


FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2024 OFFICIAL SELECTION
SHORT FILMS COMPETITION

OFFICIAL SELECTION
tiff
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2024


idfa
Official Selection
BEST OF FESTS
2024

SHORT FILM
NOMINEE

2026
CINEMA EYE
HONORS

98TH
ACADEMY AWARDS®
BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT
NOMINEE

perfectly a strangeness

a film by Alison McAlpine



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](#)

Distribution consultant [Justine Baillargeon](#)

Press questions films@alisonmc Alpine.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

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perfectly a strangeness premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, Official Competition 2024 and has since traveled to TIFF, IDFA “Best of Fests” and over 100 international film festivals and cinemas, playing in 34 countries, winning 24 awards.

perfectly a strangeness was nominated by Cinema Eye Honors, Best Nonfiction Short Film 2026 and has been nominated by the Academy Awards® 2026, Best Short Documentary Film.

For all Awards: perfectlyastrangeness.com/awards/

Selected Awards

Academy Awards® Short Documentary Nominee 2026

Cinema Eye Honors Nonfiction Short Film Nominee 2026

Best Short Documentary Special Mention, IDA Documentary Awards 2025

Full Frame Jury Award for Best Short 2025

Canada's Top 10 TIFF 2025

Silver Hugo Documentary Short Film 2024, Chicago International Film Festival

National Competition Grand Prize 2024, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma

Silver Gentian, Best Artistic Technical Contribution 2025, Trento Film Festival, Italy

Best Direction Short 2025, i-Fest International Film Festival, Italy

Best Short Film 2025, Rendez-Vous Québec Cinéma

Best Cinematography 2025, Nevada City Film Festival

Cine Sin Fine, Tramway Film Festival 2025, Poland

Athens International Film and Video Festival 2025 Winner

Science New Wave Luminary Award 2024

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What People Are Saying

“One of the most cinematic documentaries of the year.

— [Matthew Carey, Deadline](#)

“McAlpine’s film is a heady blend of myth, science fiction, documentary, comedy and philosophical exploration... Stunning.

— [Ben Nicholson, The Film Verdict](#)

“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](#)

“A beautifully reflective film. Quiet. Evocative.

— [William Bibbiani, The Wrap](#)

“The surreal Oscar-nominated short about three animals discovering a mountaintop astronomical observatory blends science and spirituality to unlock the secrets of our cosmic universe.

— [Etan Vlessing, Hollywood Reporter](#)

“A breathtakingly beautiful piece of work.

— [Jennie Kermode, Eye for Film](#)

“Visually expansive, meditative... otherworldly, best experienced in a darkened theater.

— [Collin Souter, Roger Ebert](#)

“A true stand-out original... rich, complex, and fun to explore... A singular work that creates a new space within non-fiction with a fresh language.

— [Pat Mullen, POV Magazine](#)

“*Perfectly a Strangeness* has the advantage of being one of the most gorgeous films nominated for an Oscar this year across any category.

— [Sean Boelman, FandomWire](#)

“Increasingly rare...A film of infectious, wide-eyed curiosity.

— [Sarah Smith, Directors Notes](#)

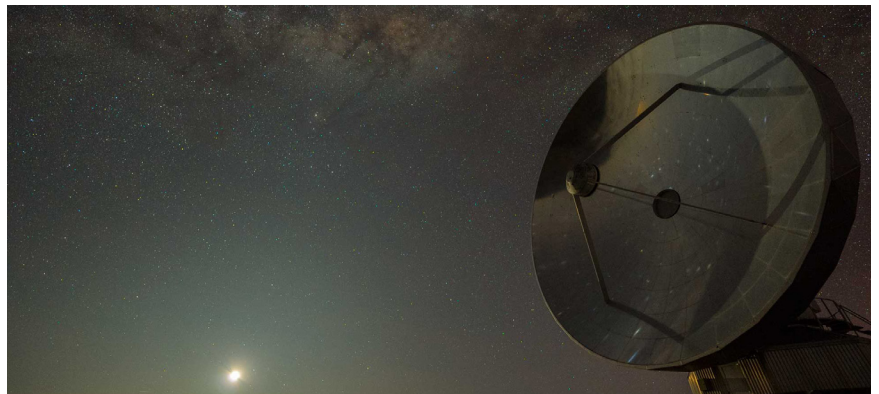
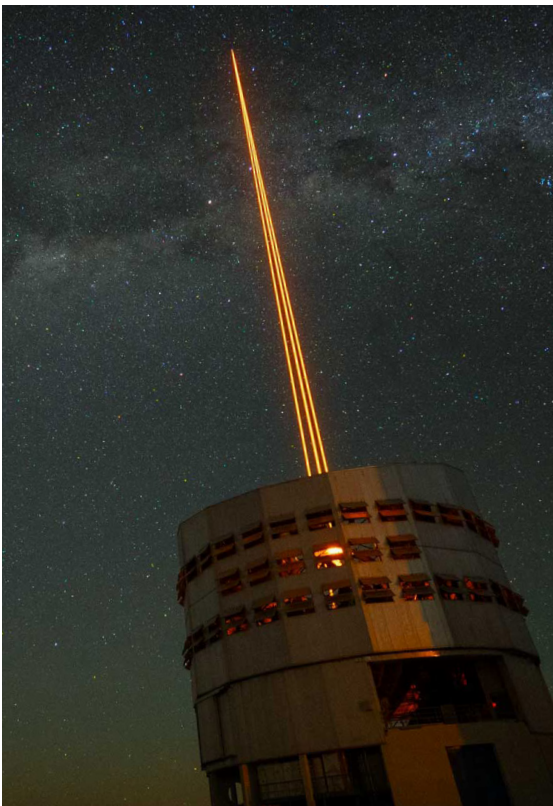
“...a dazzling cosmic display of overwhelming beauty and mystery.

— [Criterion Channel](#)

“Pushes the boundaries of what documentaries are.

— [Michael Ordoña, LA Times](#)

For all Press: perfectlyastrangeness.com/press/



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 PDF for all film credits](#)

Background & 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.



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, was named as “One of the best documentaries of 2018” by *Esquire* and *The Guardian*.

perfectly a strangeness, Alison’s first short film, had its World Premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, Official Competition 2024, followed by TIFF, IDFA “Best of Fests” and over 100 international film festivals, winning 24 awards. *perfectly a strangeness* has been nominated by the Academy Awards 2026, Best Short Documentary Film. A 2021 Guggenheim Fellow, Alison is currently working on her first feature-length fiction film and a feature-length hybrid documentary.

One afternoon, she arrived at La Silla Observatory in Chile to shoot 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, and 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



Canada Council
for the Arts

