

## 2013 Sundance Diary, Day 3: Let's Run Away From it All

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 20, 2013 - 9:56pm

- [Ain't Them Bodies Saints](#) [2]
- [Amy Ryan](#) [3]
- [Ben Foster](#) [4]
- [Ben Wheatley](#) [5]
- [Breathe In](#) [6]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [7]
- [Casey Affleck](#) [8]
- [Felicity Jones](#) [9]
- [Film Feature](#) [10]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [11]
- [Movie Review](#) [12]
- [Rooney Mara](#) [13]
- [S-VHS](#) [14]
- [Sightseers](#) [15]
- [Sundance 2013](#) [16]
- [Sundance Film Festival](#) [17]

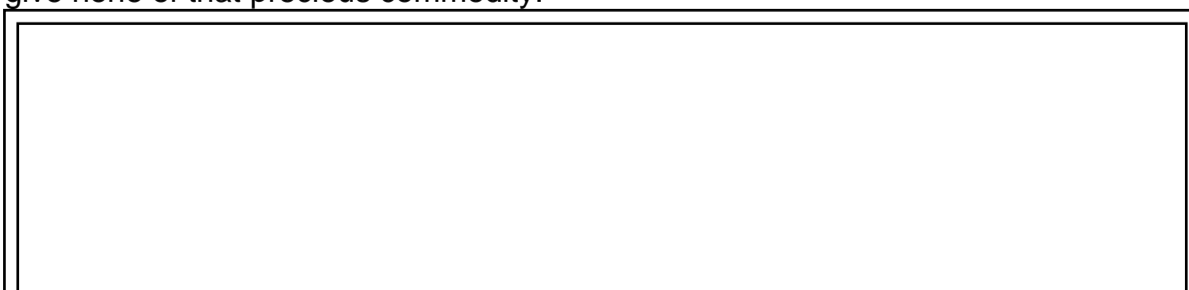
PARK CITY, Utah – Film festivals naturally encourage those who write about them to look for themes. A few years ago it was the end of the world. This year, it seems to be the coming-of-age story (“Kill Your Darlings,” “The Spectacular Now,” “Mud,” “Emanuel and the Truth About Fishes,” “The Way, Way Back”) on the surface and the journey from home a little deeper. I’ve seen four films that I can write about since my last diary and three featured characters trying to get away from it all while the fourth would just make the squeamish flee in fear.

Let’s start with the movie of this quartet that I expect to be the most divisive, David Lowery’s **“Ain’t Them Bodies Saints,”** an atmospheric, lyrical piece starring Casey Affleck, Rooney Mara, and Ben Foster that has warranted comparison to Terence Malick in its approach to telling a story with obvious tones of “Badlands.” The story is remarkably simple. A trio of robbers (the exact crimes they have committed is unclear) is being chased by the police. They hole up in a house and a shootout ensues. Ruth Guthrie (Mara) shoots a cop named Patrick Wheeler (Ben Foster) and her boyfriend Bob Muldoon (Casey Affleck) takes the rap. He goes to prison and his daughter is born as Ruth seems to consider moving on with her life. Patrick, the cop she shot, even becomes a potential protector for her. Then Bob’s 6th attempt at escape works. He’s coming home. Will Ruth run with him? Will he be caught? Who are the mysterious men chasing him? Keith Carradine co-stars.



Ain't Them Bodies Saints  
Photo credit: Sundance

“Ain’t Them Bodies Saints” is a smokey glass of whiskey, a film that you need to savor and allow its effects to kick in after the glass is empty. Consequently, it’s a rough film to consider in the middle of a film fest as you’re running to catch a shuttle or do an interview. I need to dissect it, analyze it, dream about it. And I need to see it again. My first thoughts are simple — there are so many great elements, especially Ben Foster’s stunning supporting performance (his second great turn after “Kill Your Darlings”) and Bradford Young’s incredible cinematography, that it has to be recommended. I’m not sure it has the weight it needs and think some of it is too precious but I need time and film festivals give none of that precious commodity.



