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JASON WATCHES MOVIES

THE CINEMATIC EQUIVALENT OF TREPANNING A MERMAID.

THIS IS WHAT THE MOVIES SEE WHEN
THEY WATCH ME BACK

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 12

The penultimate day. And I'm writing after the festival. It's all over but the writing.

I started last Saturday with **MAGALLANES**. A story from Peru, Magallanes is a taxi driver as well as being the private driver of a retired and senile old colonel--his old commanding officer. When a girl from his old past--his past with the colonel--takes a ride in his cab, it brings up some long-suppressed memories. Memories of guilt, but memories he hopes he can overcome through arguably heroic acts. Much of the film becomes a semi-comic series of capers--blackmail and kidnapping. But that's hiding some serious trauma underneath, and the eventual reveal is excellent, both as a plot reveal and a philosophical point about the impossibility of escaping your past. The acting is great, especially **Damián Alcázar** in the title role.

Next up was a Czech comic masterpiece, **LOST IN MUNICH**. This does not take place in Munich, rather the title refers to the Munich Agreement, where the Sudetenland was ceded from Czechoslovakia to Germany, and is widely remembered as a national embarrassment and betrayal of Czechoslovakia by the French. On the 70th anniversary in 2008, the French and the Czechs attempt to make amends. As a gift, the French ambassador presents the Czechs with...a parrot. But not any parrot, the parrot that lived in the French

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prime minister Édouard Daladier's office at the time. The last surviving witness who can repeat the warm, loving attitude Daladier had towards the Czechs. So too bad when he starts spouting pro-Hitler statements and insulting the Czechs. Oops! A struggling journalist steals the bird and prepares for a story recounting everything he says. And then...something completely different. I don't want to give too much away, since it relies on the Czech comedy technique of "mystification." But it suddenly becomes a making-of story about the movie itself. All of the behind the scenes trouble, etc. But...that's all (I assume?) a fiction, too. And to get the movie right they have to go back to the original Munich agreement, figure out what was really behind it, and whether it really was a national betrayal and embarrassment, or secretly a master-stroke by the Czechs that worked out for the best...other than weighing on their psyche for generations. Brilliant mind-twisting fun, that I think might have had a serious point?

Anyway, next up was the Barco Escape Shorts Block A. This was the only Barco program I saw this year (I want to see MR INVINCIBLE, but once it's finished, not as a work-in-progress.) I will echo my feelings after seeing it last year--while the 3 screen technology is interesting (if not entirely new) it's rarely used well. I'm not a fan of stitching the 3 screens together into one panoramic image--it's a nice idea, but I always end up focusing on the seams, and whether they stitch well (spoiler alert--they never do.) So it works best when there's something different going on in each screen. But even then, it's rare that it's used effectively to create something that can't be seen on just one screen. There's one good example of that this year.

GUARDING GRACE: Parallel stories of a young disabled girl, her dying father, and a drug dealer who becomes her unlikely guardian. A good story, with compelling characters, but I honestly can't remember what the 3 screens were used for. I'd rather see this story drawn out into a feature than expanded to 3 screens.

IN ANOTHER ROOM: This is the one that really used the three screen effect well. The team from **HOUSE ON PINE STREET** is back with another haunted house. In the center screen, we see a real estate agents and her clients touring a house. On the side screens, we see other rooms--usually the ones they're about to enter. Halfway through, the clients stop, feeling the ghosts in the house, they leave. So the agent is there alone when supernatural events start happening. And by showing the rooms where she's not, we're constantly scanning back and forth to see the ghosts she can't see. And it builds slowly, beautifully, scarily. Truly effective use of the format to create something that couldn't work on a single screen.

THE PARANOID CAT: A funny little cartoon about a cat who sees danger in every shadow. Very cute, but again I can't think of anything the three screens added that wouldn't work on one screen.

TOUCHING HEAVEN: Some beautiful shots of wingsuit adventures. And often a clear example of the potential of the three screens to create a panorama, but for that I'd rather see a single panoramic screen. Paying attention to how well the three screens stitch together just ruins it for me (I

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► October (4)

► June (16)

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▼ March (19)

Jason goes to CAAMFest--Tuesday,
Mar. 15th

Jason goes to CAAMFest--Monday,
Mar. 14

Jason goes to Cinequest--Encore
Day and Closing Ni...

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 12

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 11

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 10

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 9

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 8

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 7

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 6

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 5

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 4

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 3

Jason goes to Cinequest--Day 2

Jason goes to Cinequest--Opening
Night

Jason goes to Midnites for Maniacs
and celebrate's...

Jason goes to Indiefest--Closing
Night

Jason goes to Indiefest--Day 14

Jason goes to Indiefest--Day 13

► February (17)

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fully admit this may be solely my problem, and not representative of the audience in general.)

VOODOO APP: And angry ex-girlfriend and an app that's perfect for revenge. Very funny, but again not much added value in the 3 screens.

WIFI: A guy is just looking for the WiFi password, when he realizes he's in a very different kind of meeting. The 3 screens are actually used pretty well, to create the immersive overload of social media addiction. Nicely done.

