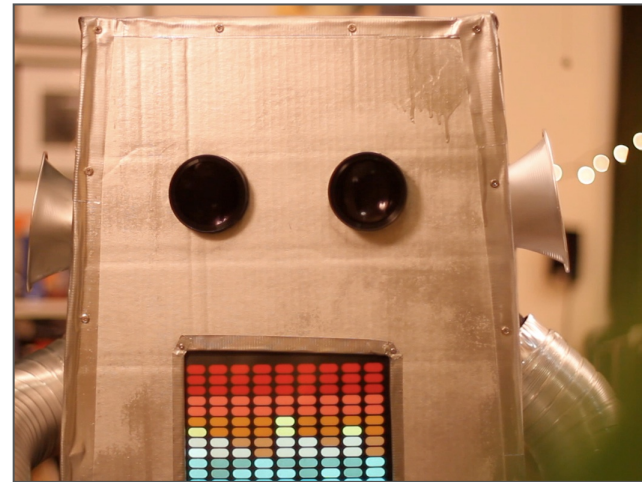
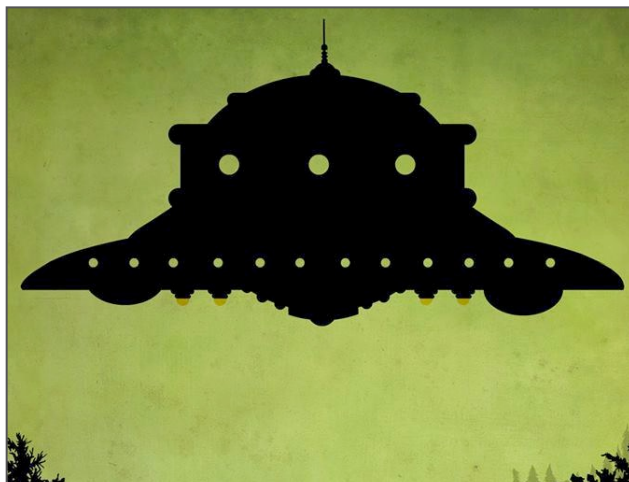


# The DrinkTank 388

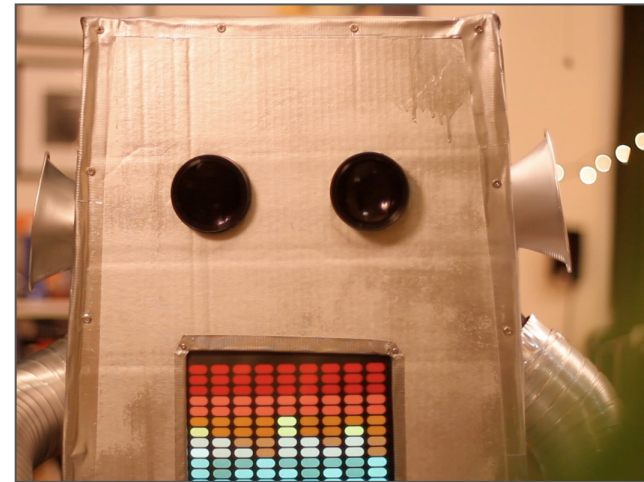
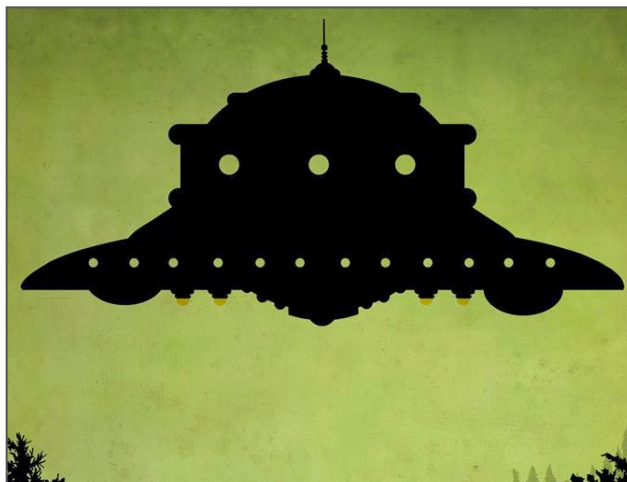
THE SILICON VALLEY SCIENCE FICTION SHORT FILM FESTIVAL



From Vanessa, Chris, & James

# The DrinkTank 388

OCTOBER 2014



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## *Section 1*

# SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES... ONLY SHORTER



We showed 20 Short Films at Con-volution this weekend. Yes, there were some technical hiccups, but Vanessa saved the day! She always manages to do that, you know! The con was so great, and I was so happy with the response the films got from the audience! We had a wonderful screening and more are on the way!

