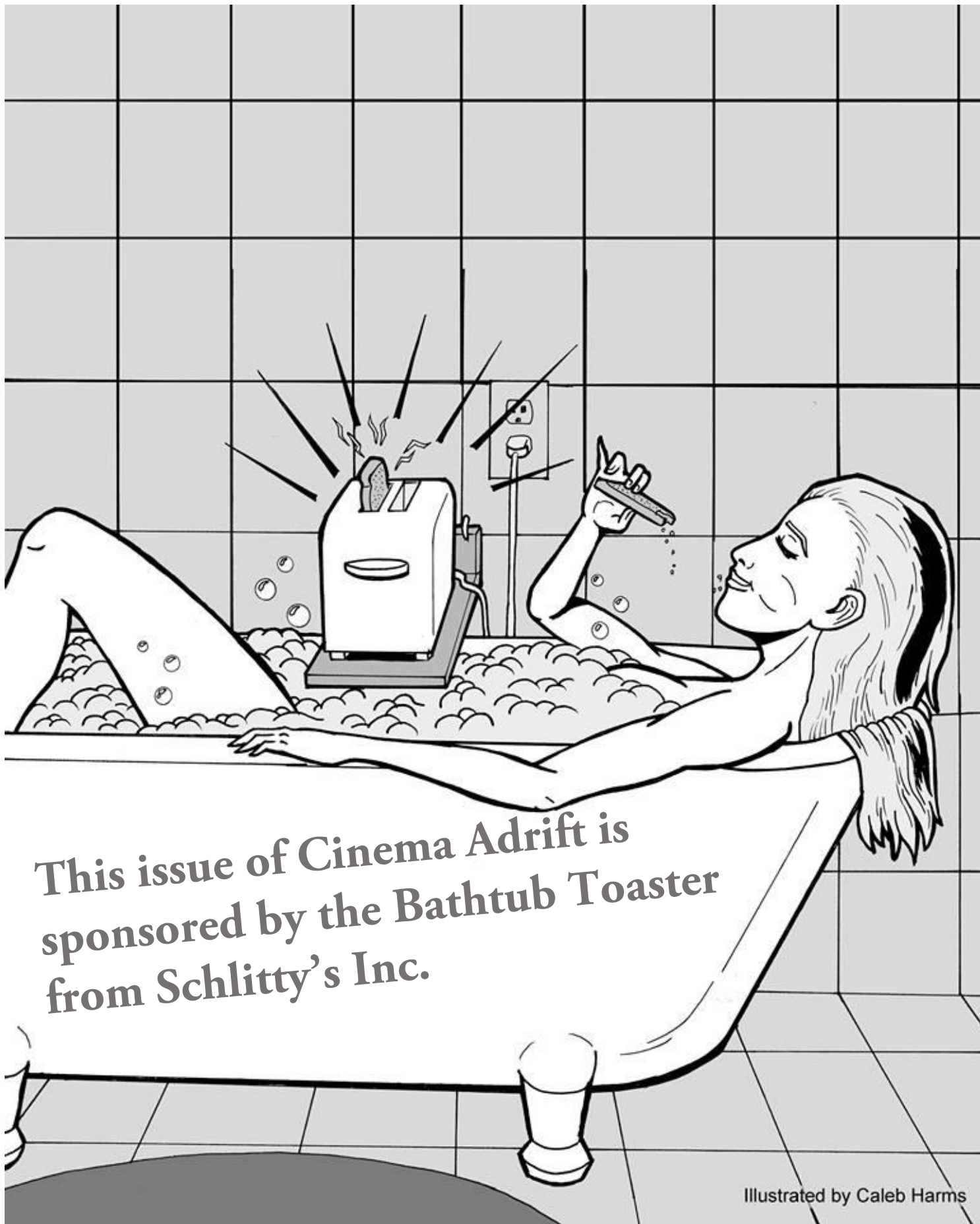
All of this does seem like extra work for the viewer who may just want to watch a good genre picture. Something uncalled for in order to make things interesting with added layers. But to continue with notions of implied readers and implied authors let's just assume that our implied author is one who wants to revive an old action star's career for example. They will cast him in a film in which he plays a character whose life of violence must be revived out of necessity. Our implied reader is one who will see the similarities between portrayer and portrayed and enjoy another level of self-aware fun, something that the film purposefully contains but without all the usual winking. What this suggests is that this technique is something done for entertainment and not necessarily meaning. It is a technique that is also useful to fulfill vague characters and give them life even if it is through the use of the actor's life.

Jason Suzuki is a contributor to Cinema Adrift and is an asshole for hating on *Birdman* after only one viewing.



**CUTE CORNER:** *Song of the Sea*





**This issue of Cinema Adrift is  
sponsored by the Bathtub Toaster  
from Schlitty's Inc.**

Illustrated by Caleb Harms

## REVIEW: INTERSTELLAR – C.M. Vales

Time itself is illegible. We do not interact with it as a physical dimension. We frame it in time zones, routines, and deadlines. Is there enough time to accomplish the necessary—does it matter how far we can push the human spirit into the unknown if that next generation cannot enjoy the fruits of our labor?

“We have gone further than anyone else in human history,” says Dr. Brand (Anne Hathaway) the expedition's biologist. Survival, it seems, is not without a sense of irony. Going further and further means nothing if no one in the future can study it in the histories. Or does it?

Creatures of five dimensions, of which time is one, may be able to climb upon it, as if it were a spatial dimension. Humans are merely subject to its effects. This collective feeling of profound smallness is summed quietly as a passage past Saturn with a nocturne Piano sonata. It alone is worth the price of admission. My mouth hung open. My mind stimulated into a visual awe. My sense of empathy with their quiet rage, stoicism, and all our own human frailty was made sublime and aware. Also, an image that foreshadows the journey ahead—despite its gargantuan proportions, the planet is nothing but a concoction of suspended gases, without any solidity or surface. In past epochs, the term ‘saturnine’ meant to be surrounded by melancholy. Nolan's commitment to visual inference, erudition, and metaphor is something other projects of this scale have taken for granted. Or Hollywood's backdoor committees don't allow. It is for all intensive purposes, an image that foretells a fraught and suicidal journey that will probably fail.


