

QLH-S3E11M: We're All Going to the World's Fair

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SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

J Jessi Chartier 00:04

Welcome to Quiet Little Horrors. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark. Let's talk about We're All Going to the World's Fair.

J Jen Myers 00:22

We talk about movies. So we're going to talk about parts of movies that may be spoilers. If that doesn't bother you, you can keep on listening. Or you can hit the pause button and go watch the films that we're talking about before you continue here. Consider yourself warned.

J Jessi Chartier 00:39

Casey joins in on an internet role playing game that involves watching a video and recording its eerie effects on you. This film combines the narrative structure of found footage to play off the new user generated genre of collaborative horror storytelling often found in the internet. Jen, this was an odd movie.

J Jen Myers 01:00

It's a very odd movie, which I mean, I think both of us agree that's usually a good thing.

J Jessi Chartier 01:05

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. I was gonna say, I remember watching this. And as often I watched some of these, my husband will hang out in the background and watch them to occasionally. And this is one that we watched together. And once it ended, my reaction was, Wow, that was weird. And my husband's reaction was, that's it?

J Jen Myers 01:24

Well, and the ending I think, is even odder than the film as a whole. And the film as a whole is pretty odd.

J Jessi Chartier 01:29

So yeah, yes, exactly. Right. Exactly. Right. Yeah, it's okay. So let's, let's talk about it. So this movie, first off falls into our, our theme this month is found footage. And we wanted to pull this one out, particularly as a mini because we want to talk about found footage as a whole in the next one and really kind of use Butterfly Kisses as the kind of the touchstone that we're going to continue to come back to. But we wanted to talk about We're All Going to the World's Fair because it is very different. And it's there's a lot of debate on is it really a found footage film is it will kind of horror film is it because it plays with a lot of really cool genres and tropes and not tropes. And it's got a very small cast. And there's a lot of really cool filmmaking techniques that are used here. But to make sure everybody's aware a little bit more about the plot. So the first act is really about I mean, the inciting moment is Casey, this teenage human person, I don't think we need to worry about the gender here, because it's never really revealed whether or not Casey is female or male, and it makes zero difference on the plotline. Think it makes a huge amount of difference in the subtext, but we can talk about that in a minute. Anyway, so Casey joins in on this internet sensation, which is a new type of storytelling where you are creating content, so you're a content creator. And you're creating almost like artifacts like these elements to find online and create and feed into a cultural story. So things like things like Slenderman is a great example. So she embarks and conducts this internet ritual, which involves cutting your finger and watching a video and then recording the effects of the video on you. And they the effects from the content creators. And it's just like user generated storytelling can be a variety of things. Some people claim that they're turning into plastic, some people claim that they're disappearing, some people claim all these other things, but it's all done within this collective community in this online environment. And so she has now joined this collective community, and invoked the ritual and now is recording herself and has attracted the viewership of at least one individual who is engaging with her in this collaborative storytelling. So he's like, Oh, I'm really concerned about you, and keep recording yourself. So I know you're okay. So there's a lot of this playfulness in there. And some of the subtext along the way. Are you know, she says, she starts to feel weird, she starts to feel like she's not existing, she starts to have almost these kind of psycho breaks psychotic breaks a little bit where she's dissociated from herself and returns and is like, what did I do? But then there's a story behind the story of like Casey's actual home life is clearly very broken. It we get the impression that she lives with her father, only her father, on a farm we never see the Father, we only hear him off screen once. And so she's very isolated. She's very alone. And it's just there's this it's clear that she's using this story, to connect with people or to to become discover herself or to connect with a community or all the things that you feel in adolescence. And I think that that's really where the story focuses on. More so than the plot really doesn't. The plot does matter. I mean, obviously, because it drives the story forward, but it's the loneliness that I think Casey feels. And the the uncertainty of direction of her or her their own life is really, really kind of interesting. Anyway, so that's kind of the whole overview of the movie. Jen, do you want to talk a little bit more about like some of the things that you saw on it? Like, did you like the film? Did you not what you did? What do you like about it? What do you not like about it? Let's just kind of dive into it a little bit. Yeah, definitely.

