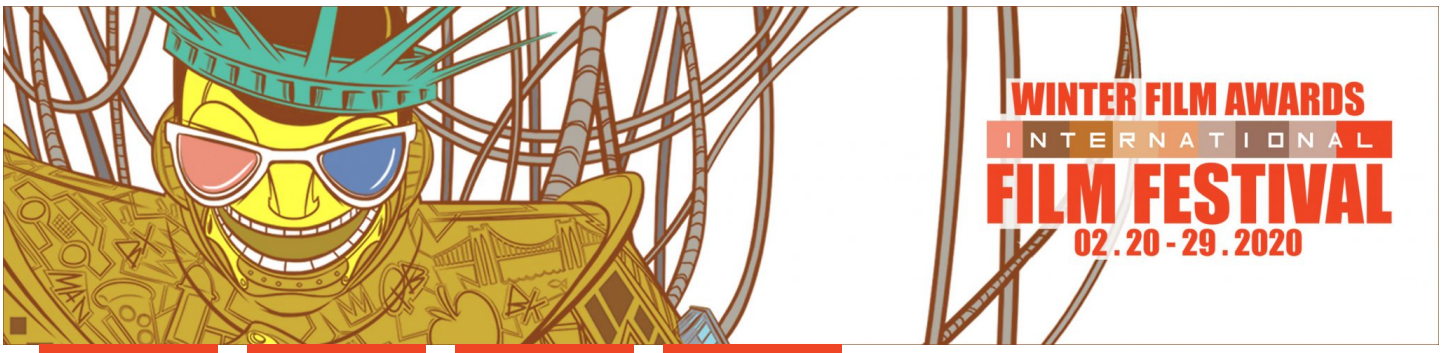

15 Days | 12 Hours | 25 Minutes | 48 Seconds

GLOBALISM AND HUMANITY IN "ALEX'S STRIP"

February 2, 2020 2020 International Film Festival

Feature film "*Alex's Strip (La Cinta De Alex)*" is a thrilling drama that tackles terrorism, global commerce, and the struggles of citizens of the world who belong everywhere and nowhere.

By Andrew Gutman for Winter Film Awards

*See the US Premiere of feature thriller **Alex's Strip (La Cinta De Alex)** on Saturday Feb 22 @9:15pm at Cinema Village (22 East 12th Street) as part of New York City's 9th Annual Winter Film Awards International Film Festival.*

Alex's Strip, the feature debut of Spanish director Irene Zoe Alameda, opens with a bit of genre sleight of hand. We see a young girl in Indian garb rush into a musty street before looking on in horror as a nearby building explodes, and already our minds have locked in on assumptions about what kind of films this will be. But Alameda uses this opening not only to play with viewer expectations – overturning stereotypes will be key to the story to come – but also to accustom her audience to her own weird, eclectic approach to storytelling.

We're introduced to both titular Alexes early in the film: the young Alexandra, a Spanish-American girl frustrated with her DC life, and her father Alex, a businessman and one-time suspected terrorist, just released from prison. Alex invites his daughter to bond with him on a business trip to India, thrusting us into a complicated multinational mix of contexts, something Alameda found important to portray: "More and more people are these oddities, they have odd origins and live odd lives," she says, speaking of her characters as well as her own Spanish-German-American path through life – from everywhere and nowhere at once. "We have to try to merge all these elements in a harmonic way," to truthfully portray how people are often "mixed breeds" in our cosmopolitan world.

While in India, Alexandra learns a great deal about the country – from her father's business manufacturing cheap shoes to sell abroad to the challenges of her new friend Debli as a young Muslim girl in predominantly Hindu Rajasthan – and slowly finds herself more and more comfortable in an at first unfamiliar and even unpleasant environment. And of course, some Indian flair rubbing off on *Alex's Strip* was inescapable – filming on location and working with local actors, Alameda notes that the crew, including she says some of the best technicians she has worked with, infused a certain "playful" atmosphere to the film she hadn't experienced elsewhere. And the unique style of Indian actors is fully on display as well – particularly Krishna Singh Bisht as the gangster Kasim, whose cocky, devious performance Alameda found so compelling she rewrote scenes to give him more time in the spotlight.

Alameda takes a bold approach to her subject matter, making sure that the audience will not grow bored with the emotional family drama that takes up much of the film before, as the explosive opening suggests, a more exciting climax arrives. "I wanted to make sure I had so much footage that I could edit the movie as a thriller," she says of her method, noting that she used as many as fourteen camera positions to allow for a higher tempo to the domestic scenes in the cut. The effects of this decision are noticeable; though much of the film is focused on the father-daughter bond between Alex and Alexandra, even scenes dense with exposition have a Greengrass-y pace, giving the impression that a major development is always right around the corner. And when the more thriller-favored final act of the film arrives, it feels like a completely organic outgrowth of the story that came before it, and not an abrupt genre switch-up.

But above all, more than just a thriller or a family drama, Alameda considers *Alex's Strip* a fairytale. "It's the world according to a 12 year old girl," she says of the story, "the world is either good or bad, black or white." This is a viewpoint Alexandra will have to overcome, learning that, like on the Möbius Strip referenced in the title, two sides can turn out to be one and the same. But that's not to say all innocent worldviews must be discarded – "everyone knows what is good and bad when you are 12," explains Alameda, expanding on Alexandra's polarized worldview with an optimistic twist: "I wanted to show that behaving in an ethical way can pay off." This explains – without spoiling – the film's truly fairytale ending, where cops are ultimately all good cops and the press isn't quick to jump to conclusions, a premise Alameda recognizes as not realistic but thinks is important to present in her film, perhaps as a way of maintaining her main character's idealism in a productive way.

Alex's Strip, which recently won two awards for Best American Film and Best Political Film at the Jaipur International Film Festival, paints a picture of an interconnected world through the narrow experience of a young girl. It brushes up against many tough topics – from commercial imperialism, to the war on terror, to Indian gender politics – but ultimately endorses a human idealism that endorses putting aside complicated rationalization in favor of trusting our own experience and being willing to see from new perspectives. "Things don't have to be this or that, they can be both things at the same time," Alameda explains, "you start walking and you end up places you never expected you would be."

Alex's Strip_La cinta de Álex_Trailer_English Version

Andrew Gutman

Andrew Gutman is a freelance writer and programmer based in Michigan. He graduated from the UK's National Film and Television School in 2019, and since then has been on a mission to discover the best films from around the world and introduce them to new audiences.

About Winter Film Awards

New York City's 9th Annual Winter Film Awards International Film Festival runs February 20-29 2020. Check out a jam-packed lineup of 79 fantastic films in all genres from 27 countries, including shorts, features, Animation, Drama, Comedy, Thriller, Horror, Documentary and Music Video. Hollywood might ignore women and people of color, but Winter Film Awards celebrates everyone!

Winter Film Awards is an all volunteer, minority- and women-owned registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2011 in New York City by a group of filmmakers and enthusiasts. The program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the NY State Council on the Arts.

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