This frailty provides that fine dramatic tension we search for in cinema. Christopher Nolan may be the only independent minded filmmaker in Hollywood that doesn't take anyone's notes. And yet he doesn't make auteur, art house fare for small, eccentric audiences. And he doesn't go for the simplistic and generic, either. He goes for original large landscape drama with moral complexity and thought at the front. And he asks questions that lead to ambiguity and ambivalence. Not a typical approach to a popcorn movie. He has discovered a signature way of visualizing vital stakes in a universal way, placing abandonment and death on even ground with one another. Vulnerability is his canvass here. And though *Interstellar* owes much to Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, it is not derivative, but complimentary. To be original, is to innovate based on what has come before. Nolan has admitted that seeing *2001*, was the formative cinema experience of his youth. To paraphrase Kubrick: The universe is certainly indifferent to us. There is no choice but to create light.

Through great direction and a collaborative script, characters are imbued with such awareness of their frailty. They sob in outrage that it all may in fact be done. We may not see those we love one last time. We are creatures that feel love, and need it. Not just affection or comfort, but intimacy and a mythology of relationships, connection, and reciprocation. This does not stand in the way of environmental collapse-- Human history may still end. But love is the reason to go on despite a great probability of failure. If efforts fail, and that eureka moment doesn't come in time; the human race will face suffocation and starvation.

The Earth has entered into a cycle of blight, dust storms, and instability. The last crop to be grown successfully is corn. Which is, in itself, depressing. In a mealtime scene, Murphy's (Jessica Chastain) sister-in-law offers her more corn soufflé. Amongst pudding and fritters, a dissatisfying monotony. This scene of strained family togetherness underscores the salient theme running throughout. Murphy replies, “I've got to get back.” No more family dinners for anyone. That is an inevitable future.

Time is an angry artifice for us three-dimensional beings. Even when faced with what is termed as ‘slippage’ in the film, ‘relativity’ in physics, the characters cannot fully grasp the force of it, only feel it as a loss, missing out on the moments they thought they might experience out of miscalculation, error, forgetfulness—it is all human, all too human. Their most intimate confidants, children, parents, and friends age in Earth-time, all the while this business of survival is sought, the astronauts aging much more slowly, all the while desperately searching for the new home for the human race.





The planets they discover are so divergent in landscape, equally unsuitable and sterile. One is an ice planet, as austere as Antarctica, with days lasting 87 hours, a chlorinated atmosphere and frozen clouds, and the other an endless ocean surface with alkaline water and gigantic tsunamis. The time spent travelling to these places comes to naught, but of course— sets a grand spectacle, as Nolan makes use of the epistemic distance between theoretical prediction and lived experience.

The ability to travel these great distances to remote planets is a wonder, but also a disappointment. A key plot turn depends on a transgression between these points. A character sees himself as the future arbiter of history and the end met places short shrift on his design. I'd say it is with some dry humor, considering the circumstance and otherwise melancholy tone of the film—but why not? After all, what hubris is this? And the faith we place in the courage of the explorers--the admiration, sycophancy, and idealism. And by that, I mean us, as the audience. It is a view not shared by the 'caretaking' set on Earth—where the only professions left are educator and farmer, one scene in particular points out the frail human need to redraw history using cardboard conspiracy theories to suit the ideological needs of the present, and it is too ridiculous not to get a laugh. The scene serves to help the audience understand the alienation Cooper (McConaughey) feels and that his only option is piloting the last space mission ever. Much to his daughter's chagrin, and no, she doesn't really grow out of it! And to no applause—haven't you heard recently that funding NASA is just too great a luxury when there are greater needs? Bollocks! Says Nolan.

The various points of tension are roundly great storytelling. It would be much preferable to travel into outer space than to keep company with the ignorant dullards on Earth. Well, at least at first. Eventually any human contact is better than none.

The counterpoint of the brilliant explorer losing his sanity is the limitation placed on the instinct to go where no one has gone before. There is no ignoring our social existence--even the companionship of a sarcastic robot wouldn't really be enough. Maybe a dog would have been. All the miscalculation written into the story provides a lot of room for the peril that science fiction stories need, the same maybe said for social commentary that both leads and subverts.

Why does Cooper choose the other planet? Is it a small feminist commentary about not trusting 'emotional' women, even really smart biologists who know arable conditions just by looking at statistics? Of course, it provides the necessary path to irrevocable conflict, and another swift change resets that dashed course. And it provides for the ending. The casting of Matthew McConaughey would provide a likeability factor for what is surely a great cinematic moment of cocky-posing-as-skeptical mansplaining. The ending and all the faith he places in his daughter's powers of observation may be meant to compensate for it.

Which brings me to the ending of *Interstellar*. I will do my best not to recall the plot in strict order, or render 'spoilers.' Though it would seem a good observation that anyone reading this may have already seen the film. But I choose to speculate about what time was in those last sections. It does appear that time is presented as a fabric of intentionality. The imagery used is what the character wanted to see. Singularity provides room for interesting, logical elusiveness, and a foreground for narrative speculation. Some have questioned the absurdity of travelling through the event horizon, and coming through the other side in one piece. But Nolan's intention is transcendence. The kind that transgresses a grammatical separation between the scientific and the supernatural. Perhaps in the context of our own minds we may travel to places though it is 'physically' impossible. Perhaps, a 'dream' in three dimensions, is 'real' in five. Exploration is a kind of hope, and maybe love does travel through all dimensions, and time for once doesn't really matter

Photos from C.M. Vales

## Cinema Adrift Review

(by Mara Norman)

Still haunted by Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* last year, my cinematic eye was hopeful, open and yet expectant, almost greedily awaiting a masterpiece. A few high points this year fed my hungry ghost allowing the experience of great cinema to wash over me and take me in. The formal elements in film when constructed well: visual, sound, color, texture, and the most mercurial aspect, time and memory, allow a layer of emotion to be revealed. When watching a visually well-constructed film, my emotions are mirrored and linked up; often times aspects of my own inner psychology that are hidden from my everyday awareness come to the surface of my consciousness. There in the dark theatre with a large screen powering over me I can access aspects of myself, I can respond and feel in ways my everyday life and attention do not always allow.

