



In the dazzling incandescence of an unknown desert,
three donkeys discover an abandoned astronomical observatory and the universe.
A sensorial, cinematic exploration of what a story can be.



Trailer vimeo.com/989176547

Website perfectlyastrangeness.com

Distributor [Premium Films](https://PremiumFilms.com)

Press questions films@alisonmcalpine.com

Short film – Québec, Canada – 2024 – 15 min

Colour | No dialogue | Cinemascope | 5.1

Produced by **Second Sight Pictures** in association
with **GreenGround Productions**

perfectly a strangeness a film by Alison McAlpine



Selected Awards

[Festival de Cannes, 2024 Official Selection, Short Films Competition](#)

[Grand Prize, 2024 National Competition Festival du Nouveau Cinéma](#)

[2024 Silver Hugo Documentary Short Film, Chicago International Film Festival](#)

[Cinematic Achievement Award, TiSFF 2024 \(Thessaloniki, Greece\)](#)

[Theme-Sensitive Award, Science New Wave Festival XVII \(New York City\)](#)

[Best Québec Short Film – Jury Prize, Festival de courts métrages Images en vues 2024 \(Îsles de la Madeleine\)](#)

What People Are Saying

Excellent film!! Great use of sound and music, beautiful images!! *perfectly a strangeness* really makes you wonder: what the hell is going on in this universe?

— [Walter Murch](#)

[11 Must-See Short Films at TIFF 2024](#)

— C.J. Prince

An awe-inspiring, meditative journey that delves into depths of eternal questions about our existence. What is missing - or what stays off the screen - remains at the very core of this short film, inviting its viewers to reimagine a new-old world full of mystery and wonder. Without a single word uttered, through its creative use of sounds and beautiful cinematography, this short film is a testament to the richness of the cinematic language. For all these reasons, the jury presents the Grand Prix to *perfectly a strangeness* by Alison McAlpine.

— [Jury, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma 2024](#)

The dynamic short doc *perfectly a strangeness* artfully explores the possibilities of stories beyond human protagonists and the ability of cinema to usher in discovery. Almost cosmic in scope, with a finely crafted sound design that harnesses small shifts in sound to keep our attention sharply in focus, the film follows three donkeys as they wander an arid landscape. Their curious journey is captured with exceptional cinematography and as they come across an abandoned observatory, the viewer is left with an otherworldly feeling of hopefulness. This unconventional mix of formal elements posits a world after humans and provides space to think about humanity's effect on nature.

— [2024 Silver Hugo Documentary Short Film, Chicago International Film Festival](#)

I really just wanted to congratulate you on making something so unique and absolutely absorbing. Nothing else I've seen lately has given me that tingly feeling that I'm witnessing something totally original and transcendent. Bravo!

— Email from an audience member at the Cannes Film Festival, May 28, 2024

perfectly a strangeness *a film by Alison McAlpine*

Credits

director, writer, producer **Alison McAlpine**
editor **Carolina Siragyan**
director of photography **Nicolas Canniccioni**
music **Ben Grossman**
sound **Samuel Gagnon-Thibodeau**
mix **Stéphane Bergeron**
visual effects **Charles Marchand**
colour **Marc Boucrot**

See website for full credits perfectlyastrangeness.com



About Alison McAlpine

Alison began her career as a published poet, inspired by family tales and the oral traditions of British Columbia where she grew up. Discovering theatre in Ireland, she soon after wrote and directed music-theatre works which toured Canada and Europe.

The success of her commission to write a TVOpera, inspired Alison to make her first film, *Second Sight* (2008), an award-winning mid-length film. BBC commissioned two versions of *Second Sight*. *Ghostman of Skye* (2009) was “Pick of the Day” or “Critics Choice” in every major UK newspaper. *CIELO*, Alison’s award-winning first feature, named as “One of the best documentaries of 2018” by *Esquire* and *The Guardian*, has been presented at over 400 international film festivals and cinemas.

perfectly a strangeness, Alison’s first short film, had its World Premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, Official Competition, May 24, 2024, and has since travelled all over the world.

A 2021 Guggenheim Fellow, Alison is currently working on her first feature-length fiction film.

Background and the Director’s Vision

Orkney, Scotland. Alison McAlpine is in a barren, windswept field, alone among a circle of standing stones. Every night at midnight, these giants come to life and dance, the locals say. At dawn, they turn back to stone until midnight strikes again.

When Alison first set foot in an astronomical observatory in the Atacama Desert, Chile, she remembered this story. It was noon; no one was about. The metal domes surrounding her were motionless and glowing. As the sun set and shadows swept in the night, the domes and telescopes opened, tilted upward. All night they danced accompanied by the most extraordinary sounds. At dawn, they folded their metal shells inward, slept until the sun once again disappeared.



One afternoon, she arrived at La Silla Observatory in Chile to shoot for her feature documentary film, *CIELO*. A family of donkeys were grazing near a telescope dome. They watched and allowed her team to film them. They never used this footage in *CIELO*, yet this image kept coming back to Alison. How do donkeys perceive the observatory and the stars? What do they see and hear?

Music and sound design, interwoven with the images, play a central role. Hurdy gurdy, Tuba, percussion evoke the soul of this abandoned observatory and immerse the viewer in a sensorial experience which feels improvised, fresh and beyond labels. Her aim was to work with texture, movement, light, shadow, reflections, sound, and rhythm – no text – creating cinema that you want to touch like an exquisite painting, or a poem that you want to experience again and again, offering the viewer a space to think and imagine for themselves.

*Film as dream, film as music.
No art passes our conscience
in the way film does,
and goes directly to our feelings,
deep down into the dark rooms
of the soul.*

— Ingmar Bergman