J Jen Myers 05:39

Also, you did a really great job of covering all of that, because this is a difficult film to pin down again, in a good way. That's a good thing. But yeah, there's there's a lot going on here underneath the surface. I did like the film a lot. I saw this. I saw this a while back, it just came out last year, but it was definitely on a lot of lists last year of like, best horror films. And I do think that sometimes, as more people saw it, maybe that was a little controversial, because if you go into it expecting a straight horror film, that's not what you're gonna get, you're probably going to feel a little strange about it. I mean, you know, I think around here, we're okay with going into a film build of horror and find that it's more of a psychological journey, because that's kind of what we do here. So yeah, I think we're just fine with that. And yeah, I really liked it a lot I liked. So one of the things that I think a real big aspect of this film that I do think is worth talking about, especially if you're not familiar, but is that this kind of, like you mentioned, user generated, generated storytelling, and specifically, like horror storytelling on the internet, which is a thing that I am fascinated with as a subject. I mean, just in general, a lot of those things I'm interested in, obviously, I like horror stories. And I kind of like it really is kind of the new generation of urban legends. And it's just yeah, it's just got superpowers now with the internet. And I think that part of the reason I'm fascinated with it is because I did not grow up with that. Because I'm old. And we didn't, I didn't have the I didn't grow up with the internet, actually, you know, I didn't have regular access to the internet until I was like 20, Partially, partially my age, partially because I grew up in the middle of nowhere, we just didn't have access to that sort of thing. But, but yeah, initially, this was not a part of my growing up. But I will say that there were other aspects of, of kind of Casey situation that I did feel very familiar to me, I grew up rather isolated myself, and, you know, a pretty kind of quiet for lack of a better term home, or I spent a lot of time by myself, and I didn't have the internet, I had books, I had movies, I was in the woods all the time. That's what I did instead of the internet. And it's one of those things, though, that was like, Oh, if this had been like, 20 years later, like I would have been Casey, I would have totally got sucked into all of these stories and videos and message boards and all of this stuff. And that's kind of scary in itself, there's a certain horror and that of kind of recognizing, just, I don't know, connect the internet is good, because it fosters connections, and the Internet can be bad because it fosters connections. And when you have all of that wrapped up in this entire like, and it is a established culture that this is coming out of, I don't know, just all of that I found really compelling. And I do think that even though I didn't grow up in it, like I said, I'm very interested in it. And this film felt very real to me in depicting that.

J Jessi Chartier 08:37

Yeah, yeah, I was really I didn't, I didn't read anything about it beforehand. So I went into it, having no clue what to expect. And it took me a hot minute to realize that that was like the plot of the movie that it was, Oh, we're using it internet storytelling as an plot narrative, to drive things forward. And it took me eight minutes to realize that because I didn't, same thing, like I did not grow up with the Internet. And so the I'm also like, my day job as an educator. So like, my, my view of the internet is very skewed in that direction, because I'm like, Oh, I use the internet to learn things because you know, that's what I do in my day to day but the reality of the community being in this digital space, I'm also very fascinated from the psychological perspective of having a digital worlds and having that separate from your physical world and how that can be incredibly dangerous, if not managed appropriately and incredibly liberating, if

if you are in certain situations and all that other stuff. So I did find this this film. puzzling. I think that's the best way that I can describe it because I don't think I would want to go? But this is not a film that I would be like, Oh, my God, everybody has to see this. I think that this is a film that filmmakers should see 100% I think that it is going to speak to a certain generation 100% I love the fact that it explored a new territory. But I don't I can understand why this was not a blockbuster, I can understand why this was not a multi. This was not designed and created for the mass audiences. And I think that there's beauty in that I think that there is an elegance to it, because it wasn't trying to be everything for everyone. Right, right. But it was very much. It was definitely not a popcorn film. And I appreciate that. I appreciate about that. But it was very puzzling at moments, it was just like, there were these. It took me a while I'm not used to having to separate out a plot driven device from the narrative structure. So like, for example, when she's creating these videos, because it starts with her creating a video. So I'm like, okay, that's going to be the main storyline. And actually, it's not, it's just a plot device. And so the main storyline is really her making these videos and her dealing with, and I'm gonna I'm sorry, they I should say that because I don't know, there's there's no indication,

J Jen Myers 11:21

Yeah, we can get into that more, too, because that's definitely kind of a subtext there.