Two films stand out for the use of strong visual narrative this year: *Under the Skin* and *The Dance of Reality*. Both films use non-traditional, slightly unusual styles, *Under the Skin* is a mostly visual non-verbal movie, while *The Dance of Reality* uses surrealist techniques in order to explore areas of memory, trauma, and isolation. The two films offer visual story telling in new and unexpected ways; both films are extremely psychological unfolding visual ideas that only great cinema can capture. Both films explore the idea of isolation in differing ways. *Under the Skin* offers a glimpse at how awareness forms and unfolds in today's society: alienation, awareness, expansion, curiosity. *The Dance of Reality* shows an active imagination approach to



story-telling where an unfolding of past traumatic events are retold and ultimately transformed, modeling an exquisite form of inner child work to show and expand, heal, and offer a tool, a map of psychological healing.

Jonathan

Glazer's *Under the Skin* is a contemporary sci-fi story set in present day Scotland; it mostly uses visual imagery with very little dialogue. Strong contrasts between black and white imagery and crisp reds against naturalistic images of crowded city spaces and open natural landscapes and dense woods. It was reminiscent of 70's sci-fi films I had the pleasure of growing up with. The only information given to me were strong visuals with unusual soundscapes as accents. *Under the Skin* didn't explain or feed me descriptions as guides. I was thrown into an unknown and yet recognizable world. It felt as though I was back in previous great sci-fi films like Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) as well as Steven Soderbergh's (2002) remake and was reminded of David Bowie's character in Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976).



Going into the film I knew very little and wish I knew even less about the plot. The initial scene of a dead woman being undressed by the main character played by Scarlett Johansson is in harsh white light, like some sort of cosmic examination room. Naked Scarlett dresses slowly with the dead girl's clothes and high heels. The dead girl stares blankly as we see Scarlett's character pick up a small ant and examine it crawling on her finger. The next shot we walk behind her in a crowded mall, her mini skirt hanging slightly off kilter as she moves through the crowd in a somnambulist haze buying lipstick and a faux fur



coat. We next see her driving about in a large van moving through a crowd of walking fans after a sports event. The van is engulfed in the crowd. She begins to randomly engage with various men asking directions saying "are you alone, do you live alone", gradually guiding the characters she picks up to follow her into a glowing blackened space. The characters follow her submerging into a liquid like space suspended into slow motion silent infinity. The musical score by Mica Levi amplifies the visuals in such a way that flood the picture frame with sound. The soundscape, like the black liquid ooze, takes over and provides a framework to guide a visual experience. The sonic film cues help locate the viewer in the space of the story. The sound structures and the images flow showing several men sinking deep into the liquid abyss.



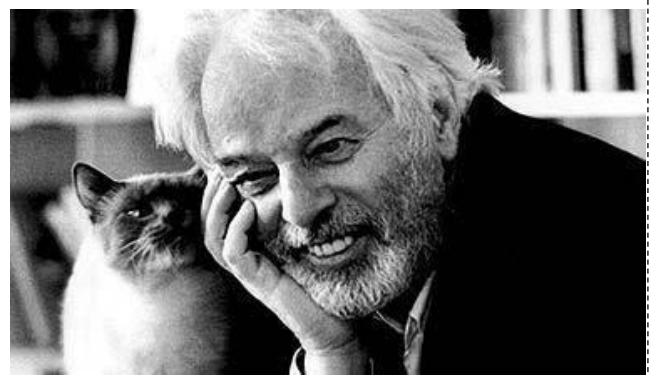
The final scenes unfold in a wooded snowy landscape, the white now more dulled by earth's natural light versus the initial clinical light at the beginning of the film. Our character's victimized skin is ripped away revealing black charcoal underneath. Looking into her mask of human features her eyes blink back, self-reflection turned inside out, destroyed and burned rising in a black cloud above the landscape, then fading into soft fat falling snow.

The other film which took me in visually and revealed a layer of my own hidden emotions was ***The Dance of Reality***. This summer I accidentally discovered Alejandro Jodorowsky by randomly walking into a movie theater and watching the next film that was

showing: ***Jodorowsky's Dune***. I was intrigued and captured by his persona as an artist, filmmaker, seeker and seer. Luckily his first film in 23 years was opening a few weeks later. I sought it out. Since then I have researched and tried to learn about the director, but I basically went in blind never seeing any of his films before, not even a trailer. I had seen the poster and that was it.

What this film offers is a narrative visual healing and active imagination unfolding before my eyes. A surreal tale of past trauma and abuse, economics, prejudice, domestic violence, and political dogma all unfolding in the life of our main character, a young Alejandro in a small mining village in Chile. The story appears to recall memories of the child's past. Surreal elements amplify memory and trauma and help the story unfold. The physical landscape mirrors the destitute, polluted village. Townsfolk wander the village damaged by dynamite accidents from the mine. What Alejandro did so beautifully is to show the viewer a model on how to work with past traumas and memories. Alejandro shows me, or more reminds me, that film as an art form offers a map for healing and deeper understanding of psychological aspects of memory and trauma.

Both of these films visually show that film has something no other art form has: the ability to travel through time and space, traversing through trauma, memory, histories, fantasies, victimization, compassion, communication. This is why I love great film; it transcends my everyday reality on the screen right before my eyes.



**CUTE CORNER: Jodorowsky + Cat**

# 2014

## Tops 13s: Co-Editors Edition (to be read simultaneously)

### MARA

1. 20,000 Days on Earth
2. Only Lovers Left Alive
3. The Grand Budapest Hotel
4. Under the Skin
5. Inherent Vice
6. The Dance of Reality
7. Jodorowsky's Dune
8. We are the Best!
9. Venus in Fur
10. The Tale of Princess Kaguya
11. The Babadook
12. Gore Vidal: The United States of Amnesia
13. Why Don't You Play in Hell?

