



**Official Oaxaca FilmFest Endorsement Package
Confidential**

***JONNIE IN THE LAKE*
FRANCES BARTH**

Dear Frances Barth, Oaxaca FilmFest would like to thank you for entrusting us with your work and we are honored to present you with this review.

It is important to bring to your attention that this review does not constitute a critic of your work, but is aiming to offer you an objective commentary that can help enhance your artistic abilities.

Following the review of your project, here are some points that deserve attention:

- ⑩ JONNIE IN THE LAKE narrated by Ron Nakahara is the story of a nine year old kid who is ready to go to sleep, but as he tucks himself in bed and covers himself up to his ears with his blanket, finds himself in an adventure where he finds that the lake outside his house has dried up and that at the bottom there's a well that takes him below to an underground city. Within this city Jonnie finds a nightclub where he sees the show performed by Azimer (Valerie Charles) who has never had an audience before Jonnie arrived.
- ⑩ JONNIE IN THE LAKE is narrated like a bedtime story, or more as if someone narrated the dreams of a child as his mind drifts into sleep, his subconscious taking over and sending him into a trip within his own psyche. His dreams are so vivid, that these may be real or not. He's not sure, but there's plenty of signs that he may be. There's a point where he wakes up and yet the world as described appears to be a lucid dream, his house appears empty, like the way we project places we've been to in our dreams. The dream functions just like the dreams of a child would work, his memories shaping the magical world he's witnessing. When the lake dries, it reminds him of when the bathtub is emptied. The dream logic involved so it always makes sense, this is till the mind of a child. Like when the face in the well asks him for a password. "There is no password" says Jonnie and the face lets him through. Once he descends the well, perhaps symbolizing further descent into his subconscious state. Jonnie arrives at an underwater city, the way it is depicted, the buildings float and take shape the way children would see things take shape in the dark with their new eyes. (You remember, right? When you were a kid and you saw shapes taking form in the dark?) Then he encounters a club where a radio announces Azimer's show through an old TV set. It is possible that Jonnie had seen this TV show while awake, and now it has infiltrated his subconscious. The show stars Valerie Charles, while performing a solo show called "Duane Does Hollywood", but in his dream she calls herself Azimer. Azimer is benign, happy to have an audience in Jonnie. However the show is called Monsters of the ID, The ID is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends. The segment played is of Valerie as she recalls an incident with her uncle Charlie, that narrates a rather uncomfortable encounter with him, and yet it is played for laughs. Jonnie asks if there is a next episode, to which Azimer replies that there is no schedule, this probably means that Jonnie's subconscious only recalls this episode since there he has not seen other episodes. Since there are no more episodes to see, Jonnie would have to create more. This is a rather bizarre yet magical exploration of dream logic, from the point of view of a child. How memories and imagination are shaped by the subconscious to create vivid narratives that make perfect sense while asleep, but when remembered while awake are difficult to rationalize.
- ⑩ JONNIE IN THE LAKE as directed by Frances Barth, is a collage of different styles of hand-drawn animation as well as some live action. The quality is dreamlike, cosmic and even a little bit nightmarish at times. It truly reproduces the chaos that the mind of a nine year old is when asleep. What's most impressive is the accurate portrayal of how the dreams of a nine year old actually work and feel. The narrative within his mind goes from one seemingly unrelated point to the next, always taken from memories he experienced in his waking hours. This world Jonnie dreams of surely took the filmmakers not just imagination but perhaps insight into what children's dreams work like. The different hand drawn animation techniques give this short that child-like quality, as if Jonnie himself had drawn them while trying to remember the next morning his adventure. The music notes remind us of water, keeping in with the theme of the lake. This is a work that should be studied by pedagogues as an insight into what children's minds do when asleep.

These various elements constitute the strength of this project. Under no circumstances would I change any of these.

Nonetheless, there are a few points that need to be addressed, that possibly should have been handled differently.

- ⑩ The most mysterious element is that of the inclusion of Valerie Charles, we have tried to research her but we came up short, as far as we know she must have been an actress who performed a solo show, the name of the show is Duane Does Hollywood. This is a rather obscure reference that is not readily available when researching. We feel that the lack of information on this keeps us from unlocking a key element of the narrative. Still, this section is almost Lynchian in its surreal appeal. While the animated short feels more suited for children, it is the story that Valerie recounts that made us feel a bit uncomfortable. Perhaps that was the point of this section, to inject a little bit of the nightmarish without being horrifying. An interesting choice none the less.
- ⑩ We believe the narrative is told from a first person perspective of Jonnie. Since we never see Jonnie himself we assume we see things through his eyes, but there are times as when we see his arms that it switches to an almost third person view. In dreams we experience most things in first person, is this how the film is being experienced as well?

If I had one quote that would summarize the project, it would be this:

JONNIE IN THE LAKE is a beautiful hand-drawn animation that does a remarkable job of making an accurate representation of how dream logic works through the eyes of a nine year old.

I want to personally thank you again.

I hope this was helpful.

If you would like us to post this particular quote on IMDB, please contact me directly and I will be happy to do so.

Saludos!

Enrrico Wood Lagonigro.

Oaxaca FilmFest