

The Drink Tank Issue One Hundred and Three



Chris for TAFH!!!
garcia@computerhistory.org



Well, I'm back and working on another Drink Tank. This one'll have to settle you for a while because there's a lot going on. I'm editing the December issue of the N3F Fan, and that'll take a little time away from my precious Drink Tank. I've also got Chris for TAFF stuff, which would have been out this week, except there's been another snag.

Convoy was going to be the British National Science Fiction

Convention at the Adelphi in Liverpool. I was psyched that I might get to go to Liverpool and see the sister hotel to the Titanic. Sadly, they had to cancel the con due to the fact that there were several articles run about thefts and various other issues. They also hadn't sold enough memberships to the con itself. Now, the way it hadn't really exploded the way I would expect the news of a major annual con calling off an edition would cause, I figured it'd happened before. I was wrong, it turns out, since they've never cancelled one before for any reason.

This is indeed serious.

Now, the issue comes down to this: where is the TAFF delegate going to go? They were supposed to be sent to Eastercon and serve as the Fan Guest of Honour. That won't be happening now. There was talk of a make-up Eastercon, though no announcement has been made of whether or not that's happening. Now, there seems to be a lot of discussion about doing something on the various LJs, but nothing has been firmed up.

And that explains the TAFF race so far: difficult, with things changing left and right, but ultimately, it really couldn't be anything else considering that I'm running...and am in the home stretch!

The Name of This Article is Dogme 95

I'm fairly certain anyone reading this knows that I'm a giant movie mark. It's easy to see why growing up with the movies I did. I saw the Godfather far too young. I watched Rio Lobo, The Outlaw Josie Wales, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, The Sons of Katie Elder, Cross of Iron, Clockwork Orange, Safety Last, Casablanca, The Big Sleep, Double Indemnity, all of the Hope & Crosby films and all the Universal Monster flicks before I was in high school. Those films alone are enough to make a guy into a film nut, but add Star Wars, The Thing from Another World, The Day The Earth Stood Still and so many other Science Fiction films that I couldn't list them all without taking up many, many pages and you'll understand how I got her.

You'll see from that list that most of the films I've loved are big productions. Lots of flash, style, cunning editing and camera work, special effects and more. It's easy to think that list like that would belong to a guy who loves the big 'plosion kinds of films, but really, to me, it's about smaller, more direct, more honest films.

Hence, I love Dogme.

The Danes are a strange people. They've been making films since the Lumiere Bros. sold a Cinematograph to a couple of Danish filmmakers in 1899.



There were a number of highly important and influential filmmakers in Denmark during the the silent period, including Carl Theodor Dreyer who made the genius *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

Denmark wasn't the most important filmmaking nation in Europe, but it was the one that got attention for breaking taboos and doing edgy work. I believe Haxen, the one of the first of the Supernatural documentaries, was made in Denmark.

There was a generation of Danish film students that started to see the light of day in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Most of these folks you'd never hear about unless you were big into the festival circuit. There was one guy who really started making waves. The guy's name was Lars Von Trier.

They say that every movement has it's mad man and Lars has been the mad man for a couple of them now. His films of the 1980s, the little seen in the US film *Epidemic* as an exam-

ple, started to get folks talking. He was shooting almost entirely hand-held and was using raw material for scripts that just killed and cut viewers to shreds. The films he made and the TV series that he did were tough and unyielding and they made a wider audience take a look than had ever considered Danish filmmakers before. He gained international attention when he really began the Digital revolution with his film *Breaking The Waves*, a film that got so much notice that Emily Watson managed to get an Oscar nom out of it.

In 1995, Lars was bitter. So were a lot of his filmmaking buddies, notably Thomas Vinterberg, Kristian Levring, and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen. They started talking about the essence of film. This is a debate that every filmmaker goes through in their life, typically while surrounded by a bunch of friends who think the same way (unless you're Oliver Stone, in which case you're the only one in the room who thinks like you do). They thought about film and came up with a list: a list of what makes great films. At a celebration for the first 100 years of film

in Paris in 1995, Lars was asked to give a keynote. He did, sort of, but mostly he just passed out a red pamphlet which explained the rules of Dogme 95.

And new kind of filmmaking was born.

The Rules

1. Filming must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).

2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being filmed).

3. The camera must be a hand-held camera. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; filming must take place where the action takes place.)

4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).

5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.