### JASON

1. Why Don't You Play in Hell?
2. Ida
3. Locke
4. Tamako in Moratorium
5. R100
6. Inherent Vice
7. Listen Up Philip
8. The Babadook
9. Starry Eyes
10. Like Father Like Son
11. The Tale of Princess Kaguya
12. The Overnighters
13. The Guest



NO LISTS BEYOND THIS POINT



#### **Favorite Opening.**

Star Lord's Dance in *Guardians of the Galaxy*  
After a heavy and dramatic opening scene what followed during the opening credits was something that didn't take itself so seriously, introducing the film's structure where it knocks itself down until the end when it can deservedly get emotional.



#### **Favorite Cameo.**

Werner Herzog in *Penguins of Madagascar*

#### ***Magnolia* Reunion of 2014.**

*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1*

Philip Seymour Hoffman & Julianne Moore

# 4105



**Favorite Face-plant.**  
*The Theory of Everything*

**Best Hospital Stay (Female)**  
*Wetlands*



**Best Hospital Stay (Male)**  
*Nymphomaniac Vol. 1*



**Favorite Ending.**  
*Why Don't You Play in Hell?*

While most people single out the film's climactic blood bath as the standout sequence in the film, it's that very final shot of Hirata (Hiroki Kasegawa) running in the rain, with his film in the can, that conveys the joyous feeling of filmmaking and reminds the audience that what we've been watching isn't just a Sion Sono film but a Fuck Bomber film (see pg. 17).

## NOW EXITING LIST FREE ZONE

### 6 Other Movies I Highly Recommend (Mara)

1. Low Down
2. The One I Love
3. Force Majeure
4. The Zero Theorem
5. Birdman
6. The Congress

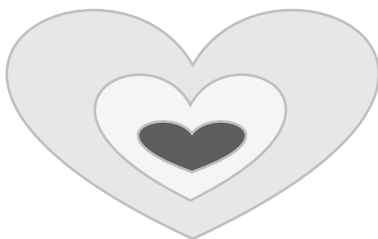
--Instead of the Super Bowl watch *Buffalo '66*.

### Classic Alternatives (Jason)

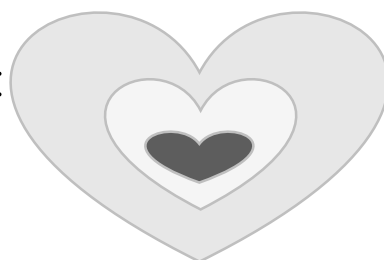
--Instead of *Nymphomaniac* watch *The Life of Oharu*. Both are a series of vignettes about society's treatment of a woman in various stages of life and undress, all with a frame story.

--Instead of *Gone Girl* watch *Ace in the Hole* then *Eyes Wide Shut*.





## REQUITED AND UNREQUITED: FAVORTIE MOVIE CRUSHES



### **The Taste of Tea** (Katsuhito Ishii, 2004)



Probably one of the best instances where a film transitions to another character (using wind). It's also a visually and aurally pleasing take on the slow motion that usually occurs when a boy sees a cute girl for the first time. The sounds heard are another standout piece from Little Tempo's score for the film.

We've all been there: getting braces because someone we like has braces. It's always worked out.

### **Chungking Express** (Wong Kar-wai, 1994)



One of those defining films about the love of the chase instead of the actual act of getting together. Faye Wong's crush on Tony Leung is reminiscent of any time when a crush doesn't take notice of you, until they do and you decide that there's nothing more romantic than a never ending pursuit.



### **Magnolia** (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999)



### **Terrence Malick's Badlands and Days of Heaven** (1973/1978)



# LOW DOWN



by Mara Norman

In 2014 a film that stands out and calls my attention is a small one, **Low Down**, directed by Jeff Preiss. The reason I call it a small film is that it is a simply shot, family drama unfolding with naturalistic style and tone, shot on 16mm color film stock. The stylistic aspects of the film, the production design, as well as the acting brought me to 1970's Hollywood. It wasn't a sugar coated version of the characters' lives. I appreciated the natural tone to the stories/memories unfolding. After watching and enjoying the film I went home and looked up reviews. For the most part the film was trashed; mostly it seems for the content rather than the actual visual elements of the film, style, acting, dialogue, plot or story. It seems to me these reviewers wanted a watered down Hollywood or indie cute Sundance side of reality rather than a natural depiction of a life explored and examined. This is a kind of character-driven movie that "makes us feels bad" and gets trashed in reviews saying it was "too much of a downer".

Why as viewers and critics do we tend to shun stories that actually reflect some honest aspects of human life and relating? Instead, in contrast, there is a tendency to move towards building up HBO's *True Detective*, and other crime drama SVU-type story telling with twisted plots and horrific murders with vast viewership and rave reviews. Those types of stories seem to get the good press and yet to me there is nothing more of a downer than twisted serial killers. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind a good horror film, and violence in movies has never been a problem for me. I grew up in the 70's for god's sake and saw Kubrick's **The Shining** in a theater at a young age, but here I digress.

It seems as though viewers are engaging in twisted voyeurism rather than emotional connection to true characters and the struggles of daily life: struggles in connecting with family, addictions, having enough money to live, and being a creative artist. The stories we want to trash and tear down perhaps are the stories that must be viewed. We need more movies like **Low Down**. Movies that are made with a meticulousness and interest in telling stories in visually interesting ways. In my perfect world there would be hundreds more 5 to 10 million dollar movies made each year. We need small films that have the room to be seen and discussed. The good thing is that even through the mess of dismissive reviews the film exists. It had a very small (far too small) theatrical release, but it will have a life on DVD and possibly cable and on-line. It may have a second life when fans of Elle Fanning, John Hawkes, and Glenn Close dig into their filmographies. I recommend this film to watch these actors honing their craft. Depicting relationships with all their sadness and mistakes, struggles and dysfunctions finding their way through their flawed lives. This is what I want from a "small" film.