The films themselves were the stars, as it should be. The tour will hopefully involve 3 more stops, including a probable Loscon screening and one for sure at Illogicon, but this was the premiere and we are so glad that it went so well.

In December, we'll be opening up to submissions for the 2015 festival!

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## *Section 2*

# THE 1UP FEVER



Director Sylvia Dal Dosso has managed to do something incredibly impressive. She has managed to create a multi-level reality 'documentary' about a multi-level reality. It's science fiction at it's best, but at the same time, it tells an incredible story about gamification, financial realism, anonymous generosity, social dynamics, and just plain fun. When I realised that this documentary wasn't necessarily documenting something real, I started looking at it differently. It actually took on more meaning.

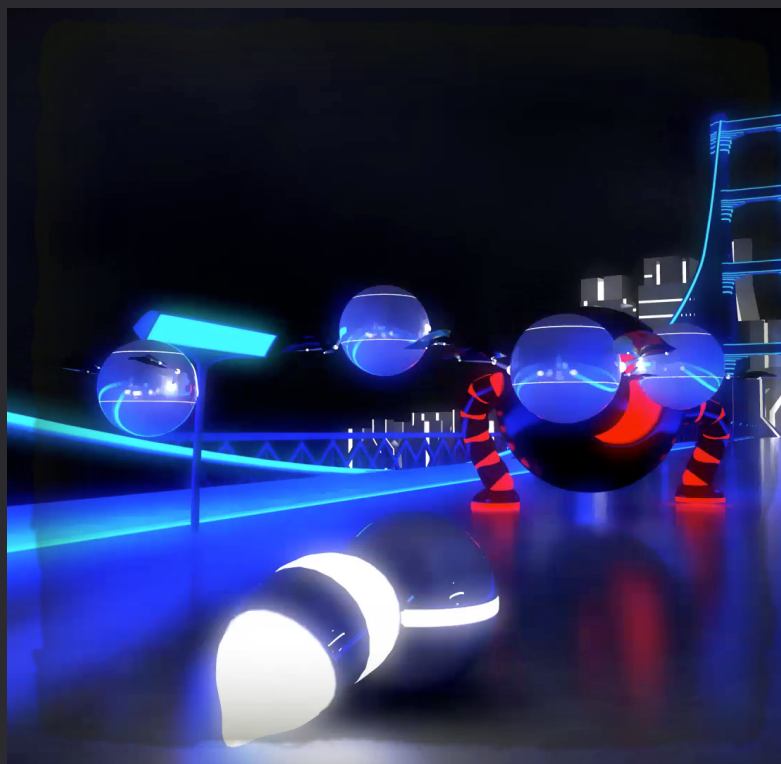
The story of the film is simple - there's a game that's taken Berlin by storm. It's basically a virtual version of Super Mario, only based on the iPhone with the screen providing a secondary image of the Real World. There are coins scattered all over Berlin, and you can only see them by looking at the world through your SmartPhone screen. You collect the coins by tapping them with your smartphone. Well, by tapping the space they appear in the screen of the smartphone with the smartphone. The coins represent Bitcoins, which are then transferred to a Bitcoin Wallet.

Whether or not it's a real game is of utmost importance. If it is, it's a huge documentary of a phenomena that could change the way people see the world around them. If it's not, then it's a great piece of imaginative fiction that brilliantly plays with the documentary form. either way, it's thoroughly entertaining!



## *Section 4*

# All the Robots



If you've got a film that has a message, you damn well better have one that is engaging if you completely disagree with the central premise. It's a rule that is all too often broken. All The Robots has a message, a beautiful one, and it uses exquisite computer animation to make it plain. The film just flat-out works, and the combination of music and visual-styling leaves a lasting impression.

The story, about teamwork, about standing up to bullies, about how you can stop the cycle only if you can avoid becoming that which you once faced, is so important. I want every young science fiction kid who is picked on in school to see this one, and not only for the message. Also because it's WAY COOL!!!



## Section 5

# BENDITO MACHINE V - PULL THE TRIGGER



Human history is the story of watching.

History is basically written by people who watch, and typically the folks who watched and survived are the winners. *Bendito Machine V - Pull The Trigger* by Jossie Milas tells the story of human historic struggle through the existence of an alien who has come down from space and been stuck here on Earth. He ends up buried and Human History occurs over his head. The stories that we see played out very very quickly range from technological advance, to wars, and on and on. The end is a bit of a sting, and it totally works.