J Jessi Chartier 11:26

Yeah, let's actually dive into that, because I think that that's gonna play into kind of like, my how, because I want to talk about the story of Casey, not the story of the internet sensation that she goes through, or they go through. And so the, the very little I did read about the movie afterwards, talks a lot about not a lot about but it was I was very fascinated on. I had a question I question that would drove me, which was, how autobiographical is this for the creator of the make of the film? Do you want to talk a little bit about who could the creator of the film who?

J Jen Myers 12:06

Yeah, I don't know a ton, but what I do know. So their name is Jane Schoenbrunn, I believe is how you pronounce the last name. They are trans non binary. And yeah, you know, I think that we yeah, we've fumbled a bit with Casey's pronouns, a lot of the things that I've read about the film, when they talk about Casey, the character in the film, they do use she pronouns. But I do think it is worth considering using they pronouns. Not only is it not made explicit, I feel like gender is definitely an open question in the story. It's a part of the character. And I think that you know, and maybe there is no answer that maybe that's one of those puzzling things that we're meant to kind of bring our own conclusions to, because that is also a part of the film, I think, especially in the ending. So yeah, I think it's worth, I think it's worth considering how we talk about Casey in terms of this. And I do think that the filmmaker has said that they intended this film to be authentic to their own coming out story. So that's obviously why all these things are coming up in there, because it is telling that authentic story.

J Jessi Chartier 13:15

Yeah, and so yeah, exactly, exactly. And so that's why I think Casey's story is the one that we

year, and so year, exactly, exactly. And so that's why I think Casey's story is the one that we should be looking at. Not anything else, because Casey is obviously very, like we said, alone, I love the scene where they go. So they leave their room and they because they can't sleep on they're frustrated, because they're recording themselves sleeping. And they get up and they're like, nobody wants to watch me sleep. And so it's clear that she feels very defeated, like it's a very defeatist moment. And she goes out to the barn. And they do two things, the first thing they do is they pull out their father's gun and just stares at it for a minute. Their hunting rifle puts it away and then goes into another because they live on it's clearly live on a farm goes out to the barn then the other part of the barn is almost like this rumpus room media room that's got like pull table and TV and couch and all that stuff. And they put on a video of someone basically telling them everything's okay go back to sleep, everything's okay. And it's just this almost like very you know, how like some people will put on white noise in order to help them drowned out their thoughts. This is clearly a moment of soothing that that that this person does in the case he does in order to fall back asleep. And it was very heartbreaking. Like it was just so relatable of feeling so alone and having this this unknown person basically just soothe you back to sleep like and they keep saying the I think it's a woman on the screen and she keeps saying sounds like it yeah. Yeah, like, it's okay. I'm here overly you're safe. It's very motherly every matronly. Yeah. And it's but the woman on the on the video is clearly not her mother because she's just another adolescent.

J Jen Myers 15:10

Yeah, no, but honestly, I would have said that was one of my first impulses when I was watching the scene is like, Oh, is this like her mother or something? And then I realized this is another aspect of what we're talking about with like internet culture is like, no, she found a video of somebody providing this, which you could do right now if you wanted to, which is yeah, it just kind of reinforces what we're talking about this whole situation.