6 MOVIES LATER



Caleb's Favorites of 2014:

1. Guardians of the Galaxy
2. The Interview
3. Captain America: The Winter Soldier
4. X-Men: Days of Future Past
5. The Lego Movie
6. Calvary

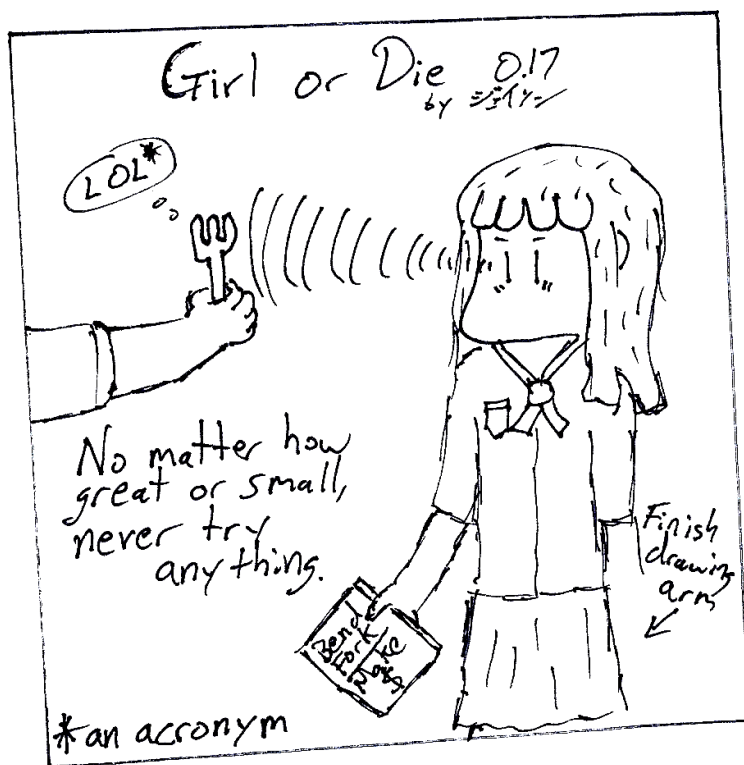
C.M. Vales' Favorites of 2014:

1. A Most Wanted Man
2. Boyhood
3. Finding Vivian Maier
4. Ida
5. The Imitation Game
6. Interstellar
7. Jodorowsky's Dune
8. Only Lovers Left Alive
9. The Skeleton Twins
10. Tracks

Overrated: Belle, Theory of Everything



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If you are a fan of South Korean cinema you will eventually come across the topic of the North/South divide. It could be from Park Chan-wook's debut thriller *J.S.A.* or the deeply personal films of Yang Yong-hi, a Japanese-born Korean, or *zainichi*, who uses the real life circumstances of her family as the subjects of her two documentaries and feature debut *Our Homeland*. Even in the mainstream sphere of the K-drama, top-rated shows like *Dr. Stranger*, about a North Korean defector, feature storylines that deal with the North. Across these representations of North Korea there was one of an enemy which later became an invisible other, to use the phrase from film scholar Jinhee Choi, once storylines of romance between South and the North were featured in blockbusters.

The hope for reunification is something that permeates *Our Homeland* but also features into the Hollywood ending of *The Interview* which elevates it from previous Goldberg/Rogen efforts like *This is the End* and *Neighbors*.

Something that the film understands is how important Kim Jung-un's propaganda machine is when brainwashing his people. Myths about the dictator seem at first just juvenile and stupid things Rogen and Franco came up with on the spot but are actually real lies told to his people. For instance, that he can speak with dolphins and that he has no butt hole. This makes for an interesting collaboration between the propaganda and the writers.

Places like the DMZ make special appearances in the film, not exactly played for laughs but just shown with no context to take advantage of the surreal qualities a room can have when soldiers from each country stand at their respective sides and look at each other.

But going back to the hope for reunification, this is where the film shows its heart and makes it one of the more surprising viewing experiences, one that is entertainingly cathartic when compared to other films dealing with the topic of North Korea, something that distance surely provided. There's a lot to respect in *The Interview* so let's take a moment and enjoy that before *Sausage Party* comes out.  
-Jason Suzuki



## TINY THOUGHTS DOUBLE FEATURE: THE INTERVIEW/ THE META ACTION HERO PT. 2: ONE HOUR PHOTO

The question I thought of after watching Mark Romanek's *One Hour Photo* for the first time was whether or not I would have liked it so much if Robin Williams was still alive. Just like the Red Knight in *The Fisher King* now takes on greater significance due to details of Williams' real life battles with depression, throughout Romanek's film I was transposing all of that onto Sy the photo guy to the point where the character was now a hybrid, incorporating all of the darker details of its star's personal life. I would like to think I would still have been a big fan of the film, although a latecomer, but there is no doubt that the experience was elevated because of the external. There is some guilt involved as I had been avoiding the film because a roommate-turned-person I loathe liked the film. It was one of the few films he owned along with not



so great stuff like Schindler and his list and that Indian game show movie. The guilt comes from the fear that it took the death of a great actor to make me get over a petty reason to not watch something.  
- J.S.



# フアックボンバーズ

## Why We Want to Join the Fuck Bombers

The Renegade Amateur Filmmakers from Sono's *Why Don't You Play in Hell?*

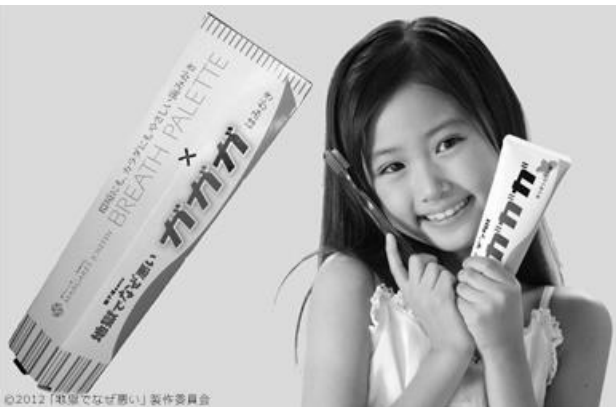


What they lack in agency they make up for in enthusiasm.