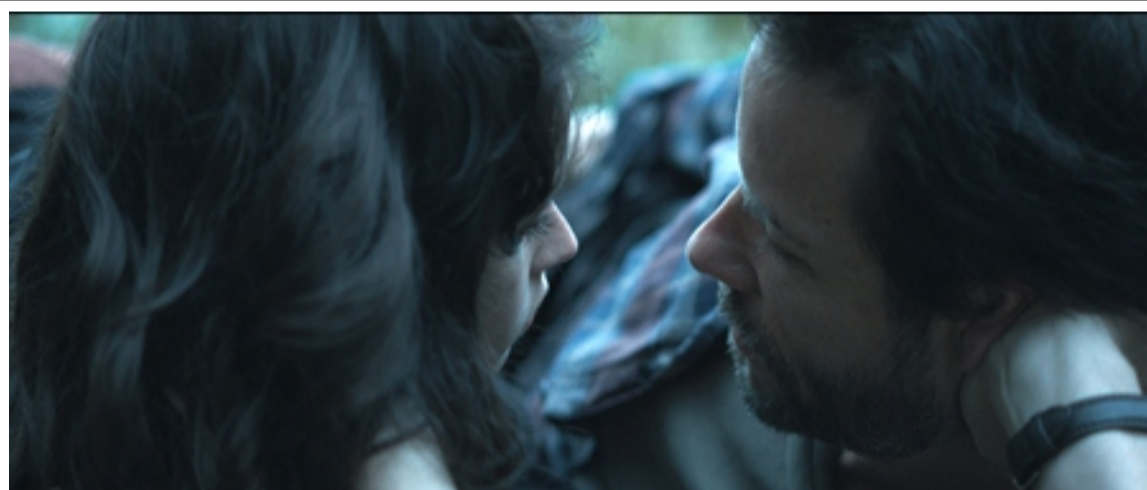


S-VHS

Photo credit: Sundance

My feelings about **"S-VHS"** are more coherent. It's pretty damn good. It's definitely a superior work to last year's Sundance hit "V/H/S" as its two central segments are so cleverly conceived and well-directed that they make any flaws of segments one and four easier to overlook. Utilizing a much higher budget, this is the more hi-fi answer to the original (a fact that will easily divide viewers into camps as to which one is their fave). Let's get to it. Simon Barrett helms the wraparound segment as a private dick and his assistant break into a house looking for one of the kids from the first film and find a bank of static-filled TVs and a series of tapes. The assistant starts watching. The first standalone segment was directed by and stars Adam Wingard as a guy who gets a camera implanted on his eye. Said camera allows him to see things he shouldn't see. (As most of these segments work best the less you know, I'm going to be purposefully vague on plot. I'm not just being lazy.)

The second segment, directed by Eduardo Sanchez ("The Blair Witch Project") and Gregg Hale is such a smart, clever piece of work that it's likely to be most people's favorite of the film. It's pretty much straight-up comedy as a biker with a camera attached to his head is bitten at the start of the zombie apocalypse. Imagine all the activity of an undead rambler from his perspective. It's even more awesome than you zombie fans can imagine. The third segment was helmed by Timo Tjahjanto & Gareth Evans ("The Raid: Redemption") and actually plays as a horror companion piece to "The Raid." Just as that film featured a very bad journey into one very awful building, this segment centers on a poor group of people who decide to visit a commune on the day the Satanists make contact with the great beyond. Remember how well Evans staged his action in "The Raid". Imagine with batshit crazy horror. Yeah, it's that good. I'm not fully sold on Jason Eisener's final segment but the wraparound, Evans & Tjahjanto, and Sanchez & Hale stretches (with parts of the Wingard) make this twisted tape work.



Breathe In

Photo credit: Sundance

Another dark journey is undertaken in Ben Wheatley's **"Sightseers,"** a jet black comedy about two lovers — Chris (Steve Oram) & Tina (Alice Lowe) — who head on a road trip after Tina accidentally kills the family dog, Poppy. After a trip to the tram museum, Chris gets into an altercation with a litterer and then runs him over with his caravan. Was it an accident? Why is he smiling? It's just the first. Arguments with other sightseers lead to murder. Chris & Tina want to see the countryside but they don't want to deal with anyone along the way. Wheatley's comedy is very smart and very funny, especially in the way he handles Tina's moves to impress a man who is clearly a homicidal maniac. Lowe & Oram have excellent comic timing and Wheatley proves yet again that's an interesting filmmaker to watch.

Finally, there's Drake Doremus' **"Breathe In,"** the director's follow-up to his Sundance smash "Like Crazy." Once again, Felicity Jones serves as the director's muse, this time playing a foreign exchange student named Olivia who will be spending a semester with the Reynolds family — daughter Lauren (Mackenzie Davis), mother Megan (Amy Ryan), and father Keith (Guy Pearce), who also happens to be Olivia's music teacher. Of course, Jones is drop dead gorgeous and Keith notices immediately. It also seems like Olivia likes older guys. The inevitable ensues in a movie that never once rings true. It's contrived, cliched, and dramatically inert, lacking all of the realism that attracted people to "Like Crazy" in the first place. It's long, boring, and my least favorite film at this year's fest. On to better films tomorrow. Trust me.

[Read all of Brian Tallerico's coverage from Sundance 2013! \[16\]](#)

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