

Interviews: Two More Filmmakers at 2015 Chicago Critics Film Festival

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 11, 2015 - 2:58pm

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CHICAGO – The showcase and respect given to filmmakers at the recently completed 2015 Chicago Critics Film Festival (CCFF) meant that the top directors made appearances on behalf of their featured films. James Ponsoldt of “The End of the Tour” and Patrick Brice of “The Overnight” are two prime artists at the top of their game.

HollywoodChicago.com also got a chance to talk to Ponsoldt and Brice after their screenings at the CCFF, and the insights provided context to their art.



James Ponsoldt, Director of “The End of the Tour”

James Ponsoldt is a great friend to the festival, having screened his film “The Spectacular Now” at the first CCFF in 2013. He returned with “The End of of the Tour,” a superior and poignant understanding of author David Foster Wallace (a career-defining role for Jason Segel), as he takes his last book tour promoting his famous novel, “Infinite Jest.”

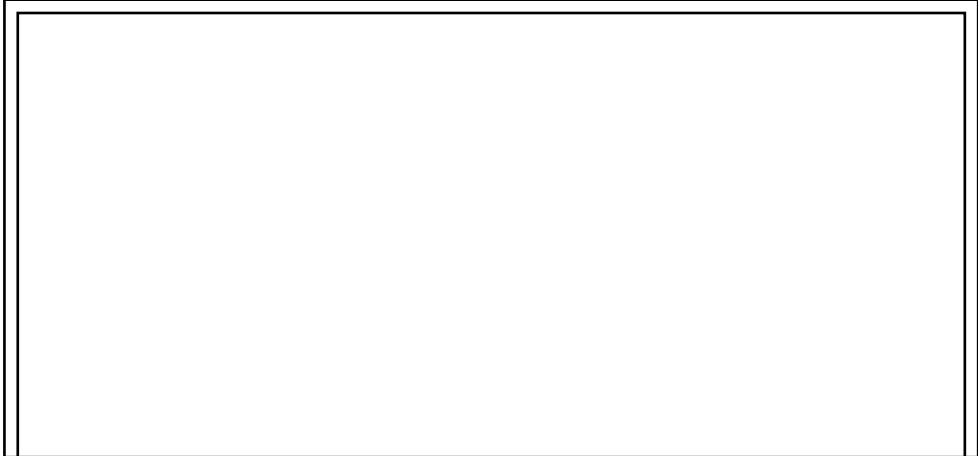


James Ponsoldt at the Chicago Critics Film Festival, May 6th, 2015
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: What did you learn about David Foster Wallace, and the disease of depression, as you indulged yourself in this story?

James Ponsoldt: For this film, you have to understand that we were focusing on a very brief window of time, when Wallace was in his mid-thirties and relatively healthy. It was a period where he was managing his depression and enjoying a bit of success. This was the focus, and not on the darker periods, where those stories are different.

HollywoodChicago.com: Much of the film focuses on two people just talking to each other. What was the challenge in composing the action in almost stageplay-like atmosphere, and creating compelling cinema out of it?





'The End of the Tour,' directed by James Ponsoldt

Photo credit: A24

Ponsoldt: I always thought of it as a chess or ping-pong match, or whatever a two person match up would be. It was about those two vying for power and status, and in that drama there is conflict. Even when it seems like a lazy or meandering transgressional conversation, it became about what two people wanted from each other. It was about the ebb and flow, and the heartbeat of the situation.

HollywoodChicago.com: The topics and subject matter of your three feature films are very different. Is there any way to you, that they feel similar?

Ponsoldt: Hopefully there is a respect and love for the characters. I allow them to be complex, contradictory and ultimately authentic.

HollywoodChicago.com: What type or genre of film best inspires you as a filmmaker, and what titles are your soul food, when you need inspiration?

Ponsoldt: I love honest and joyful films, with hope and a respect for the characters. My soul food go-to films are 'City Lights' by Charlie Chaplin, 'The Nights of Cabiria' by Federico Fellini, 'Secrets and Lies' by Mike Leigh, 'Toyko Story' by Yasujirō Ozu, 'Manhattan' by Woody Allen, 'Harry and Tonto' by Paul Mazursky, 'Harold and Maude' by Hal Ashby, 'California Split' by Robert Altman and 'The Wizard of Oz' by Victor Fleming. Those are just some of them.

HollywoodChicago.com: You are filling up Netflix queues as we speak.



Patrick Brice, Director of "The Overnight"

One of the more contemporary films at the 2015 CCFF was "The Overnight," featuring Jason Schwartzman and Adam Scott as neighbors in Los Angeles, meeting each other with their wives for the first time. The "overnight" rendezvous takes some turns, that define their developing friendship, personalities and relationships. This is Patrick Brice's second feature, working with noted filmmakers Mark and Jay Duplass as producers



Patrick Brice at the Chicago Critics Film Festival, May 7th, 2015
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: Last year I interviewed Jason Schwartzman, and he seems to have that ‘open and loving’ aura that he was applying to the Adam Scott character in your film. How did Jason help you bring this story to life?

Patrick Brice: Well, like you said, his personality is so infectious. Normally when you see his characters in films, they are very contained and controlled. We were excited because in this story he was a bit more free.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since sex was a theme in your film, why do you think people have some much trouble facing the truth of it in themselves?

Brice: I don’t know offhand, can I speak to the entire human condition? [laughs] Sex is a subject that I’ve not seen done well, so I wanted to give my take on it.





The Overnight, directed by Patrick Brice
Photo credit: The Orchard

HollywoodChicago.com: Another theme in the film is marriage. What are you trying to say about that particular institution?

Brice: You're asking me to be my own analyst on the film. [laughs] Marriage is difficult and nuanced, with a lot of complexities. Just because the story in the film ends the way that it does, it really speaks to the strengthening of both of the marriages portrayed. They had their moment of curiosity, and that was needed for them to get over their problems.

HollywoodChicago.com: What do you think of a country that embraces 'Fifty Shades of Grey' as mainstream, but are more vulnerable regarding the sexual subjects brought up in your film?

Brice: I haven't seen '50 Shades...', so I can't really speak to that, but I can almost say with certainty that my approach was different. I want to normalize sexuality in my film, and take what we have previously thought of as taboo, and place them in the realm of conversation. I wanted to make the film an inclusive experience, so I hope that's the way people end up responding to it.

For more information about the recently completed 2015 Chicago Critics Film Festival [click here](#). [19]



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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 24 2024 - 4:24pm):
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