

Reviews: The Man Who Wouldn't Cry

Indie Shorts Mag: Dry Eyeballs And Razor-Edged Satire

Mannen som inte ville gråta (The Man Who Wouldn't Cry) is a comedy that serves as a guise beneath which it distils the very real tendencies of the world. Satirizing the way companies function, the 16-minute film is based on a Stig Dagerman short story, written by Björn Boström and directed by Emil T. Jonsson.

Beginning with the death of a beloved actress, the film opens on the waves of reaction at an ad agency. With animation, the film pares down the sequence down to the bare melodrama it is. No one is exempt from grieving, which spells trouble for Martin (Jonas Nilsson), who does not share in, nor understand, the severity of everyone's reactions.

When this results in a talking-to from his boss (Sissela Kyle), the scene drips with that sickening mawkishness that hides some form of rot behind it. Everything is brightly lit here, everyone appears to be transparently expressive. The situation is what is commonly termed 'a big family'; there is no longer an employee of the month, replaced by a buddy of the month. You are not a salaried employee, you are a child, part of a family. The employees' time and psyche belong to the company, thus the flagging when it came to Martin.

Martin is sent down to the archives, to be monitored by a camera as well as the latest buddy of the month, Jockum (Christoffer Nordenrot) until he cries for the death of the beloved actress, Henrietta. The colour palette continues to be bright and cheerful, continually highlighting its unnaturalness—its function to remind everyone that this is supposed to be a happy place, filled with happy family members uniform in every feeling, every thought, every action.

In the archives room, just as the plot doubles down on Martin, the film doubles down on its critique of capitalism, especially in the era of social media. The satire threatens to break down into pure pathos as Jockum despairs over what it will cost him to replace his broken

glasses. The exultation and devotion required of employees towards the company are pinned down in a single line, “The promised pay raise never happens, even though I’m Buddy of the Month and everything.” The element of the religious makes a jarring and significant statement about the farcical and exploitative systems of companies.

The ending rounds it all off with the role of social media in all its neverending stream of input, however unnecessary, meaningless or inaccurate that output may be. Martin’s tears had a good reason to arrive. The wonder is if it will stop having those reasons anytime soon. Will we?

☆☆☆☆☆

Indie Shorts Mag Team, 29 Apr 2022

<https://www.indieshortsmag.com/reviews/2022/04/the-man-who-wouldnt-cry-dry-eyeballs-and-razor-edged-satire/>

UK Film Review: The Man Who Wouldn’t Cry Review (aka Mannen som inte ville gråta)

A charming and astute satire on empathy in our modern society, *The Man Who Wouldn’t Cry* explores the difference between genuine and superficial grief. After the death of the beloved actress, “Henrietta” sends shockwaves of sadness through an ad agency, the only one unaffected is illustrator Martin who instead finds amusement in a subsequent moment when someone drops some chocolates. Believing their co-worker to be a sociopathic monster after not publicly bawling his eyes out over a woman he’s never known, Martin is banished to the archives with star employee Jockum and isn’t allowed to leave until he cries.

Björn Boström’s script, adapted from a short story by Stig Dagerman is brilliant in how it frames the vanity of this work culture and its participants. ‘Henrietta’ isn’t mourned as a person, Sissela Kyle’s as Martin’s boss eulogises this actress only through her commercial appeal both for the ad agency and for the employee’s social media pages. The film is bookended by this idea that the lenses of our humanity all now have to be filtered through social media in pursuit of online attention. Though not to such a frightening extreme the film reminded me of *Black Mirror’s Nosedive*, in that our emotions only have value in this cynical

consumer context for gratification. Director's Emil T. Jonsson's establishes this superficial theme so well, that when the legitimate emotions of Martin and then Jockum take centre stage it makes more of an impact.

The mise-en-scène of the film offers interesting contrasts to the film's themes and visuals. While Martin's situation represents this bleak depiction of assimilation, *The Man Who Wouldn't Cry* feels almost whimsical. Soft pastel colours and lighting, symmetrical furniture and scooters; these aren't the bleak office blocks of Mike Judge or Ricky Gervais but somehow they feel even more soulless. It's warm and inviting in the same way a cult can be, especially emphasised in the film's final scene. Jonsson's direction gives the film plenty of personality though, especially through its animated narrative device, where flashbacks are told through illustrations. These visuals exaggerate and express Martin's imagination and its classic style is a nice juxtaposition with the live-action, enhancing them especially with Jockum's story about a troubled time in his life.

