



MICHAEL STONE, VOICED BY DAVID THEWLIS

WELCOME TO HOTEL FREGOLI

Charlie Kaufman fucks with reality once again in animated feature *Anomalisa*

Welcome to the Hotel Fregoli. Charlie Kaufman fucks with reality once again in animated film *Anomalisa*.

The screenwriter and occasional director Charlie Kaufman has been delightfully gas-lighting moviegoers since 1999's *Being John Malkovich*, a film that takes place, quite literally, inside the head of John Malkovich. Like Rod Serling before him, Kaufman loves to knock everything just slightly off kilter, creating an existential free fall that is at once exhilarating and upsetting. Using wry humor to offset his philosophical heebie-jeebies, Kaufman's what-if movies pry open absurd cracks in accepted reality until a plausible explanation of our human condition emerges.

Is this the definition of surrealism? I don't know. And I don't know what to think about Kaufman's latest film, other than it's quite good. *Anomalisa* is an animated feature that employs the old-fashioned stop-motion technique — a technique that, like puppetry, is disarmingly effective in creating an aura of real-life reality. The "characters" in this film are at once less than human and more so. In that less-more gap, a kind of emotional urgency brews up unexpectedly.

On its surface, Kaufman's film, which he co-directed with Duke Johnson, couldn't be more ordinary and uneventful, almost dull. Michael Stone (the voice of David Thewlis), a self-help author suffering a mid-life crisis, flies to Cincinnati to deliver a lecture; he checks into the Hotel Fregoli (the Fregoli delusion is the belief that all people are actually the same person); he dials up a jilted ex-lover for drinks; he meets a woman, Lisa, in the hotel and they have sex. Sounds like any other weekend in Cincinnati, right?

But, this being Kaufman's world, there are the expected fissures in reality, one of them not just figurative: a small line, a crack, runs from the corner of every character's face, giving it a mask-like, robotic appearance. And it doesn't take long to realize that, aside from Michael, everyone in the world, male and female, has the exact same voice (the gentle coo of Tom Noonan) and general appearance. Could it be that Michael is such a pathological narcissist that everyone is simply a projection of his miserable self? Or, just perhaps, is he yet another cog in the replicated matrix of consumerism, trapped in a brave new world of manufactured consent?

What a mind fuck.

When, halfway through the movie, Lisa (Jennifer Jason Leigh) appears with her distinct voice and blemished face, it's almost impossible not to fall in love with her, because love, for Michael, and perhaps for all of us, is simply relief from the monotony of life — a suspicion horribly confirmed in a nightmare Michael has after he sleeps with Lisa, his beautiful "anomaly" of a woman.

(And speaking of sex: the scene of Lisa and Michael in bed marks an unprecedented moment in the history of cinema; it is almost excruciatingly realistic, a protracted coupling that is at once touching and wince-inducing. If for no other reason, see the movie for this segment.)

The animation of *Anomalisa* suits Kaufman's absurdist temperament eerily well. In doing away with real actors — in doing away with the so-called real world — he's able to dig more deeply into the human condition by combining the ordinary and fantastic, the deep and the shallow, in a way that is otherwise just not feasible. When an already manipulated reality begins to fall apart, the effects are jarring, as though the suspension of disbelief is being turned inward upon its own mechanisms of perception. (*Bijou Metro*)

BIJOU Showtimes
Jan 29-Feb 4
492 E. 13th Ave.
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2016 OSCAR NOMINATED SHORT FILMS

ANIMATED	Fri-Sun	1:00, 5:30, 10:00
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LIVE ACTION	Fri-Tue	3:05, 7:35
	Wed-Thu	3:05
CAROL	Fri-Sun	1:20, 4:00, 6:40, 9:15
	Mon-Tue	4:00, 6:40, 9:15
	Wed	4:00, 7:30, 9:15
	Thu	4:00, 6:40, 9:15

UO Cultural Forum presents
MEDITERRANEA Wed 7:00 (\$5 General, free w/ UO ID)
Encircle Documentary Series presents
THE OVERNIGHTERS Thu 6:00
(followed by filmmaker Q&A via Skype)

BIJOU METRO 43 W. Broadway
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ANOMALISA	11:45, 1:50, 3:55, 6:00, 8:05, 10:10
THE DANISH GIRL	2:20, 10:10
SPOTLIGHT	7:30
ROOM	12:00, 2:35, 5:10, 7:45, 10:10
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BROOKLYN	11:50, 5:00

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KUNG FU PANDA 3 (CC,DV) (PG) ★ Fri. - Sat. (1130 230) 430 730 930
KUNG FU PANDA 3 3D (CC,DV) (PG) ★ Fri. - Sat. (1200 200) 500 700 1000
THE FINEST HOURS (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1230 PM) 1005 PM
THE FINEST HOURS 3D (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★ Fri. - Sat. (330 PM) 645 PM
DIRTY GRANDPA (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1235) 425 725 1030
THE 5TH WAVE (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1215) 435 720 1025
THE BOY (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1220) 420 650 925
13 HOURS: SECRET SOLDIERS OF BENGHAZI (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1150 305) 620 935
RISE ALONG 2 (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1225) 450 735 1035
THE HATEFUL 8 (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (115) 420 730 1020
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THE FINEST HOURS (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1215 PM) 1000 PM
THE FINEST HOURS 3D (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★ Fri. - Sat. (345 PM) 700 PM
DIRTY GRANDPA (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (115) 420 730 1020
THE 5TH WAVE (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1245) 400 720 1000
THE BOY (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (100) 410 740 1010
THE REVENANT (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1200 320) 645 1015
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THE 5TH WAVE (DIG) (PG-13) 10:50, 1:35, 4:20, 7:05, 9:55	JANE GOT A GUN (DIG) (R) 11:30, 2:05, 4:35, 7:15, 9:45
THE BOY (DIG) (PG-13) 11:35, 2:25, 5:10, 7:55, 10:25	KUNG FU PANDA 3 (3D) (PG) SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 11:00, 4:05, 5:15, 10:15
BROOKLYN (DIG) (PG-13) 10:55, 1:40, 4:25, 7:20, 10:05	KUNG FU PANDA 3 (DIG) (PG) 12:15, 1:30, 2:45, 6:30, 7:45, 9:00
DADDY'S HOME (DIG) (PG-13) 11:45, 2:30, 5:00, 7:40, 10:10	NORM OF THE NORTH (DIG) (PG) 11:05, 1:25, 3:45
DIRTY GRANDPA (DIG) (R) 11:25, 2:10, 4:50, 7:35, 10:10	THE REVENANT (DIG) (R) 11:10, 2:40, 6:15, 9:55
FIFTY SHADES OF BLACK (DIG) (R) 11:50, 2:15, 5:05, 7:50, 10:30	RISE ALONG 2 (DIG) (PG-13) 11:20, 1:55, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
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THE FINEST HOURS (DIG) (PG-13) 1:50, 7:30	STAR WARS: EPISODE VII - THE FORCE AWAKENS (3D) (PG-13) SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 12:00, 10:25
THE GOOD DINOSAUR (DIG) (PG) 11:40, 2:20, 4:55, 7:25, 10:00	STAR WARS: EPISODE VII - THE FORCE AWAKENS (DIG) (PG-13) 3:40, 7:15

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