J Jessi Chartier 15:33

Yep, exactly, exactly. And so I just I find it very interesting that Casey's just, and the one viewer that she interacts with, is an older man, a kind of a creep bear, we say, kind of a creep. But he also is very, um, I think what Casey finds in him is the fatherly figure that he she's not getting either not super clear cut. Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, he's, he's his, where his creep factor comes in is from being overly concerned about this random young woman. Yes. But as the relationship grows, and as you get to know him a little bit more, he's almost almost more like a big brother. At least the the implication that you get is that he is not only playing along with the game of like, oh, no, something has happened to you. And I am going to follow you through to genuine concern, because one of the videos that Casey provides, is just a random clip of her saying, My father has a gun, and he doesn't think I know where it is.

J Jen Myers 16:39

You know, this is interesting. I don't know if we want to dive too much into this. But I'll be honest, I don't. I'm not as sold on his genuineness. Oh, yes. Yeah. Which is why I probably like introduced my opinion of the way I did. And it's but again, it's not like I'm 100% this like, this is this is a movie of ambiguity, again, in a good way. But I had a much stronger negative reaction to him. No, and it's not that I felt like he wanted to see harm come to her. I do think that there

was some there's genuine concern on that. But I don't know, I kind of got the impression that he wasn't playing along with her, but that he also, he either believed this whole thing as much as she did, or at least to a certain extent, or he was playing along with it for his own ends. And maybe more, maybe more so the ladder. And so like, okay, but but also, I don't know, I always got the impression that he was kind of caught into this, like, how did he find her in the first place if he wasn't interested in the story? Unless he unless he does go out just to find, you know, female presenting young girls on the internet, which is right helus us,

J Jessi Chartier 17:52

which he's definitely not without his own demons. I mean, it's, and he's also very isolated. I mean, he there's one image of him in a house with a woman wandering around in the background. And she's never in focus.

J Jen Myers 18:09

Specifically, yeah, well, there is one

J Jessi Chartier 18:11

episode or once, like one clip, not episode, but when she's never in focus, she just walks in and out. She's not, it's just kind of like an everyday thing. But then there's other areas where you're like, Okay, something is wrong with this. Something is abnormal, not something is abnormal with this gentleman, because his bedroom is like, a kid's bedroom. Not a kid's bedroom. It's like a single adolescent bedroom. It has a twin sized bed. It's clearly not the master bedroom. Yeah, something huge house. Yeah. And the only other person we see is this one person walking around in the background. So I mean, he's just as isolated and marginalized in some way, shape, or form, whether justifiably or not, he is marginalized in some way, shape, or form, and is alone. And it's clear that they found each other on this internet site, specifically designed for this collaborative horror storytelling. And collaborative storytelling only works if you have an audience. So you can't just have a bunch of creators, you also have to have an audience to interact with. And so I think that he is definitely not a saint. But I also think that he is invested in the storytelling because they do have this banter back and forth at one point in time, so Okay, so he does get really concerned about her because he says to her, Hey, I saw your video about the gun. I've been in your shoes as an adolescent. I just want to make sure you're really okay. And it changes ever so slightly, that it's clear that he's now no longer playing the role of the audience in this collaborative storytelling, but that he is genuinely concerned about Casey and what Casey might do to herself or to someone else. And at that point, she flips out on him. And she says, it's all just part of the story. And she swears at them and then calls him a pedophile. And that clearly is like, I mean, there's like a music note that happens when that word comes up, like, everything happens where it was like that word had a huge amount of weight to it. And she hangs up on Skype with them. And he storms out of his room, wanders the house for a bit sits down, and just and then says, nope, nope, I am not going to take this. And he storms back up into his room and tries calling her tries calling her tries calling her. So it's like, it's clear that that word had obvious weight to it. And I mean, that was what we were all thinking, right? Why is this boy? Yeah. Why is this man watching this young girl. But I think that there that he was playing a role to your point for his own satisfaction 100%. But something,

there was a point in time where things got too real. And you wanted to call her out on it and be like, Okay, now I'm actually concerned about you. And she doesn't have she flips back. And as you know, turning it on its head of like, Oh, it's just part of the story is just part of the story. And I think that that works, because he's older, where she can use this whole, like, you don't understand storytelling from the internet's perspective. Of course, I was just joking. Yeah. But I just I love I love that little banter in that interaction, because it did create this whole. It just played off of there the age difference, so well, it played off of their implied relationships. So well, like it just it just worked. It just worked.