Instead of taking sides, they realize the power in combining handheld shots with dolly shots.



While they realize planning is very important in order to make a good film, sometimes there is no time for that and it's either now or never to make your movie!



**CUTE CORNERS:**  
*Why Don't You Play in Hell?*





# Detention/The World's End: The Personal Apocalypse

by Jason Suzuki



Joseph Kahn got his start directing music videos in the mainstream pop sphere, working for artists like Britney Spears and Eminem. To this day he still makes his living off of this work. While some of these videos seem run-of-the-mill MTV fodder, his brightest moments set him apart from other for-hire directors. His use of the triple split screen for Blink-182 and his music video remake of *Vertigo* for Faith No More hinted that he not only has a great visual eye for complicated designs but is willing to go weird. His feature film debut as a director was *Torque* (2004), a motorcycle-centric

action film that got panned due to its close proximity to *The Fast and the Furious*' release. Unlike his next film *Detention* (2011) Kahn didn't write *Torque*, which would have benefitted from it. The pacing of *Detention* and the rate at which the film unloads its gags on the viewer make the now cliché and usually false declaration that a film is on crack an apt description in the case of *Detention*. On a surface level the film is a high school romance between Riley Jones (Shanley Caswell who we want to see more of) and Clapton Davis (Josh Hutcherson who we want to see more of in stuff like this). On another level it is a parody of the teen slasher film. It is also an indictment of the ADHD generation made for the ADHD generation featuring time travel, jocks with fly blood, and rapid fire references to the 90s and the 80s. The fact that this was made by a music video director whose only other film credit is *Torque* is something else the film has fun with.

*The World's End* is a culmination of ideas for Edgar Wright and co-writer/star Simon Pegg both of whom have reached a level of success where they don't need the same amount of introduction that Kahn unfortunately needs. It goes darker than their previous films but still shares thematic and stylistic similarities to *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (2007). The narrative follows middle-aged nobody Gary King (Simon Pegg) as he manages to convince his old schoolmates to retry an epic 12 location pub crawl back in their home town which they discover has been taken over by body snatching robots. During the course of that night the gang fights the demons from their pasts along with the invaders whom they refer to as "blanks".



Stylistically both films use rapidly-paced humor to progress their narratives; but beyond the similar kinetic style is this idea of a personal apocalypse that links these films. Gary King's reluctance to let go of the past/attempt to ignore the harsh realities of his post-high school life (something shared by his old friends) and Riley's angst of the time when she is not going to be in high school anymore (something shared by her classmates) are what make up each film's respective personal apocalypse, a method to convey the deeply personal. *The World's End* uses the alien invasion narrative structure while *Detention* uses time travel and slasher horror on top of the alien invasion narrative to manifest these internal anxieties.



It's hard to notice the moments when *Detention* is being poignant but there is one in particular that speaks to how small the world can be during those high school years. A world where the smallest things like a crush seeing someone else can make it seem like everything is falling apart. The moment when the characters realize the world is about to end, back in 1992 no less, the world is referred to by the characters as Grizzly Lake, their hometown. "Have you ever been outside of Grizzly Lake?" is the rhetorical question that justifies looking at the world this way. The more contained the personal bubble

the more likely one of these apocalypses will occur. Gary King's world seems to revolve around his high school experience, specifically that one night he originally tried the pub crawl. It's both delusion and self-awareness that manifests a personal apocalypse; delusion that these personal anxieties equate themselves to the end of the world. When incorporating self-awareness it differs between Riley, mentioned later, and Gary whose self-awareness is the failed suicide and its scars he tries to hide.

The idea of the physical, diegetic world of a film reflecting the internal of a character is nothing new (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*). And neither is the notion that a society's fears are best reflected within apocalypse/genre narratives (*Night of the Living Dead*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*). But to match up something so extreme, the end of the world, with something so miniscule, the personal, is a pairing that elevates *Detention* from being an exercise in 90s' pop references and makes *The World's End* the strongest of the Cornetto trilogy.

While *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* do deal with themes of friendship and moving from extended adolescence to maturity, these are secondary to the fun parody/reverence for each film's particular genre. It's the zombie film for *Shaun of the Dead* and the buddy-cop action film for *Hot Fuzz*. This can't be easily said for *The World's End* where the genre this time is in service to the main foci of the film: maturity, friendship, and the ways in which the past can haunt us. To Gary King the self-proclaimed "prodigal son" what other way is there to explain why no one in his home town remembers him than that they have all been replaced by robotic alien "its"? What else is interesting is that the events of that night so closely mirror the night the boys first tried to tackle the pub crawl; Oliver (Martin Freeman) is the first to drop out of the crawl either from passing out in his youth or being replaced in the present and the next to go on each night is Peter (Eddie Marsan). The introduction of the film is a brilliant piece of foreshadowing. It is also a testament to the idea that history repeats itself which unfortunately is another way of saying that we cannot escape the past.

Of course the personal apocalypse was not introduced in the past decade by Kahn's and Wright's films. One of *The Twilight Zone*'s most famous episodes features another sort of personal apocalypse. The episode is "Time Enough at Last," it is the one where the guy breaks his glasses, all alone on Earth except for his books which he now cannot read. This sort of personal apocalypse is one





in which anxieties are not externalized as the end of the world, but the end of fellow life on Earth is a cure for these anxieties. *Night of the Comet* (1984) is almost an antithesis film to *Detention* in that the end of most life on Earth is an escape from teenage angst. Crappy jobs, abusive stepmothers, and school are what ail the two sisters who end up surviving the titular night. *Night of the Comet* is also probably one of the only zombie films to have a shopping-at-the-mall montage rather than a holing-up-at-the-mall montage. These two

examples only present the cathartic apocalypse at the beginning but the realities of isolation set in eventually in both narratives. It's true this type of reading looks over obvious nuclear holocaust anxieties in "Time Enough at Last." Anxieties that are global rather than personal. Even in *Detention* maybe the end of the world isn't just the fear of life after graduation but how time will just cannibalize itself when people can't stop looking back and trying to live in the past (the 90s are the new 80s though). In *Detention* living in the past is a criticism of the popular culture whereas in *The World's End* it is a (tragic) way of life for Gary King.