It's the style that made this into an incredible viewing experience.

You may have seen the classic steampunk short film *The Geographic Expeditions of Jasper Morello*. Quite possibly the best animated film of the last twenty years. The shadow puppet style of the short is remarkable, and Milas has used it here to amazing effect. The green background plays into the imagery, as well as give the feeling of one of those old green-screen monitors!

An amazing short and the Winner of the Best Animation for the Festival!

## *Section 6*

# Cenapse #2



Two of the unspoken things I set out to do with the Silicon Valley Science Fiction Short Film Festival was to bring out experimental filmmaking along with the more traditional narratives, and to highlight short-short films. Something that just sorta happened was the huge influx of films from parts of the world that I didn't expect a lot of films from. Thus, an experimental short-short from Iran would satisfy every situation!

This is such a difficult film to summarize. It's a series of images in negative, mixed in with all sorts of generated imagery. There's some text, and the entire thing could certainly cause a seizure in those who are very sensitive, but it also brings forward all sorts of thoughts. The young woman who is the featured image seems to be exploring and searching for something, which may be the perfect metaphor for what the audience is doing.

## *Section 7*

# Dark Shadows



This film is an interesting fit for the Science Fiction Short Film Festival. On its surface, it is a Noir. There is a detective, a murder victim, and voice-over. Then we are greeted with an author at a typewriter. At that moment, we are then shown, in extremely quick order, his murder. It is difficult to see such a thing as a Science Fiction film, or even a Fantasy.

Except that it certainly is.

If you consider the play *City of Angels* fantasy, then *Dark Shadows* is fantasy. It's the story of a writer's vision impinging upon his reality. It is a fantasy - The World which we know is not the world the film presents, and that is my only definition of fantasy.



## *Section 8*

# DRING OF THE DEAD



Some of the best films are contained pieces. They are held tightly, in a single venue. It's tough to do that because in order for stuff to happen, you need a wider world. Some of my favorite films take place in bars, or a single house, but I can't think of any where all the action takes place in a phone booth.

Except for *Dring of the Dead*.

This French zombie film points out that zombies are beasts, and perhaps there is a way to soothe them. Music, perhaps?

This film, less than 5 minutes, is an entertaining piece of zombie fiction that does some very smart things. It's small, it's personal, it's a clean story told in a minimal space with sound design as a foremost concern. The acting is good, the make-up is not over-the-top, as is often the case with zombie films.

Steve Mix, my pal and author of the wonderful novel *Goodbye from the Edge of Never* saw this and said it was amazing and should have won best Film. That may be a bit too far, but it's great stuff!

## *Section 9*

# The First Yugoslavian Cosmonaut



Yuri Gagarin was one of the most significant figures in the space race. A HUGE deal in the US, and of course in the Soviet bloc of the time, Gagarin died too early.

A part of the Road to Gagarin project by photographer/film-maker Rene Nuijens and writer Steve Korver, *The First Yugoslavian Cosmonaut* is a little bit experimental and a little bit straight-forward. The entire idea here is not only to pay tribute to Gagarin, but to make us consider aspects of Gagarin's life and work in a new light, and this does exactly that.

## Section 10

# INSOMNIAC



This is a beautiful short, and a powerful piece of subtle Science Fiction. Well, sort of. What makes this SF is the fact that it presents a world where it is possible to erase the nightmares and pains and get a good night's sleep.

Or at least that's what we're told.

Instantly, I thought of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and a few other major motion pictures where Memory Detailing is featured, but the most important thing here is the economy of filmmaking. Director Eva Nieto tells the story in less than 5 minutes through beautiful imagery and smart dialogue.

It's also a part of a growing Spanish Language cinema movement in the UK, which has produced dozens of excellent shorts over the last few years.



## *Section 11*

# Invasion



No matter what, it's difficult to be an Astronaut and not be Science Fiction.

I know, you don't think *Gravity* was SF, but you are also wrong. This short is a lovely example of the Avant Garde in SF Filmmaking. *Invasion* is about two tiny astronauts from NASA who land on Earth and investigate a high school.

At least that's how it looks...

You see, at no point are we shown the two miniature space adventurers having a purpose, which I guess is exactly like our space exploration. Hve we really done any better than these two?