6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)

7. Temporal and geo-

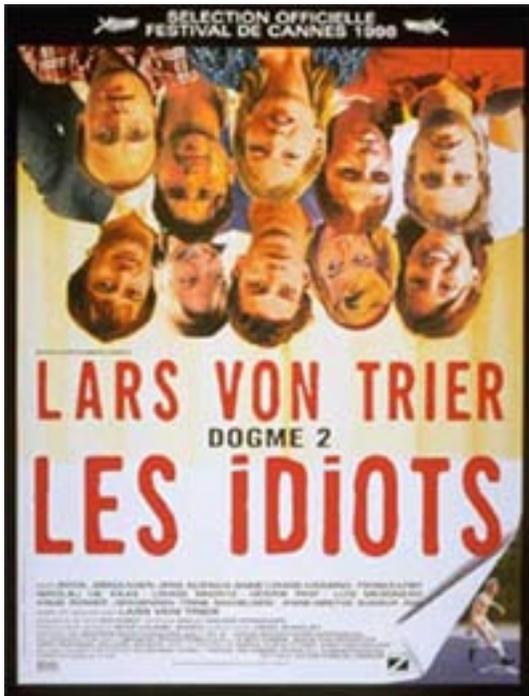


graphical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)

8. Genre movies are not acceptable.

9. The final picture must be transferred to the Academy 35mm film, with an aspect ratio of 4:3, that is, not widescreen. (Originally, the requirement was that the film had to be filmed on Academy 35mm film, but the rule was relaxed to allow low-budget productions.)

10. The director must not be credited.



You see, a little extreme, but the idea is to come up with a film that is real, as real as you can get. It's Cinema Verite taken as far as possible. The idea is that the film is actually a document, not a documentary, but a recording of fictional events that happen in a more or less natural way. That sounds odd, but trust me, it makes sense. The reality provided by using handheld and available light makes it seem like a doc and it would be hard to pull it off with a genre film. There is a sense of reality that must be presented.

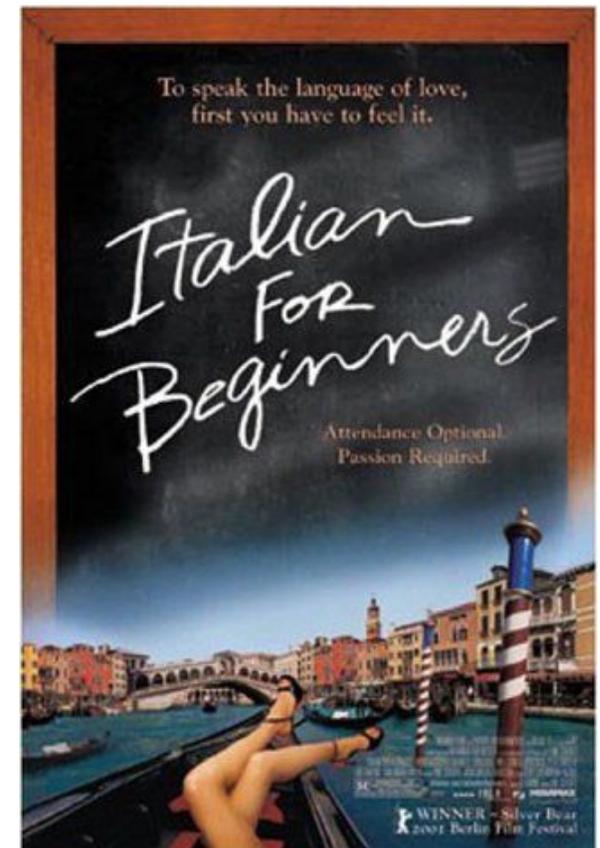
The first Dogme film wasn't made by Von Trier, but by Vinterberg. He made the film Festen and it's a near-masterpiece. It depicts a party that a family with deep issues is having. It feels like a home video. That's one of the impressive things about Dogme; it allows you to play with recognizable forms. The film was a giant success, winning the Jury Prize at Cannes (not the Palme de Or) and was released internationally. It got the Dogme ball rolling.