There is something else that links *Detention* and *The World's End*; both films end on a note that is rather fun in the sense of their genres but allude to much different statements on the personal level to their main characters. *Detention* concludes with Riley and Clapton finally together, they have saved the world and all is right. The film even feels like it is ending with its use of main character voice over and a



montage of characters finding happy resolutions, but it really ends with the twist that the world is still going down thanks to an alien invasion that has been hinted at throughout the film. *The World's End* concludes with narration as well but from Frost's character instead of our "prodigal son." If we take the name of each visited pub as foreshadowing the following scene then The Rising Sun should be obvious. Gary, now accompanied by the replicas of his high school friends, has found a way to live in the past and to be the King once again. His reluctance to face the present, let alone the future, has created a brighter future for him (he *is* drinking water now so it's not all bittersweet). Riley, a self-aware character in a self-aware movie, can't help but let teenage anxieties creep in again. "It's not the end of the world" she repeats to herself to no avail as vegetable aliens begin their takeover of Earth. Gary King on the other hand shows that repression of truth is how the world, his mainly, can keep on going.

Jason Suzuki is a contributor to Cinema Adrift. He has written such pieces as "The Meta Action Hero" and "The Personal Apocalypse"



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## FRANK – Reviewed by Bruce – Courtesy of The Video Station

I'm currently re-reading one of my favorite film books, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, a vastly entertaining history of The New Hollywood, that uniquely ephemeral flowering of Hollywood, circa 1967-1980. That period was marked by a transition from the original moguls, who were dying or decrepit, to the corporate conglomerates that still rule the big screens today. For

those 13 glorious years, the money men knew *Doctor Dolittle* wasn't going to cut it, while *Easy Rider* was stuffing their pockets with cash, so they gave relatively free rein to Coppola, Nicholson, Friedkin, Ashby, Altman, Beatty, et al.

Cut to 2014. Disney, Universal, Sony, Fox, even the Weinsteins funding and/or distributing *Frank*? Unimaginable. And yet, here it is. The point being that, yes, the current Hollywood is a nearly complete, unutterable wasteland of dreck, marked by the Weinstein machinery grinding into its inexorable Academy Award gear, to win it for their usual "film of quality." And yet, again, here is *Frank*. The conclusive point being that, despite a completely different filmmaking environment, now is an era when odd and artistic films can still be made, and are, on a consistent basis. And the films actually come to fruition in much the same way they did then, by keeping the budget low, paying all the actors scale, even the "star," who may or may not be the vessel to a profit. But no matter, because just as Bob Evans, Charlie Bluhdorn, and Bert Schneider knew in the 60's and 70's, if the budget is low enough, even a disaster isn't a disaster. The only real difference now is that these films don't exist in the big studios' world; it's the micro studios and the private financiers who are apparently amenable to even the weirdest propositions, like a film in which one of the most charismatic movie stars in the world wears a papier-mâché head for almost the entire running time.

*Frank* is ostensibly a rock 'n' roll story based on screenwriter Jon Ronson's life as keyboard player in a 90's band, the very English phenomenon known as Frank Sidebottom. That Frank indeed wore a papier-mâché head, while performing an obscure, pseudo-vaudeville act. But Ronson's script for the movie *Frank* is a much darker exegesis on the true meaning of art, and the clawing forces of the quotidian, whose weapons are fame, popularity, and cash. How brilliant to ask Michael Fassbender (*Inglourious Basterds*, *Shame*, *Hunger*), that master of the tortured soul, and how nice that he accepted a part in which his face, an actor's primary tool, would not be seen until the end; and that he saw this as the rare opportunity to express himself through his hands and voice.

As Howard Hawks said, the most entertaining movies are those with clearly delineated good guys and bad guys. And to my mind, *Frank* has that, in spades, although I really don't read or hear that as viscerally as I felt it. Domhnall Gleason (*About Time*, *Harry Potter*) plays the Ronson character, here Jon Burroughs, and I believe he represents all that is wrong with music, and I would say even with life in general. Burroughs, in his doe-eyed, doughy innocence, wonders what's wrong with Frank. He writes songs of no innocence and no experience, and obliviously presents them to Frank and the band, here a much darker and nervy entity than the real Sidebottom, verging more into Can and Beefheart territory. Three-fifths of the band react to Jon's very existence with cold, loathing dismissal, as did I; Frank and Don (Scoot McNairy) are more naturally friendly and accepting, leading to their dark fates. One-third of that three-fifths is played by the glorious Maggie Gyllenhaal (*Secretary*, *Donnie Darko*), whose first words to Jon are "don't touch my Theremin," and who later cathartically stabs him. Jon is not even a philistine; he is unaware of any world beyond his own white bread, pedestrian, vapid little thoughts, and that results in disastrous, havoc-wreaking calamity. Jon represents the eternal barbarian, he who has no appreciation for art, much less for fragile beauty.



# Vegan Education:

contrarian film commentary from Kale Hudson

TOPIC: FILM OF THE YEAR 2014: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

For independent filmmakers, those silent pioneers who will continue to push boundaries of cinematic form and who always strive to avoid the cliché and the pedestrian, it is found footage and character studies which are the dominant genres for them to express their iconoclastic spirit. *It Doesn't Feel Special Anymore*, my personal favorite of 2014, uses the latter of the two forms. The film, a feature length debut from Gregg Spooner, follows a nameless independent filmmaker in between projects, lovers, homes, and ultimately in between himself.

Spooner has made a name for himself with short films such as *Did You Play for 7 Hours?, I'll Get Back to it Eventually*, and the clever post-modern rom-com pastiche *Two New Cups for Dakota Saint*. His transition to full length narratives is without fault as the emotional arc is a straight line which upon closer inspection is filled with little, tiny bumps the consequences of which equal tidal waves of pent up melancholy.

