



# 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](https://vimeo.com/989176547)  
Website [perfectlyastrangeness.com](https://perfectlyastrangeness.com)  
Distributor [Premium Films](#)

Press questions [films@alisonmc Alpine.com](mailto: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**

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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 70 international film festivals, playing in 27 countries, winning 19 awards.

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

For all awards: [perfectlyastrangeness.com/awards/](https://perfectlyastrangeness.com/awards/)

## *Selected Awards*

Academy Awards® Short Documentary Shortlist 2026

Cinema Eye Honors Nonfiction Short Film Nomine 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

Film, Cine Sinn Fine, Tramway Film Festival 2025, Poland



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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 film that demonstrated ingenuity in filmmaking; one that challenges convention...from the story to the visual aesthetics, sound design, and music composition. We were drawn to its poetic and philosophical approach, its gentle sense of humor, and a timeless curiosity that invites reflection on existence...

— Jury, Full Frame Jury Award for Best Short

“★★★★ Santa Barbara International Film Festival unveils its most intimate short film... In an otherworldly way, there is a hypnotic beauty in *perfectly a strangeness*. It reaches places no one else can touch.

— [Nicole Alicia Xavier](#)

“An awe-inspiring, meditative journey that delves into depths of eternal questions about our existence... Without a single word uttered, through its creative use of sounds and beautiful cinematography... a testament to the richness of the cinematic language.

— Jury, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma

“... *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...exceptional cinematography...

— Jury, Silver Hugo Documentary Short Film, Chicago IFF

“For its unique vision halfway between a wildlife documentary and an existential science-fiction film that transforms into a humanistic poem...

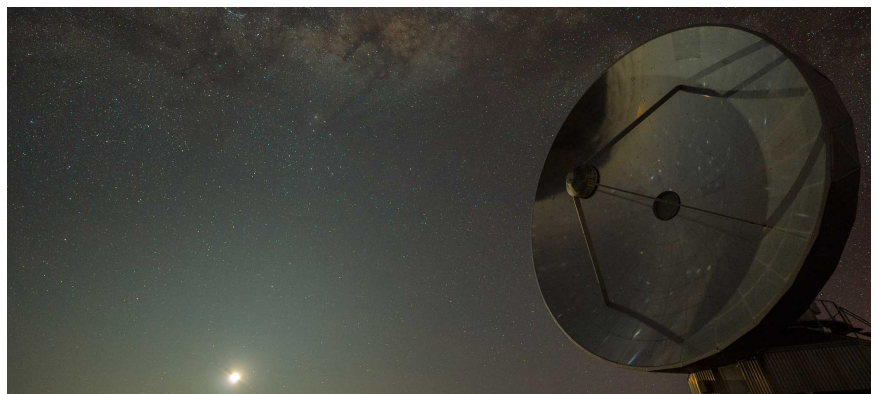
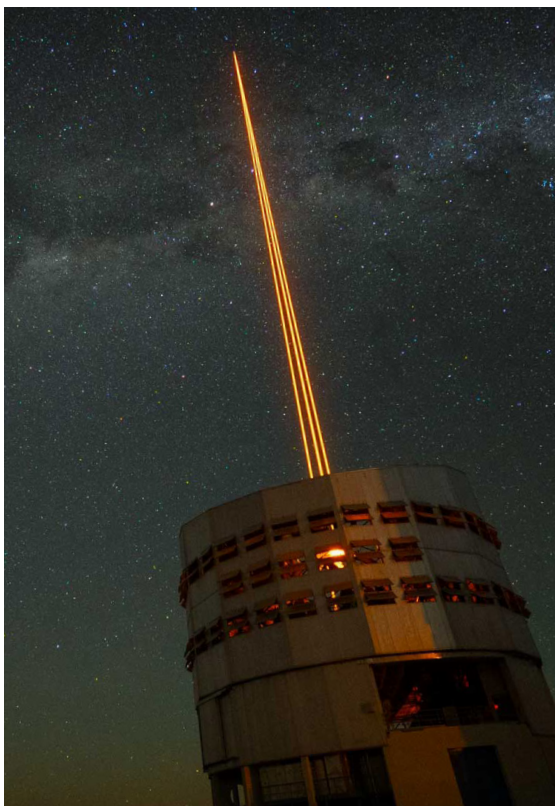
— [Jury, Rendez-Vous Québec Cinéma 2025](#)

“An extraordinary documentary... of great brilliance.

— Jury, Festival de courts métrages Images en vues 2024

“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, Cannes Film Festival, May 28, 2024



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## 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](http://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, and 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 70 international film festivals. *perfectly a strangeness* has been shortlisted 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.

## 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.



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, 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