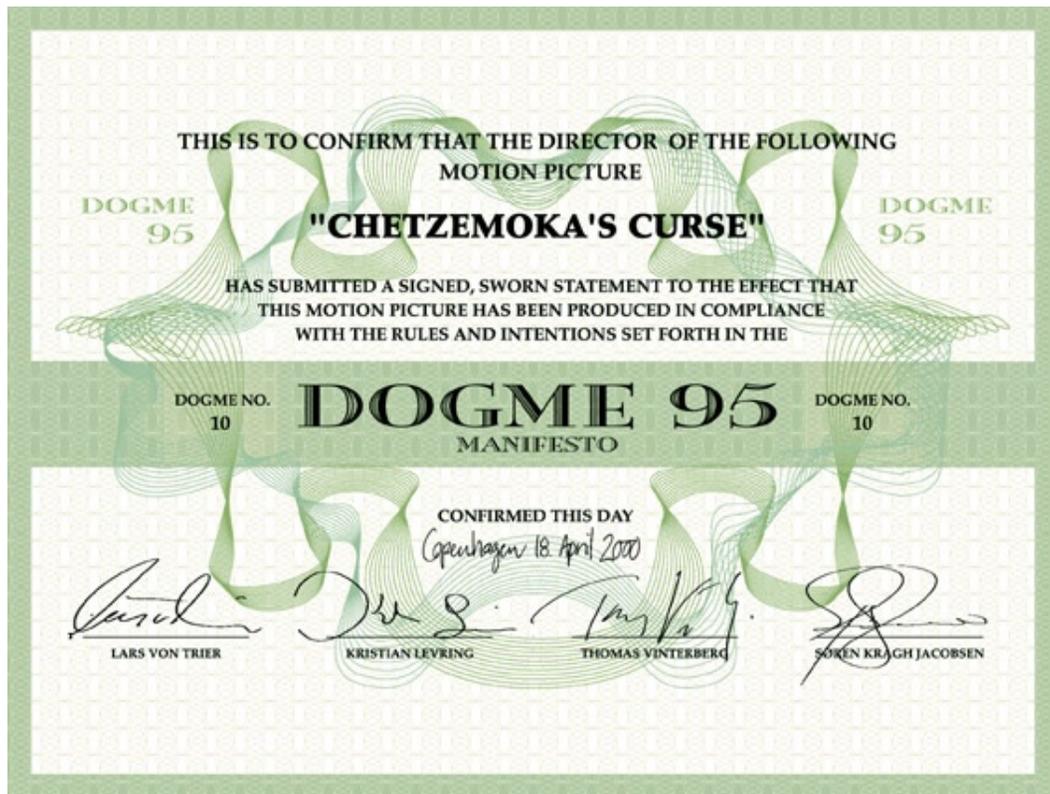
The second Dogme film was Von Trier's. He did a film called The Idiots which was not nearly as well received. It's not that it was bad at all, but it wasn't nearly as good and Vinterberg's cheats were much nicer than Von Trier's (which included using porn stars for sex scenes). The premise was interesting: a bunch of folks decide to play

like they are mentally retarded. It's sort of treated like performance art that takes over their world. It's a strange film, but one that's really good.

And number of other films started to pop up in the 1999-2000 time frame. The first American one was done by Harmony Karine and was called Julien Donkey-Boy. It wasn't nearly as good as the others, so if you wanna see one Harmony film, see Kida, which he wrote.

Probably the most accessible Dogme film is the Italian for Beginners by Lone Scherfig. It's a combination





family drama and romantic comedy. It's both touching and funny and has a great cast. As I understand it, the film wasn't fully written, only strongly outlined, though many of the Dogme films have that in common. What's incredible is that they make it work so well with this simple, yet layered film.

Italian for Beginners has several different stories, all of which work. There's the minister whose wife has died (and who spends time "reading about loss"). There's the clumsy baker sister, the sexual hairdresser, the fiery tempered restaurant manager and more. It's a great group and the way

it was created properly. The reality is that no film has ever done 100% and they'll issue a confession saying what they did that wasn't within the Dogme dogma. This started with Vinterberg and continues on through today. Some of the confessions are far more interesting than the films. Harmony Korine had to write a pretty spectacular confession since Julien Donkey Boy opens with a Murder, which they specifically mention as being uncool.

So you see, I love the rawness, the reality, the hypersensitivity of Dogme films. It doesn't hurt that I'm a big Von Trier fan either. It's just the most real non-doc film style there is!

they interact is breathtaking.

There are many Dogme films still being made. I think they're into the 80s in their numbering. Once you've completed your Dogme film, you can submit it to the Dogme Film Authority and they'll certify



As I'm sure most of you are aware, I love cons. I've been to a couple over the last few months and I'm really looking forward to the next one: Lo-sCon in LA.

I went to my first LosCon in 2001 and had a really good time. The next one I went to was 2005 and I met all sorts of great folks, including running into my All-Time favourite fen: the Vegas Bunch.

This year, I'm probably going to be doing a TAFF auction (got anything you don't wanna got anymore? Send it to be auctioned!) and I'll have a couple of panels. I will be carrying my sign and preparing for the the question...