An extended sequence in which our protagonist practices yoga at first seems odd and is voyeuristic to the point of annoyance until we find out that director Spooner was recently hospitalized for trying to perform autofellatio. I hope for a swift recovery although an untimely death might be the needed boost in publicity this film needs in order to reach an undeserving audience.

Props must also be given to the creators of the film's score: indie rock band Five Finger Discount. Their throwback, vintage instrumentation clashes nicely with the film's sparse visuals. I have taken up the Russian-nesting doll theremin thanks to them.

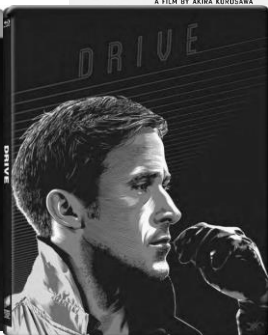
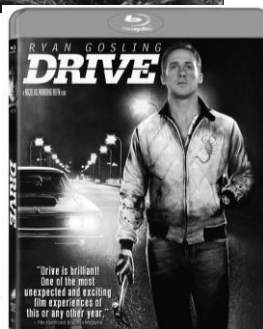
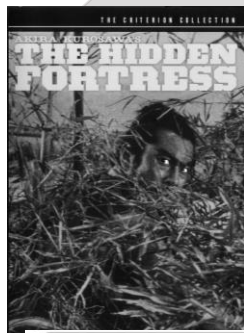
If you care at all about film as an art form and as a way to feel emotions you thought had been shelved away please seek this film out and support brave filmmakers. Unfortunately, the LaserDisc edition which is how I saw the film is out of print but I'm sure there are multiple torrents out there.

Love,  
Kale Hudson  
BA Creative Writing  
[facebook.com/ukuleledreamer](https://www.facebook.com/ukuleledreamer)

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## 2014 Highlights By Month

- Jan. – Buffalo 66: 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Blu-ray (Lions Gate)
- Feb. – Mr. Nobody (Magnolia Pictures)
- Mar. – The Swimmer Blu-ray/DVD Combo (Grindhouse Releasing)
- Apr. – Sorcerer (Warner Home Video)
- May – Sleepaway Camp Collector's Edition (Scream Factory)
- June – Judex (Criterion Collection)
- July – Herzog: The Collection Blu-ray (Shout! Factory)
- Aug. – Chaplin's Mutual Comedies (Flicker Alley)
- Sept. – Eraserhead (Criterion Collection)
- Oct. – The Complete Jacques Tati (Criterion Collection)
- Nov. – The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Kino Lorber)
- Dec. – Guardians of the Galaxy (Disney)

## DIGITAL SPOTLIGHT: BLEEDING SKULL! VIDEO

Early on in the digital distribution platform's life, festival hits like *Indie Game: The Movie* used VHX to sell the film directly to fans. Now companies like Drafthouse Films and Kino use the service to provide customers with DRM-free downloads of their films. And while VHX does spotlight titles on their site some things get ignored because they are not in the typical indie film wheelhouse. Bleeding Skull Video have not been featured by VHX so far, and that's a shame as they release a different type of independent film. The type of films that one finds on a VHS tape in the trunk of a used car. The ones that are self-funded and can only be worked on once a week over the course of years. Films like *The Soultangler* and *Run Coyote Run* make up for what they lack in quality with their independent spirit and insane narratives.

The distributors are Joseph A. Ziemba and Dan Budnik, the dudes behind BLEEDING SKULL!, a site which reviews trash-horror oddities on VHS. They have since co-authored a book, expanded the site, and their latest venture is a distribution company.

Out of their three titles (so far) all of them come in VHS packages that include boxes with custom art, a Minimum Underdrive 'zine specific to each film, a downloadable copy of the film, and a fold out poster in the case of *Run Coyote Run*. *Cards of Death* is the only one not available just on digital. PDFs of the 'zine come with each digital package. Digital packages go for \$10 while VHS packages go for \$25.

The 'zine that accompanies *Run Coyote Run* contains 20 pages of photos and an interview with the film's director James Bryan. It's nice to see a company provide thorough text supplements at a time when Criterion's booklets seem to be getting smaller.



# Don't Look Back

Stuff We're Looking Forward to in 2015



It should be a good year for Japanese cinema fans as hopefully new works from masters like Nakashima Tetsuya (*Confessions*), Irie Yu (*Ring in their Ears*), Miike Takashi (*Lesson of Evil*), Ishii Katushito (*The Taste of Tea*), and Sono Sion (*Love Exposure*) will be coming off of festival runs while new independent works like *Forma* will also be finding ways to non-festival audiences.

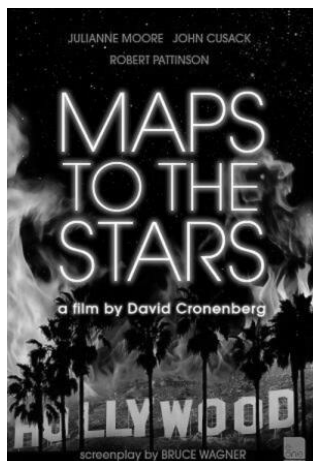


*The World of Kanako, Hibi Rock, As the Gods Will, Hello Junichi!, Tokyo Tribe, Forma*

## Mara's 2015 Picks

*Maps to the Stars* – David Cronenberg  
*Goodbye to Language* – Jean-Luc Godard  
*Knight of Cups* – Terrence Malick  
*The Early Years* – Paolo Sorrentino  
*Sea of Trees* – Gus Van Sant  
 Bob Dylan's – *Shadows in the Night*

An "uncovering" of Frank Sinatra tunes. I know it's not a movie but I'm still excited Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>!



## BABADOOK CORNER



# cinema adrift

## Editors:

Jason Suzuki & Mara Norman

Jan. 2015

photo Diane Arbus – An Empty Movie Theater, N.Y.C. (1971)

drawing David Lynch – “Hello” (2012)

## Contributors:

Caleb Harms

Kale Hudson

Robin Hyden

Bruce Shamma

C.M. Vales

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