TWO LEGGED RAT BASTARDS: And finally, this bonus short that was actually a part of the other shorts program. Derek Waters' (DRUNK HISTORY) father recounts a very high stakes poker game. Hilarious. Didn't need three screens, but frickin' hilarious.

Then fresh off it's win for Best Documentary at Cinequest, I caught the inspiring film, **THE PROMISED BAND**.

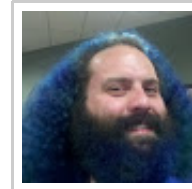
But first, the short **STICKS**. A Picture The Possibilities short, all around the world people explore the differences between living in the country or in the big city, be it Beijing or New York.

Okay, then the feature, **THE PROMISED BAND**. Let's get this out of the way first--they're not a real band. In fact, they only sing together once--kind of--at the end when director Jen Heck plays their recordings together on screen. Jen quickly becomes one of the subjects of her documentary, when an encounter with a Palestinian mountain climber on Everest gets her interested in meeting and making friends with people in the occupied territories--especially Lina Qadri. And that grows into an interest in getting people together from opposite sides of the border. In particular, getting women together. But the legal ability to do that is...complicated (the graphic showing the 3 zones in the Palestinian territory is frighteningly complex.) Well, a few arts/cultural exchanges are allowed, so they might be able to cross if they were all in a band. So that's exactly what they do. The results are funny and poignant, and the quest to just be able to play one song together (first, learn to sing and/or play an instrument. Second, get everyone together in one place) becomes epic in its scale and importance. And it's funny to watch who sticks with it and who drops out (spoiler: I don't want to ascribe motives to anyone...but men are cowards.) Great movie, and well deserving of Best Documentary of the festival.

Then I was over to the California Theatre for **WEEPAH WAY FOR NOW**. Elle and Joy are sisters (played by real-life sisters and musical act Aly and AJ Michalka.) As such they have a beautiful, witty charm that plays very, very well. In a conceit that sounds kinda eerie but ends up being very sweet, the film is narrated by the spirit of their stillborn middle sister. And it jumps around in the past and the future as it sets up a going-away party for them. Not only are they going on tour, they're forever leaving their old house. Complications arise at their divorced parents show up to the party and cause quite a bit of chaos. But I'm getting ahead of myself. The strength of the

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- ▶ [2011 \(254\)](#)
- ▶ [2010 \(210\)](#)
- ▶ [2009 \(239\)](#)
- ▶ [2008 \(254\)](#)
- ▶ [2007 \(276\)](#)

ABOUT ME



JASON WIENER



I'm Jason. I'm a nuclear physicist and a medical professional. Or if you prefer, I take pictures of invisible light. And I watch a lot of movies.

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

MY FAVORITE FILM FESTIVALS

Dead Channels!
 Indiefest!
 Cinequest!
 SFIAAFF (Asianfest)!
 SF International!

GENERAL MOVIE SITES

IMDb
 Rotten Tomatoes
 Dread Central

BLOGS MOSTLY ABOUT MOVIES

Phil's Film Adventures
 CQ Central
 Hell on Frisco Bay
 Cinequesting
 Bay Flicks

movie is the easy, hilarious, and often filthy rapport the sisters have with each other. It's full of rapid-fire witticisms that you'd probably have to watch a couple of extra times to catch, what with so many 'did she really say that?' or 'did that really happen?' moments. Quite a lot of fun.

And finally, the midnight movie was WE GO ON. Miles, like a lot of, is afraid of dying. Like very few of us, he's willing to put up a \$30,000 reward for any form of proof that...we go on...that something still happens to our...souls, consciousness, whatever...after we die. And so of course he gets a tremendous response from his advertisement. But he manages to narrow them down to a few. And he puts them to the test. And not surprisingly, he finds scams (well, he's a bit too credulous, his skeptical mother--who is no fan of his activities--finds the scams.) Still, there's a wild-card. There's that guy who didn't contact him by e-mail or snail mail, but through a text message...even though he didn't put his phone number in the ad. And that's when he gets more than he bargained for. A cool thriller that lets comedy give way to some serious scares. Very nicely done. (Note: I still don't believe in life after death.)

And then just a little drinking with filmmakers back at the hotel...until about 4:30 am (assisted somewhat by stupid Daylight Savings Time.) But I was still up and in the lounge by 10 am for the first beer of the day. Because that's how I Cinequest.

Total Running Time: 608 minutes

My Total Minutes: 424,292

POSTED BY JASON WIENER AT 2:15 PM

REACTIONS: funny (0) interesting (0) cool (0)



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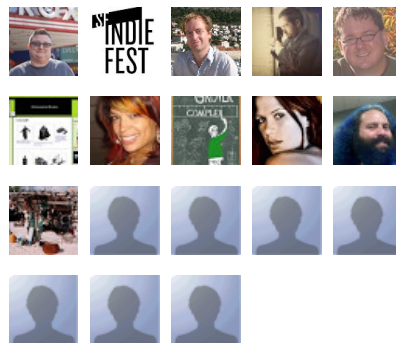
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