"So, what's TAFF?"



**OK, SO NOW WHAT?
BY FRANK WU**

I set two goals for this year (see Drink Tank #60):

1. Make a short film of Guidolon the Giant Space Chicken.
2. Go to Nicaragua and drill a water well.

I've done both, and there's still two months left in the year.

What do I do now?

Both projects were huge. I've used up a lot of Drink Tank pages describing the travails of making and selling Guidolon. And when I get pictures, I'll write up the Nicaragua trip.

But for now I'll give a brief summary. I went down there with a

team of 8 guys, under the auspices of Living Waters International. This is a Christian aid organization whose gig is to drill water wells for people all around the world. Over a billion people don't have access to clean water, and every fifteen seconds, a kid somewhere dies from drinking icky

water.

So we went down to the small village of Santa Maria, which is made of survivors of Hurricane Mitch, which killed some 11,000+ people (or 6+ times as many as Katrina). They had one well, but it's got an electrical pump and they were always losing power.

So we drilled a new well with a hand pump - by moving the lever arm up and down you can get 10 gallons a minute. And the kids tried the water (from 100 feet down!) - and it was good. Yeah! It was a way to make the world a better place, to make a political statement in response to the war on terror, and create a tangible symbol of the love of God and love for your neighbor. The trip took a year of prep: language study (I got

to preach in Spanish three times, to perhaps 900 people total!), and going to Texas to learn to do this - I've used a pipe wrench twice in my life, once in Nicaragua and once in training.

I think I might go back next year. There are plenty more people that need water.

But... that trip will only take another week or so.

What do I do with the rest of my year?

I need a new project.

I could keep working on Guidolon, fleshing out other scripts. But aside from a small bit of clean-up animation, I think it needs to lay fallow, except dragging it to a couple film festivals (I was able to give Robert Redford a copy of it last night at an art gallery!)

There are plenty of other things to do. Like dating. Not. (Too icky.)

I could, maybe, uh, vacuum. Evict the dust bunnies from under the bed.

I'm way behind in cleaning - gosh, there's always something more *urgent* or *important* to do, like a magazine that needs its cover painting NOW, or there's always a convention coming up. But I rarely get visitors (no one's seen my place in a month). Yet... last weekend, I couldn't find three really important things. Instructions for the new digital camera. Software for the scanner. Scissors - and I have three of those.

OK, maybe I should straighten up a tad.

That should consume a week, maybe.

So... uh, then what?

I need a new project.

What do non-artists do with their evenings? Watch TV? I suppose I could see all 250 films on imdb.com's list of best movies of all time.

But to what end? I guess I'd learn about cinematic storytelling. But ... to make what film?

One artist I know wanders through Salvation Army looking for found objects to inspire her. Another photographs various night scenes, then throws them up in the air to see what collage fortuitously emerges.

I can't work like that.

I need a plan.

There are things I need to do. I've owed R-Laurraine Tutihasi a painting for "Feline Mewsings" for a couple years now. And I owe someone else a sailboat painting.

But I need a big project.

I could learn to play guitar.

But I need to have something tangible at the end. Maybe a performance at next year's Japan worldcon. Or a slew of new folk songs to share. Or writing and producing a song that Doctor Demento might like.

But does the world need another "Fish Heads"?

They say that with ten years of hard

work and sacrifice and constant re-tooling and improvement, you can be a world-class master at anything.

(Tracy Austin, who won the U.S. Open at age 16, had already been practicing for over a decade - since the age of 3.)

In ten years, I could be Eric Clapton.

What do I want to be in ten years?

Heady question, huh?

Maybe I could write something.

Keep pumping out a Drink Tank article every week.

But... I want to write something big.

But not a novel. Or any kind of fiction.

I've tried for years to get a science fiction story published. I've come close - "Guidolon" was published, but as a screenplay - not a story.

And I've had pseudo-scientific bits in "The Journal of Irreproducible Results" and its follow-up "The Annals of Improbable Research." Maybe I can do

funny, just not fiction.

Maybe I could write non-fiction essays.

I've really enjoyed books like "Freakonomics" and "Blink" and "God's Politics" and "Consider the Lobster."

Maybe I could write a non-fiction biography.

But about whom?

Years ago, I thought James Tiptree Jr. would be a fascinating subject. Too late.

Other sci-fi people?

Chris Garcia suggested some, but none popped my authorial cork.

Frank R. Paul did fascinating paintings, the first covers for "Amazing Stories": The "War of the Worlds" cover, the "Skylark of Space" cover, the "Land that Time Forgot" cover.