## *Section 12*

# IOA



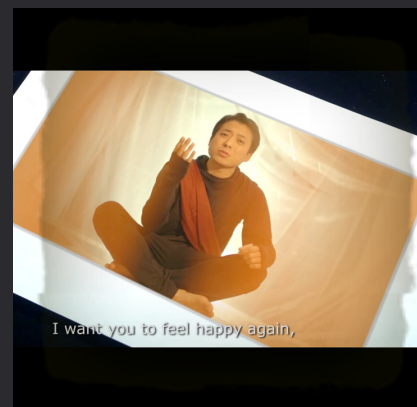
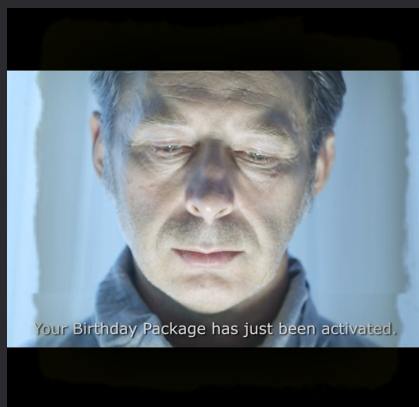
Some films are very strange. Many of my favorite films are very strange. In IOA, there is a machine. It talks. It says oddly philosophical things. At times, it talks about The Singing Teacher and the role played by the machine to Him. At other times, it merely says the names of the individual components “I-E-A-O-U”

it's strange, but the quality of the animation, the beautiful construction of the machine (which somehow brought to mind the work of The Brothers Quay) and the strange German-ness of the entire presentation struck me.

When I was programming, I had a list of more than 50 films, and this one was on my mind the whole time, practically insisting I program it! That is the sign that a movie needs to be included.

## Section 13

# IT'S ALL GOOD



Another 48 Hour film, this time from the good country of Poland. The story of a Birthday present and the Zen it brings is delightful, told mostly through reaction to a video presented on a screen. The lead actor is really great, and the Zen message is there.

If you're looking at this as a Buckaroo Bonzai thought, you're missing the point. Where as Buckaroo was living in a world of his own desireless existence, here our protagonist is trying to reach that state. There is nothing Super-natural about our hero in *It's All Good*, where as Buckaroo is basically Batman (and if you don't think Batman is supernatural, I'll have an article for you in the future!)

The film is beautiful, stark, not quite simple, but utterly science fictional. In many ways it reminded me of the scenes in *2001* of the time on the ship. There's a sparseness to the shooting that allows the impact to echo, and that's the sign of a great film.



## *Section 14*

# Library



There are many dark films in the Silicon Valley Science Fiction Short Film Festival, and I'd say that *Library* is both the darkest and most up-lifting. The story of a place where learning and knowledge is tightly controlled is done in an animation style that is just perfection. The influences on the animation are impressive, from 1950s and 60s Disney to European styles of the 1930s and 40s, to character designs that reminded me of nothing less than the work of the great Gweefee Boedoe.

The thing on this one, this beautiful amazing short, is that it doesn't feel like it's trying to make its point the whole time. It is revealing itself slowly, drawing you in and making you a part of its world, which then hits you with the thought that is behind it, only increasing the impact.

## Section 15

# NAHUAL



Another kinda simple animation. Can't have much meaning, right?

Like a Haiku, the answer to that is deceptively difficult. *Nahual* is a story, a simple story on one level, but when you dig, look for connections, there's a lot there to play with.

A woman speaks, or at least opens her mouth, and tiny bits of paper, dots, come out, and they end up taking her over, transforming her into... well, that'd be a spoiler, right?

The animation is deceptively simple, but it's also lovely. While the story take less than 2 minutes to evolve to completion, it has an impact. What is it we do when we speak? Does it transform us? Can we as viewers see this transformation happening as we are listening to someone speak. The infestation of our thoughts upon our flesh seems to be the paramount point of this piece, and even if it weren't, the animation is so wonderful, I'd have programmed it anyways!

## Section 16

# Outlook Not So Good



The one-joke short is a long-standing tradition. It's not ambitious, though it's also difficult to pull off. It's also difficult to pull off a 46 second short in general, but Andy Novak has managed with his fun little film *Outlook Not So Good*.

There's this family, you see, a Mom, a Daughter and a Magic 8-Ball Dad. They're having... well, let's leave it there.

if you wanna get deep on this one, there's a lot to be said about Fathers if you look at it like such. The Dad is a Magic 8-Ball, there are a limited number of responses, which is what we're programmed to believe Dad's have. Also, the short has the voice of Ileana Douglas, who I love!

## *Section 17*

# Requiem for a Robot



Let us talk about expectations.

