

# The STRANGE REBIRTH of ANDRE WEIL

## P R E S S

Combustible Celluloid 3.5 out of 4 star review:

<http://www.combustiblecelluloid.com/2009/strangerebirth.shtml>

Interview with *Your It List*:

<http://youritlist.com/2009/09/love-god-and-brain-damage/>

## S C R E E N I N G S & A W A R D S

- Los Angeles Shorts Fest (July 09)
- Topanga Film Festival (Aug 09)
- San Francisco International Festival of Short Films (Sept 09)
- Imagine Science Film Festival, NYC (Oct 09)
- WILDsound Film Festival, Toronto (Oct 09)
- Audience Award - Best Overall Performances*
- Miami Short Film Festival (Nov 09)
- NewFilmmakers LA (Dec 09)

## S H O R T S Y N O P S I S

A boy meets girl... Boy gets shot in the head... Boy turns to God short film. Inspired by a true story.

## S Y N O P S I S

When Andre meets Sasha it's something approximating love at first sight. She's an analog girl in a digital world. He's a hapless door-to-door salesman and notorious shut-in. Their romance becomes complicated by the introduction of Gil, an old professor of Sasha's with a nasty jealous streak. Using archival footage and a deadpan narration, *The Strange Rebirth of Andre Weil* loosely reconstructs the historic neurological case of Phineas Gage, who in the mid-1800s survived a freak accident in which a 13 foot metal rod shot through the frontal lobe of his brain and skull. The film also weaves in an homage to the neuroscientist Michael Persinger and his famous God Helmet. Super 16mm, 16 minutes, 26 seconds, black and white.



## CREW BIOGRAPHIES

### JOEL GARBER – WRITER / DIRECTOR / EDITOR

Joel is a recent graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program at San Francisco State University and the founder of Greengold Film. He is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and an alumni of the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Prior to moving to the west coast, Joel worked as an Associate Producer and Post-Production Supervisor for New York based Atlas Media Corp. His credits include programs for Food Network and The History Channel. He is also the director of several short films, most recently *Personal Curator*, a short 16mm narrative shot entirely on location at the Berkeley Art Museum. *The Strange Rebirth of Andre Weil* is Joel's MFA Thesis project.



### SUMMRE GASTON – PRODUCER

Summre is a graduate of the Master of Arts – Cinema program at San Francisco State University. She recently completed her written

thesis entitled, *Robotic Femmes: Gender, Technology and the State of Feminism*. She was the principal organizer for the international film conference “Spaces of Conflict,” and in addition to extensive teaching experience she has also recently produced the short documentary, *I Beat Cancer*. Summre is currently working as the filmmaker coordinator for TurnHere, Inc., an internet video provider.

### MILENKO SKOKNIC – PRODUCER

Milenko Skoknic is a freelance producer based in Los Angeles. While working on legendary director Monte Hellman's latest film, *Road to Nowhere*, Milenko wrote an essay for the 2009 September issue of *Cahiers du Cinema*. He is currently in preproduction for his first feature film and is curating a retrospective of the Italian director Marco Ferreri for the San Francisco Italian Cultural Institute. He holds an MFA in Cinema from San Francisco State University.

### SINISA KUKIC – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Sinisa graduated from S. Illinois University in 2005 with a BA in Cinema and Photography. He is currently enrolled in San Francisco State University's MFA Cinema program, where he continues to make experimental and documentary films. *Pump* (2006), his most recent film, explores the hybridization of the bicycle and the cyclist. *Pump* has screened at over a dozen international film festivals, including Ann Arbor Film and Video Festival, and has aired on PBS. His preoccupation with the particulars of camera carriage and movement are rooted in his involvement in the local biking community and his work as a racecar mechanic.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Phineas Gage, a railroad foreman in the mid-1800s, suffered a freak accident in which a 13 foot metal rod shot through the frontal lobe of his brain. Though he survived, Gage was transformed. Previously known for his patience and thoughtfulness, Gage became a darker, more temperamental, and angry man. Gage's case became famous for alerting the world of science to the compartmentalization of the human brain, and the fragility of the human personality.

Modern science is pre-occupied with understanding the brain and how it works. Newspapers and magazines constantly update us with the latest developments. New research on the brain points to a potential sea change in long held notions concerning consciousness, ethics, philosophy, art, and religion.

Traumatic brain injuries often lead to bizarre neurological conditions that are illuminating by virtue of their very oddness. Andre Weil, the film's protagonist, suffers from one such condition, known as Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE). A small number of sufferers of TLE have epileptic fits during which they experience intense spiritual sensations, often reporting that they are in touch with some God-like presence. It has been speculated that noted historical figures, from Joan of Arc to Fyodor Dostoevsky, endured undiagnosed cases of TLE.

Michael Persinger is a neuroscientist at Laurentian University in Ontario, Canada. In the 1980s he developed a device called the "God helmet," a modified snowmobile helmet that is wired to create a weak magnetic field aimed precisely at the temporal lobes in the right hemisphere of the brain. The effect, in nearly 80% of participants, is the sensation of a palpable spiritual energy, mimicking the experience of a seizure in people with TLE. As Jack Hitt, writing for Wired Magazine puts it: *..after I adjust to the darkness and the cosmic susurrus of absolute silence, I drift almost at once into a warm bath of oblivion. Something is definitely happening. During the 35-minute experiment, I feel a distinct sense of being withdrawn from the envelope of my body and set adrift in an infinite existential emptiness...*

What does it mean that a specific part of our brains control spiritual thought? What implications are to be drawn from the fact that, like Phineas Gage, we are all a single violent blow away from transforming into different people? These are the chief thematic concerns backgrounding *The Strange Rebirth of Andre Weil* and the foundation upon which the love story narrative is built.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION VISIT: [www.greengoldfilm.net](http://www.greengoldfilm.net)  
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