

# Film Geek

A Film by  
James Westby

USA, 2004, 72 minutes, Color, Video



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## FILM GEEK

### Synopsis

Scotty Pelk is a socially inept video store clerk with an encyclopedic knowledge of film. He runs a website, [scottysfilmpage.com](http://scottysfilmpage.com), which receives zero traffic. He annoys his customers. He annoys his co-workers. And when he is inevitably fired from his video store job, Scotty finds refuge in Niko, a downtown hipster who teaches him a thing or two about love and life. But Niko's smarmy ex-boyfriend Brandon won't go away quietly. As Scotty's first love turns to obsession, his life begins to change in profound ways.

### CAST AND CREW

#### **James Westby (writer-director-editor)**

James Westby is a filmmaker and video store employee from Portland, Oregon. His work has shown at the New York Underground Film Festival, the Sarasota Film Festival, and the Chicago Underground Film Festival. His film *Bloody Mary* was praised by Roger Ebert as "a diabolical thriller in the tradition of *Blood Simple*," and he was quoted by John Pierson in the book *Spike, Mike, Slackers, and Dykes* as a voice of a new generation of filmmakers. James loves movies more than anything and would love to talk with you about them.

#### **Byrd McDonald (producer)**

A graduate of the New York University Film Program, Byrd McDonald worked as a Creative Executive for director Jonathan Demme's production company Clinica Estetico from 1994-1999. Byrd was a founding producer of Phat Shorts, a short film festival held in New York City from 1995-2001. With Justin Tan, Byrd produced HUGE (2001) and RAW (2002), both collections of short films directed by various indie directors including Bruce La Bruce, Rose Troche, and Ira Sachs. In 2004, Byrd co-directed and co-produced feature length documentary HAUNTERS with Brian Johnson. Along with James Westby, Byrd was named one of the 10 new filmmakers to watch by the Oregonian in 2004.

#### **Jason Wells (Composer)**

Jason Wells is a composer of music and sound designer with many film, TV, and animation credits including Dreamworks, Disney, and Tim Burton. Finding a home in Portland, OR, Jason has worked on many independent films such as the critically acclaimed "Alma," the upcoming feature documentary "Lipstick and Dynamite: The First Ladies of Wrestling," Mark Palansky's "The Same," starring Josh Hartnett, Tim Burton's "Stainboy," and many others. A wacky-jazz/ classical/ soundtrack enthusiast, trumpet player (Trashcan Joe, March Fourth Marching Band) and pathetic film-geek himself, Jason brings a lifetime of disturbing loquaciousness to FILM GEEK.

**Melik Malkasian (SCOTTY PELK)**

Melik was born in Ethiopia, and currently resides in Vancouver, B.C. He has appeared in numerous movies and TV shows, starring opposite Ron Perlman in the TV movie "Operation: Sandman" and recurring guest roles on "Star Trek Voyager" and "Judging Amy." Melik is the muse of director James Westby, appearing in 6 of his films, and inspiring numerous original screenplays.

**Tyler Gannon (NIKO)**

Tyler Gannon has been acting since her childhood. She appeared opposite Kirsten Dunst in FIFTEEN AND PREGNANT (1998), and starred in the TV movie THE ANN AND ABBY STORY (1999). Most recently, Tyler appeared in Mike Mills' THUMBSUCKER (2004). She currently resides in Los Angeles.

**Matt Morris (BRANDON)**

Matt Morris makes his film debut in FILM GEEK. He was hired for his chiseled good looks and his stunning resemblance to the actor Patrick Dempsey. Matt currently lives in Portland, OR and drives a delivery truck.

*[www.scottysfilmpage.com](http://www.scottysfilmpage.com)*

Culled from a lifetime of movie love and 12 years of video store experience, James Westby wrote the screenplay for FILM GEEK in 3 weeks. "I didn't have to do any research. I realized that pretty much all I ever talk about is film. This is about as personal a movie as I could ever make."

Luckily he found a producer who was a fellow movie fanatic in Byrd McDonald, a recent Portland transplant. "When I met James, it was that instant recognition of 'oh, we are going to be able to talk film.' When I read his script, I knew that even if the film only reached an audience of hardcore cinephiles, that was still a substantial audience. Fortunately, the film has a much broader appeal, likely because people today are much more film-literate than ever before and can enjoy the joke."