Going into any film, we have them laid out before us - often from trailers or word-of-mouth, and perhaps most damagingly, everything else we've ever seen. Often, a minute or two into a film, you're fully aware of what it's going to be, largely due to the fact that it's not the first movie you've ever seen. Sometimes there's a twist; you can count on that from all the M. Night Shaymalans that have sprouted since 1999. When a turn happens not in plot but in tone, that's when I take notice.

And that's why I really believe that *Requiem for a Robot* is one of the films that every writer should see to learn the craft of turning an audience's expectations against them.



## Section 18

# SHIFT



One of two films I recruited from Cinequest, *Shift* is a heist film. Not only that, it's a teleportation film. Not only that; it's a damn fine example of both, with a satisfying ending.

Problems with teleportation films are many. It's too powerful a ability to make for good storytelling. How you gonna beat 'em? Just happen to have a good sturdy bag to catch 'em in like a common snipe? No, only a teleporter can defeat a teleporter... unless they defeat themselves.

Ah yes, hubris. There is little in the world of Science Fiction older than the idea of the Scientist who falls through his own creation. Heck, *Frankenstein* was all about that! *Shift* takes that route, and instead of making a point about science gone amok, it sticks to a simpler idea - that you gotta know what you're doin' at all times if you're gonna play with fire!

## *Section 19*

# Silence



Horror films aren't science fiction, but SCREW YOU, it's my festival!

*Silence*, by the great french director Pierre-Gil Lecouvey is one of those wonderful short horror films that take a standard story (Hey, we're teenagers and we can hang out somewhere we're not supposed to!) and then adds a layer of dark fun. There's a lot of moody joy to this piece, and I really loved the actors.

The idea of a Library holding dark secrets is an old, old one. Think of *Ghostbusters* with the floating Librarian who keeps shushing people. It's actually kinda important to remember that for this short. The Library is a character, as much as the house in *The Fall of the House of Usher* or *House of Leaves*. The Library is not what it seems.

## *Section 20*

# SORRY ABOUT TOMORROW



One of my favorite films. Not one of my favorite short films, one of my favorite films. The fact that it's a 48 Hour Film Project film is even more incredible!

The story is of Baldwin, who meets two scientists who are working on a Time Machine. He falls for one of them, and eventually, they come up with the right method and can start jumping through time.

The editing is what sets this apart. It's uncommonly well-cut, with each beat landing perfectly. The acting is good, the script is solid, the ideas fun, the delivery both hilarious (when it's supposed to be) and heartbreaking (when we finally see what's going on). I have watched this film at least fifty times, first programming it for Cinequest last year, and then again for the this fest.

And dozens of times in-between, because it's that damned good.

## *Section 21*

# The Swamp King



Frogs are always science fictional... but I didn't have to tell you that, did I?

This is the story of a bunch of frogs and a balloon in the shape of a frog wearing a crown. The balloon is caught in a tree and the frogs can see it. They begin to look at it, one begins to worship it, another attempts to bring it down. A battle over the balloon ensues. The story ends as all stories like this end, with more questions than answers.

The message here is big and powerful, and the animation is wonderful. The storytelling's compact, measured path is so ideal to the form that it can't fail to deliver.



## *Section 22*

# Untitled



Beautiful computer animation dominates the world of Short Film these days. As an historian specializing in Computer graphics, music, art, and video games, I can say that the path these films have taken are so different than what the pioneers expected. The classic 1980s and early 90s computer animated short film wouldn't tell a regular story, but was often an allegory, or maybe a dream-like snippet. *There are no Kittens in Paradise* has some of those markers, as it is a music-driven piece, perhaps closely related to the *Silly Symphony* films from Disney, of two tribes dancing as they prepare for war. The imagery reminded me of Polynesian masks, tattoos, and art, while at the same time holding forth a sort of Techno-Pagan ideal that is fresh!

## *Section 23*

# WITCH HUNTER



The spy thriller is a favorite genre of mine, and there are a lot of ways to go about making one. You can go straight-forward, tell the story of a spy working for an agency doin' spy stuff. You can go gritty, you can go dark, you can go silly.

Or you can go super-natural.

And that's what *Witch Hunter* has done. We start by getting a glimpse at a training session for what I can only assume are a clone army. We then see a call to go and take out *The Witch*. We're not 100% sure who that is, or why it matters, but as the film goes on, we see the how, and later the why.

This tiny film does everything a John LaCarre novel does in less than 5 minutes through excellent photography, wisely-timed effects, and a good soundtrack. The only Korean film in the festival, it's a real treat.