



NEW RELEASES

We're All Going to the World's Fair

Director's Statement

When I was 13 years old, I would stay up late writing scary stories about serial killers and vampires on an online horror message board. I was a morbid, creative kid still decades away from accepting my trans identity. And for me, the anonymity of this forum was a refuge. Even though the tones of my stories were pretty dark, writing and posting them was a balm.

A 30-something man who posted under the acronym 'WAJ' started commenting on my stories. We never met IRL (thankfully), but at his instigation we formed a pretty close relationship over AOL Instant Messenger. This film is inspired by something he told me one night during an AIM conversation:

He told me that vampires were real: that his boyfriend had drunk his blood, and that now he was turning into one. He told me that he could feel the changes starting, that he was afraid of what he was becoming, but that it also felt good...

I remember sitting in math class the next day playing this over in my head. I knew that WAJ's story wasn't true, but part of me sort of wished that it was. I thought, 'Wouldn't the world be a more exciting place if this sort of transformation were possible?'

We're All Going to the World's Fair is a film about fantasy and intimacy and identity play in the digital realm. It takes inspiration as much from traditional narrative form as it does from the scroll of a newsfeed, and it tries to speak authentically in the language of the internet. It works from the thesis of Poe's Law, an adage that posits that it is impossible to know if someone is telling the truth or trolling you online.

It is also an attempt to use the language of cinema to articulate the hard-to-describe feeling of dysphoria. Growing up, I did not know this word, nor did I know the words 'transgender,' or 'non-binary.' These terms hardly existed at the time, and today I believe we're still just beginning to develop a language through which we can articulate our transgender experiences, whether verbally or cinematically.

What I did know growing up was a constant feeling of unreality, one cut with an ambient sense of shame, self-loathing, and anger. I knew that fiction was a safe place for me to hide. I think fantasies like the one WAJ offered me were appealing because the life I was living and the body I was living it in did not feel real to me. It took me decades to unravel these feelings, and to understand them for what they were – very common symptoms of dysphoria.

But I'm not sure I've ever seen dysphoria explored in American film in this way (at least not by an openly trans filmmaker), and I think if I had it would have helped me a lot. Instead I saw *Boys Don't Cry* and *Dallas Buyers Club* and *Silence of the Lambs*, and I didn't see myself in those films' depictions of transness at all. As the film critic Willow Maclay writes in her series Body Talk:

‘Transgender Cinema as it is understood by cisgender filmmakers is exterior forces and changes, but we understand transness as an internal, textural, abstract energy. Especially in the case of dysphoria. What cisgender filmmakers typically do not understand is that for us, the internal becomes external, not the other way around. Dysphoria manifests itself in real exterior ways, but it originates from an internal place.’

The tones of my film can be quite dark (just like those stories I wrote on that message board decades ago), but I feel that at its core this is a gentle work, and I hope that watching it will be a balm for people like me. I hope certain viewers will see something they recognise in these feelings and images, in my film’s fractured rhythms and narrative obstructions, in its interior world and emotional turbulence, in its hazy aesthetic distortion and oneiric reflections on gendered bodies, ungendered bodies, and bodies in disarray. In its cinematic dysphoria.

I hope this will make them feel a little less alone.

About the director

Jane Schoenbrun is a non-binary filmmaker. *We’re All Going to the World’s Fair* is their first narrative feature as writer/director. Jane is the co-creator of the ongoing touring variety series *The Eyeslicer*, a collaboration with hundreds of filmmakers including David Lowery, Ari Aster, Shaka King, Jennifer Reeder, Bridey Elliott, and many more. *The Eyeslicer* is executive produced by arts collective Meow Wolf and has screened in hundreds of venues across the world including MoMA, the Tribeca Film Festival, and Kansas City’s oldest porn theatre. In 2018, Jane created the Radical Film Fair, a film flea market and mentorship event that drew thousands of attendees. Jane is the director of the feature documentary *A Self-Induced Hallucination* (Rotterdam 2019), a producer on Aaron Schimberg’s *Chained for Life* (Kino Lorber 2019), an EP on season one of Terence Nance’s *Random Acts of Flyness* (HBO 2018), and the creator of the omnibus ‘dream film’ *collective:unconscious* (SXSW 2016). Jane sometimes publishes the column ‘Continue Watching’ for *FILMMAKER Magazine*, and has previously worked as the Senior Film Lead at Kickstarter and as the Associate Director of Programming at IFP.

Press for ‘We’re All Going to the World’s Fair’

‘The highlight of Sundance... a transfixing portrait of creepypasta obsession’
– *The AV Club*

‘One hell of a trip... The unmistakable arrival of a brave new talent’
– *Film Threat*

‘One of the 15 best movies at Sundance. A tender and intimate teenage journey... *We’re All Going to the World’s Fair* is a warm hand for those still trying to figure themselves out.’ – *The Hollywood Reporter*

‘Critics Pick. An auspicious, wildly smart narrative feature debut... You don’t need to be an internet geek to vibe to *World’s Fair*, you just need to be human.’ – *Indiewire*

‘Jane Schoenbrun is redefining trans horror. A nuanced exploration of how the web can both comfort and manipulate.’ – *Bitch Media*

Production notes

WE'RE ALL GOING TO THE WORLD'S FAIR

Directed by: Jane Schoenbrun

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Presented by: Utopia, Dweck Productions, Flies Collective

Executive Producers: Hannah Dweck, Theodore Schaefer,

Daniel Patrick Carbone, Zachary Shedd, Matthew Petock, David Lowery

Produced by: Sarah Winshall, Carlos Zozaya

Co-producer: Abby Harri

Associate Producer: Mila Matveeva

Written by: Jane Schoenbrun

Director of Photography: Daniel Patrick Carbone

Edited by: Jane Schoenbrun

Production Designer: Grace Sloan

Costume Designer: Abby Harri

Music: Alex G

Sound Design: Eli Cohn

Cast

Anna Cobb (*Casey*)

Michael J. Rogers (*JLB*)

USA 2021

86 mins

A Lightbulb release

NEW & RE-RELEASES**Cries and Whispers (Viskningar och rop)**

From Fri 1 Apr

Playground

From Fri 15 Apr

Ennio

From Fri 22 Apr

Firebird

From Fri 22 Apr

The Northman

From Fri 22 Apr

We're All Going to the World's Fair

From Fri 29 Apr

Croupier

From Wed 4 May

Vampyr

Thu 5 May Preview 18:15; Mon 23 May 14:00 Seniors' Matinee

+ discussion

From Fri 20 May

Cabaret

From Fri 6 May

Vortex

Tue 10 May 18:00 Preview + intro by Gaspar Noé

From Fri 13 May

Get Carter + The Frighteners: The Manipulators

Mon 30 May 18:00 + intro by Douglas Weir, BFI Technical Delivery

Manager

From Fri 27 May

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