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Slamdance 2016: Where Film Makes a Statement

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Slamdance 2016: Where Film Makes a Statement

Abstract

Introduction to the Slamdance Film Festival 2016.

Author Notes

Rubina (Ruby) Ramji is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cape Breton University. After serving as a Chair of the Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group for the American Academy of Religion and then on the steering committee, Rubina continues to serve on the Executive Committee for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion as President and is the Film Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film. Her research activities focus on the areas of religion, media and identity, religion in Canada, and religion and immigration.

The *Journal of Religion and Film* is always lucky enough to be able to enjoy two independent film festivals that take place in Park City, Utah every January. Established in 1995, the Slamdance Film Festival showcases the work of individual filmmakers who use low budgets and do-it-yourself filmmaking techniques. They regularly receive more than 5000 submissions every year. Slamdance continues to live by its mantra: *By Filmmakers. For Filmmakers.*



Slamdance 2016 Film Poster Wall
Courtesy of Rubina Ramji. Park City, UT January 23, 2016

This year, we were not able to get to all the screenings for Slamdance, but we did get our hands on the films being shown, and we plan on sharing those reviews with you. *Chemical Cut* is one of those films that stood out for reviewers. It is a black comedy, a film that will have you laughing while others suffer.



Chemical Cut Cast: Marjorie Conrad (director and screenwriter), Ian Rudick and Leah Coster. Courtesy of Monica Blizek. Park City, UT January 2016

Neptune tells the story of an orphaned girl who is raised by the church, and then is haunted by the disappearance of a fellow classmate.



Neptune: Derek Kimball (director and screenwriter), Jane Ackerman (actor), Bill McDonough (actor), Matthew Konkel (screenwriter). Courtesy of Monica Blizek.

Fursonas, a documentary feature at Slamdance, examines the Furry community; people who dress in Fur costumes.



Fursonas: Dominic Rodriguez, Boomer, Olivia Vaughn and Christine Meyer. Courtesy of Monica Blizek. Park City, UT January 2016.

Excursions tells the story of two couples who go into the woods for a weekend getaway and participate in ritual purges, which in turn lead to the emergence of their primal selves.



Excursions: Daniel Martinico (director and screenwriter), Hugo Armstrong (screenwriter and actor)

Of the films we reviewed at Slamdance, the following received awards:

- *Disco Inferno*, directed by Alice Waddington, won the Jury Award for Anarchy Short.
- *Fursonas* won the Spirit of Slamdance Award.

Even though Slamdance serves as an excellent platform for emerging artists, it also holds events all year round, screening films in different cities, holding workshops for student filmmakers and continues its monthly cinema club partnership with ArcLight Cinemas, where they screen two films monthly and offer a Question and Answer session after each screening. Although Slamdance may be considered young in relation to other film festivals, it goes above and beyond in helping young aspiring filmmakers get their creations onto the screen for the independent film fan to enjoy. If you can't make it to Slamdance, check out Hulu's film festival alumni collection.

As always, we want to thank Deedee Morse, Melanie Marquez and Annie Jeeves of Cinematic Red, and all of the staff at the Slamdance Press Office. We appreciate all the hard work they do in putting together a fantastic independent film festival, and making it run so smoothly. They are the driving force of Slamdance and they continually foster a nurturing space for emerging filmmakers that don't have distributors. Thanks for your continued passion!!!