The Man Who Wouldn't Cry's script is delivered wonderfully by Jonsson's direction alongside the performances of Jonas Nilsson as Martin and Christoffer Nordentrot as Jockum. The supporting cast is also stellar in their brief moments (Kyle especially) but it's the authenticity Martin and Jockum find together that makes the film's themes thrive. Nilsson has terrific body language as the quiet unassuming Martin, with his early scenes revolving on how befuddled he looks at what the fuss is all about. Nordentrot captures the classic overly enthusiastic co-worker that needs to give us space, Boström does well in building from familiar dynamics to make the comedy and drama grounded in this ridiculous setting.

We are free to grieve as we wish, whether it be privately or through lengthy social media posts, our shared empathy aches when we lose people. Whether they be family, strangers, or stars we saw on the silver screen, Jonsson's film isn't a memorandum on the correct way to mourn. Instead, *The Man Who Wouldn't Cry* is a terrific satirical examination of the warped nature emotions are processed through social interactions both off and online.

☆☆☆☆

Corey Bulloch, UK Film Review

Aug 8, 2021

<https://www.ukfilmreview.co.uk/post/the-man-who-wouldn-t-cry-short-film-review>

Shorted: Short film of the day – The Man Who Wouldn't Cry

Based on a short story by Stig Dagerman, *The Man Who Wouldn't Cry* is a wonderful union of pastel colors, satire, absurdity, the skewed standards of society, and a hapless protagonist who finds himself at the receiving end of it all. After the passing of a famous actor, Henrietta, an ad agency is consumed by their public (and perhaps borderline histrionic) display and expression of grief. To the viewer, this expression remains markedly superficial and disingenuous, meant more as a performance and outward appearance than bona fide sorrow.

Martin, an illustrator at this agency, does not subscribe to the said practice. Needless to say, this does not sit well in a world that is determined to make everyone part of the same herd, be it in the form of social media opinions, or the reputation of an ad agency which eventually comes to pivot on Martin's grief (or the lack of it thereof).

As the film portrays all of these thematic concerns, it comes to exhibit unique storytelling and a refreshing, exciting approach. There is further a mirror held up to those disconcerting aspects of society that are so resolved to make someone grieve, a man who is deeply uncomfortable with sharing his emotions in the presence of others, that they indeed force him to the point of tears, albeit for reasons far beyond their comprehension.

The world of the film is beautifully constructed, with each performance exhibiting finesse and sophistication. This is tied with the dreary reality of Martin's world, not vastly different from our own of social media updates and online documentation, delineated through the choice of fun, perky shades, but those that only serve to accentuate the contrast between Martin's internal and external reality further.

Shorted, Dec 3 2021

<https://shortedfilms.com/short-films/the-man-who-wouldnt-cry/>

First Showing: Watch: Absurd Swedish Comedy Short 'The Man Who Wouldn't Cry'

"If you care about your own future, shed some f*#! tears before half past four!" Crying is a strange thing. Sometimes it hits right at the wrong time, sometimes it hits at just the right time. Sometimes we can't cry, sometimes we can't stop crying. What kind of crier are you? The Man Who Wouldn't Cry is an amusing, kooky Swedish comedy short film made by filmmakers Emil T. Jonsson and Björn Boström. After playing at festivals last year, it's available to watch online for free below. A man tarnishes his ad company's reputation when he refuses to mourn the death of a beloved actress and now his professional & social life is in jeopardy. Starring Sissela Kyle, Jonas Ö. Nilsson, and Christoffer Nordenrot. This short has some clever social commentary baked in, about how much pressure society puts on us. Can't we cry on our own?! I guess not...

Thanks to Björn & Emil for the tip on this one. Brief description from Vimeo: "A short absurd comedy about a man who tarnishes the company's reputation when he refuses to mourn the death of a beloved actress." The Man Who Wouldn't Cry, originally known as Mannen Som Inte Ville Gråta in Swedish, is directed by and produced by Swedish actor / writer / filmmaker Emil T. Jonsson - you can see more of his work on his Vimeo or visit his official website or find him on Twitter @EmilFilm. The short is written and produced by Björn Boström. Based on a short story by Stig Dagerman. This premiered at the Västerås Filmfestival in Sweden last year, where it won Best Nordic Short Film; it also played at numerous other festivals around the world. For more info, visit the film's official site and Vimeo.

Alex Billington, FirstShowing,

June 10, 2022

<https://www.firstshowing.net/2022/watch-absurd-swedish-comedy-short-the-man-who-wouldnt-cry/>