

Another Earth

By Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Festival

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There have been few films I've been really excited about. If you read this column at all you'll know some of them--True Grit (2010) or Toy Story 3 (2010) for example. But there is a special place in my column for those rare finds. I call them "The Best Movies You Haven't Seen." Some films in this eclectic mix include It's Kind of a Funny Story (2010), about a boy who checks himself into a psychiatric hospital only to find he's not that bad off, City Island (2009), about a prison guard lying to his family about his acting aspirations, and his family lying about everything else; and Me and Orson Wells (2008), about a young man taken under the wing of the Hollywood underdog/legend. Add another one, namely Another Earth, to that list.

What is it about these movies that are really exciting? Well, mainly they're made on a lower budget than most Hollywood films. In fact, most of them aren't really Hollywood but rather the Hollywood studios' independent features arm—namely a branch of the big studios that acknowledges (but mainly doesn't want to pay for the production of) great projects among the not-so-elite filmmakers' club.

Have I stalled long enough? Well, there's a reason for my hesitating to tell you much about Another Earth. Frankly, the plot is so well constructed and executed that to even share the premise might ruin it. I can tell you that the subplot of the film is cause for what you might read about its being in the science fiction genre—but don't be tricked by that tag. Yes, there is that subplot of another earth identical to ours appearing in the sky. Some would argue that you could strip that subplot out and still have a great story. I disagree. In fact, that small facet of the story--beautifully pictured as another earth that hangs in the sky like a great, big full moon but with blue--is both integral to the plot but a minor character simultaneously. Does that make sense? Does it need to? This film was a big winner at Sundance this year taking two feature film prizes!

The film was co-written and stars Brit Marling, a relatively unknown, completely talented actress/writer. I had the pleasure of attending a sneak preview in Philadelphia where Ms. Marling was a guest along with director/co-writer Mike Cahill. Mike said he would consider bringing the film to Cape May (you bet I asked him!), so fingers crossed. This is a film about regrets, redemption—it's beautifully told, brilliantly acted, and remarkably filmed.