

ABSORB YOUR OBSTACLES!

AMATEUR CINEMA AND VISUAL FREEDOM



Originally published: *FilmInk*, October 2012 by Jack Sargeant

British based filmmakers Daniel Fawcett and Clara Pais have just completed their second feature film – the wonderfully titled *Savage Witches* - for less than £5000 (about \$7000A). “Money is a funny thing” they state “if you really claw after it then there never seems to be enough but if you just let go of it and put your mind to the important stuff then you find that you really don’t need all that much. We have no interest in making industrial or commercial films, we are amateur filmmakers and these are our very elaborate home movies made with friends mostly and with things that we have around us. When we encounter an obstacle we have found that it is far more interesting to find a way to use it rather than to throw money at it and make it vanish! Absorb your obstacles!” The filmmaking pair make it absolutely clear that while cash may come and go, money has “nothing to do with creativity.”

While Hollywood directors so often fetishize the latest technology (the tiresome vogue for 3D comes to mind), for Clara and Daniel there is just a celebration of potential, whatever the medium, “*Savage Witches* was edited on our laptop and was shot on HD, DV, Super8 and our favourite format VHS! We like mixing formats, different cameras have a different feel. The HD is very harsh and has a very sharp, almost sculptural quality. DV is kind of flat and fuzzy and VHS is beautiful, the colours just explode, the edges blur and everything becomes like an impressionist painting. We play around with projecting and re-filming things from the wall to deteriorate the image and create more painterly effects. We also did a lot of work with single frames, exporting and printing each frame of a scene, then painting it and scanning it back in. It is incredible how our understanding of what cinema is has developed by doing this.”

Their working relationship and lifestyle overlap, the pair live in a single room, work seven days-a-week on their numerous projects, and dedicate their time to “making films and doing the things that we love and inspire our work. We both write, shoot, direct and edit. *Savage Witches* started with a conversation that lasted over two days in which we pretty much mapped out the entire film in one go. We then organised these ideas into a script, passing it back and forth until it felt complete. It would be

impossible to know who had which ideas, often we'd find that we'd have the same idea simultaneously. We always made decisions together but we trusted each other to make the right decision without discussion when needed. During *Savage Witches*' pre-production and shooting, we would do producing stuff together but Daniel would deal more with the actors and lead the workshops whereas Clara would deal with technical stuff. We often had two cameras, and the times when there was only one Clara would operate. Then while we were editing it became more like the writing process again, we'd sit together for some of it or work in shifts. It was a long edit, every single day for seven months, when one of us was tired the other could keep things going, we certainly wouldn't have got through it on our own."

Most importantly, they remain utterly enthusiastic "Making a movie is an amazing thing, it's magic! We never suffer from writer's block or a lack of ideas, we are interested in so many things and there never seems to be enough time to do them all. One question we ask ourselves before we start working on a film is, 'is this something we want to spend a year or two with?' and if we are excited by this then we throw ourselves into it fully, it becomes the centre of our lives for whatever the amount of time we need to finish it, everything else is filtered through and feeds into the project. Also we have a really good diet, we make sure we get fresh air and exercise and take care of ourselves so our bodies and minds are functioning as well as they can, it really helps us focus and keep our minds clear of clutter, it's important to be as receptive as possible to what life presents to us."

The inspiration and dedication are paying off; *Savage Witches* is premièring at the Cambridge Film Festival in the UK, with other festival screenings looming. A true example of dedication and creative affirmation, and a genuine example of outsider filmmaking, Clara and Daniel are an inspiration for all.

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