But FRP himself, as far as I can tell, wasn't that interesting a person. He basically just woke up, sat at his easel all day and then went to bed.

Is that the curse of the creative person? To be less interesting than their creations?

Movies are made about artists who've had chaotic, tormented lives full of demons. Alcoholics like Pollock. Girl-crazy egomaniacs like Picasso.

But most writers just go around doing laundry, washing their cars, having an occasional beer. Lawrence M. Schoen -



Klingon language master and currently eligible for the Campbell Award for New Writer - notes that the key to writing is simply "Butt in Chair" time.

Fascinating, isn't it, watching someone make black marks on paper. Remember that Monty Python skit about Thomas Hardy writing a new novel?

Fascinating, huh?

Writers and artists - most of them, really, as opposed to rock stars - don't go around smashing hotel rooms or waving inappropriate body parts before screaming crowds.

Should my goal be to find an interesting writer to write about (Hemingway shot water buffalo and fought in a war, but he's been done). Or maybe go off and have my own adventures?

Has my life so far been dramatic?

OK, I stood in a lab dispensing one or two microliters of clear liquid into 7 microliters of another clear liquid, then repeated year after year until they gave me a Ph.D.

And I listened to "Who's Next" over and over, while dancing with a paintbrush in my hand, then repeated year after year until they gave me two Hugo Awards.

And I sat in my office, surrounded by animal skulls and fossils and space toys that are way more interesting than me, helping huge pharmaceutical companies sue other

huge pharmaceutical companies for ridiculous amounts of money, of which I got a pittance, then repeated year after year, until they had given me many many paychecks.

Fascinating life, huh?

No drunken revelries. No drug ODs. No midnight abortions.

Well, I guess there was that one time I got lost in the New Mexico desert looking for bison fossils.

Or that other time I was hanging off a cliff in upstate New York pulling brachiopod and cup coral fossils from the slate when I was attacked by swarms of poisonous stinging flying insects (OK, OK, they were really just gnats).

Or... the time I got to ride a moped shaped like a banana.

Or... the time I got to hold Laura Palmer's diary.

That Nicaragua trip was an adventure. Physically draining and visually interesting, what with the



volcanoes on the horizon. One minute we're running the drill and lifting up 100 feet of pump with our muscles and we're soaking wet from torrential rain and moments later the clouds part and we're blasted with searing heat from the blazing hot sun. Dramatic, huh?

I suppose that's an adventure.

A life of faith is really an adventure, too - I've seen many interesting answers to prayer.

But overall, I feel like I've had a boring life.

Maybe it's 'cos I spend too much time inside. At the easel. At the computer.

I mean, I hate movies - boring dramas! - set in someone's living room.

Why do I live my life that way?

I need a project, a really big project.

I've got a million ideas.

What - you don't like the giant space chicken who makes movies?

How about... dinosaurs playing guitar (Monster Rock)?

Or... an elephant who's a professional bowler?

Instead of tiny worms which are parasites inside of people, we have people who are parasites inside a giant worm?

Or... A Selenite (H.G. Wells' ant creatures on the moon) who fell to Earth and then gets back to where he once belonged?

I've also got drive and confidence

and fearlessness and willingness to put in endless hours not going out and staying in and getting things done. I don't fear that what I try won't succeed, because I've done most of the things I've set out to do - except find True Love, but we won't go there. Thank you very much.

So what do I do?

I don't want a "Number" goal. Save a certain amount of money. Lose this number of pounds. Check off this number of movies.

What I'd really like to do is buy one of those robot bodies and be the first person to walk across the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, discovering new things. (As I mentioned this in Drink Tank #81). Oh, what, robot bodies with the strength of five gorillas aren't available yet?

I better find something to do in the meantime.

I need a new project.

Clean fossils?

Discover a new species?

Study ants?

Get another Ph.D., this time in something fun, like looking for dinosaurs?

Maybe.

Maybe.

Anybody out there got any ideas?

Lemme know.



I've got a few ideas for ya, Frank. How about putting out Further Greetings from Lake Wu, where YOU write the stories and Jay does the art.

Or...

What about collecting all the fannish writing for Christopher J. Garcia and typing it onto Mimeo and releasing it as Son of Warhoon.

Or...

What about writing a script

about two people who are in love, one in Tokyo and one in LA, who decide to see each other by walking across the ocean.

That'd be awesome!

OK, that's enough. I'll be back in a week or so with another, probably longer issue (which will feature LoCs at it's heart) and then who knows? Maybe a special issue of something or other.