J Jen Myers 21:53

Yeah, no, that makes sense to me it but it also like, I don't know if you think this exactly. But it seemed really clear to me that Casey's backlash was not what it was on the surface. Like, I don't think Casey was. I don't think that it was part of the story that Casey or it wasn't kind of like, if it weren't part of the story. I think she was, I don't know, I think Casey was lost in the story. And that kind of shook them out of it. Maybe?

J Jessi Chartier 22:27

Yeah, I think he's he wanted to be lost in the story. And then when he starts to like, be like, hey, that's too far. And she's now thrust back into her reality. Of course, she would react the way she reacts, you know, she's like, Stop ruining the story, stop pulling me back into reality.

J Jen Myers 22:44

Right. But also, in that reading, though, he was right, that it could go too far. If she gets lost in the story, so yeah, it's a complicated thing, where, in some ways, they're both kind of correct. About what's

J Jessi Chartier 23:02

exactly, exactly. Yeah. Do you want to talk about the ending a little bit?

J Jen Myers 23:06

We can try? Because it is definitely a it's not necessarily an ending that I think you can parse and come to a final solution about if this if they're ever word ending that you kind of come to your own conclusions about, as I said earlier, I think it's this one. So what what happens on screen and let me just make sure I get this right. So it's a year later, right after they've had their falling out? Yes. And you see, what's the guy's name?

J Jessi Chartier 23:38

Its initials. It's not official names. It's like JBL or something like, Hey,

J Jen Myers 23:42

J. L. B. Actually, that's what it has to be. Yeah, I don't even remember the initials. Okay, so J L B, you just see him on screen. And he basically is reporting an interaction is he actually reading from from a document or something? You get the impression he is yes. Or like, at least that's what it made in my mind, because that was kind of like, I just assumed that's what it was. But anyway, he basically tells the story. Is he okay, sorry, I'm trying to remember this. Exactly. This is hard. This is also one of those movies I'm trying to remember like, isn't in my head. Is it directed towards Casey or is he recounting a story? Like in third person,

J Jessi Chartier 24:21

he's recounting a story in third person talking about the last time he met so that's what I thought

J Jen Myers 24:26

I just wanted to make sure and then I couldn't remember if he was addressing Casey or not. So no, he tells a story. He's basically reporting on a time where he met Casey in person in New York where Casey was living or I guess in the storyline is living now and that they what did they it was kind of uneventful meeting if I remember right then but you never really know for sure if they actually met up you actually don't know what happened to Casey. I think it leaves this question open of did he read this story because maybe something happened to Casey, or keys he really did cut him off entirely and disappeared. And he doesn't know what's going on, or did they actually get back in touch? And he actually saw Casey in New York. There's all these open questions there. So for me, it is definitely, I think, an ending that frustrates a lot of people. For me, I felt like it was just another it really makes sense in everything we've been talking about in terms of collaborative storytelling. You I don't know if I really have a clear idea of what happened. But it is a little bit strange. It's not, or I mean, it's clear, it's not Casey's story anymore.

J Jessi Chartier 25:42

Right? It's almost like so the impression that I got with that ending is that this J jlb. J lb, yeah, he is closing the online collaborative narrative that he and Casey built together. And that, you gotta remember that this is also like, the internet, collaborative storytelling, like I say, has to have viewership. So it's got to have both the creator and the viewer. And that's what makes these internet sensations or these internet, I'm going to call them internet storytelling rituals very interesting is that you're not just watching the Creator, you're also watching these characters that are emerging as viewers. So it's almost like you're twice removed, you're no longer just a viewer, you're a viewer of a viewer and a creator. And so what he is doing is he's closing the storyline that he and Casey have built together in this internet forum. But you're right. You don't know what really actually happened between the live people that are behind this creation. Like you don't know if Casey actually surfaces again, you don't know any of that.

But he is closing their storyline. He's putting a button on it. He's walking away from it. Yeah. And I think that that, that is what's interesting is because one of the two stories is resolved, but the most important one isn't still very much left open.

J Jen Myers 27:10

Yeah, although I don't know it really. It depends on what story you choose which dependent it is, depending on where you think this this is like a, you know, good ending, or maybe you feel happy about it or something. I think the one that I landed on, was that Casey really did completely cut him off. I think so too, did not talk to him again. And there's a part of me well, you know, kind of, based on my, what I was saying earlier is I think overall, that was a good call. And I think that's my case he should have done. And so part of me hopes that that Casey did get to go kind of go out into the world find their place find their life. And because Casey did that, this dude has no other way to involve Casey and his story more other than making this up. And that's how I approached it, mainly because I felt, you know, connected to Casey, and I wanted a happier ending. And that was like the happiest Sunday I could come up with.

J Jessi Chartier 28:13

I definitely think Casey cutter, cut them off. And I think that I think that that is that's that's where it ends. Like, he doesn't know what happened to her or them. And yeah, it's it is very, very, very interesting.

J Jen Myers 28:33

Yeah, it's definitely our Rorschach test of an ending. I feel like movies like this is not a film for anybody who does not like ambiguity, especially at the close of a film. Because I think it's designed to be like, Well, what do you think, you know, what did you think happening about it? I mean, to take the metaphor of collaborative storytelling, you know, we're basically doing the same thing here.

J Jessi Chartier 28:57

Yes, exactly. Exactly. Well, and this was an odd film to fit into the found footage, because I actually don't think it's found footage. I think that this is, but we can talk more about that. Yeah, in our bigger podcast, because we're going to talk about what we think found footage is how its evolved as a little bit of his genre, and we're going to be looking at a variety of other films, films on that. But before we start talking about our, our main event, any final thoughts on We All Go to the World's Fair?

J Jen Myers 29:26

I mean, nothing that we haven't covered, although I would say I would maybe take a little bit of a different stance, as what you said earlier is I do think a lot more people should go see this. They might not like it, but I do think it could be provoking and interesting ways. So I would say

that people who maybe are, I think, you know, open to being provoked in some ways, maybe in those returns to go for it. Or maybe specifically to horror fans that maybe it felt let down for this. I think this is a really great kind of deal. We're way into a different type of horror to consider, and I would recommend at least giving it a shot.

J Jessi Chartier 30:07

Yeah, I guess I don't disagree with you. I mean, I do think that if you want to explore, and some people will love it, some people hate it. But I think that that's one of the beauties of filmmaking is that thoroughly, there should never be something for everyone.

J Jen Myers 30:22

And definitely and I also feel like if you absolutely hate a movie, that's better than being indifferent to it.

J Jessi Chartier 30:28

Oh, yeah, there's nothing worse than being apathetic to a movie, right?

J Jen Myers 30:32

Which is maybe a waste of money. Those are for sure. And if one of these days we get around to talking about Darren Aronofsky's *Mother*, that is my personal case study of a movie that I hate, but it's pretty invigorating to hate it. And so you know, everybody needs some of those.

J Jessi Chartier 30:51

Everybody needs those. That's exactly right. All right. Well join us next time on our main podcast, or episode, not podcast. This is the podcast on our main episode, where we talk about the entire genre of found footage but focusing it on, ironically, not *Blair Witch*, which is like what everybody does, but we're gonna center it and put a stake in the ground on *Butterfly Kisses*. So stay tuned for that. Jen. If people want to reach out to us, where can they find us?

J Jen Myers 31:16

We have a website at quietlittlehorror.com and we're on Twitter still at [quiethorror](https://twitter.com/quiethorror) and on Instagram, [quietlittlehorror](https://www.instagram.com/quietlittlehorror). And if you want to email us, you can reach us at Hello@quietlittlehorror.com

J Jessi Chartier 31:30

Thanks for joining everyone. We'll see you next time. Bye.