Made on a tiny budget with a four-person crew, FILM GEEK has a documentary-like quality acquired by run-and-gun filmmaking. Westby says, "I love the French New Wave. Who doesn't? Godard and Truffaut and those guys just kind of scrapped those early movies together. That kind of mobility and freedom is implicit in mini dv cameras. In many cases on Film Geek we just turned the camera on and started shooting. Very little lighting was ever done, and it looks pretty awesome."

Apart from the New Wave, another film movement was a key influence: the mainstream comedies of the 1980's.

“The films I grew up with, like Valley Girl and Better Off Dead, were so sweet and funny and romantic. I would watch them over and over again. And they were always peppered with wordless, pop-song-driven montages as a storytelling device.”

FILM GEEK’s protagonist, Scotty Pelk, is essayed by actor Melik Malkasian, who has acted in six of Westby’s films. “I researched the part by not hanging out with anybody for long periods of time. And by listening to James and Byrd talk about movies.”

Before shooting began, Byrd insisted that Melik and James see CINEMANIA, a documentary about film fanatics. “Melik was so depressed after seeing CINEMANIA because he realized he was going to have to live pretty low to capture the essence of someone for whom showering, eating and breathing are secondary to watching films.”

The director says, “Scotty Pelk is a man obsessed with film. And he’s the kind of geek who gets equally excited about Ivan Reitman as he does Bergman. He’s kind of like a robot. Then he meets a girl and starts to become human, kind of.”

“The most amazing aspect of FILM GEEK is the way in which budget was not a restraint but a real advantage in that we didn’t second guess anything during production,” Byrd recalls. “It shows me just how rewarding filmmaking can be if you aren’t worrying about raising insane amounts of money or what happens if you take chances that don’t work.”

## FILM GEEK FULL CREDITS

### CAST

(in order of appearance)

Scotty Pelk.....MELIK MALKASIAN  
“Days of Heaven” Customer.....RITA PARRISH  
Mr. Johnson.....JOHN BREEN  
“Letterboxed” Customer.....DENNIS ADKINS  
Kaitlin.....TARA WALKER  
Taylor.....TAYLOR NIDA  
“Godard” Customer 1.....DAPHNE CARVER  
“Godard” Customer 2.....KRISTEN TORRIANNI  
Cindi.....MICHELLE GARNER  
Video Store Customer.....MICHEAL RAMIREZ  
Mr. Mooney.....JACK RYAN  
Video Underground Manager.....KIM HILL  
Niko.....TYLER GANNON  
Temp Agency Counselor.....LESLIE TAYLOR  
Virgil.....TONY ST. CLAIR

Record Store Guy.....ANDREW HARRIS  
Record Store Customer.....EZRA DANIELS  
Brandon.....MATT MORRIS  
Lesbians.....NORTHER MALLINSON  
KAI NESS

Intern 1.....S.E. DOGARU  
Intern 2.....JOE HILL  
Party House Owner.....BYRD MCDONALD  
Cindi's Boyfriend.....ISAAC FOUST  
Waitress.....LAURA EWERS  
David Walker.....HIMSELF  
Interviewee 1.....JAYANTA JENKINS  
Interviewee 2.....EZRA DANIELS  
Interviewed Girls.....BECCA GLATT  
WHITNEY KILIAN  
DK Holm.....HIMSELF  
Shawn Levy.....HIMSELF  
Jacob Pander.....HIMSELF  
Angi Moss.....HERSELF  
Mr. Malkasian's Stunt Double.....MORGAN HOBART

Writer/Director/Editor.....JAMES WESTBY  
Producer.....BYRD MCDONALD  
Director of Photography.....JASON HUGHES  
Music.....JASON WELLS  
Casting.....JEFFERY HASSELER  
Co-Producers.....AMBER GEIGER  
STEPHANIE LLOYD

Production Sound Mixer.....SHAWN DAWES  
Associate Producer.....KATIE JONES  
Sound Editing/Design/Mix.....JASON WELLS  
Music Supervisor.....NATE CARSON

Assistant Director.....BYRD MCDONALD  
Props created by.....EZRA DANIELS  
Boom Operator.....KATIE JONES  
Art Gallery Collages by.....CHAD GAY  
Additional Camera.....JAMES WESTBY  
BYRD MCDONALD  
Still Photographers.....ANTHONY GEORGIS  
JASON HUGHES

Soundtrack recorded, mixed and mastered at Audiowells, [www.audiowells.com](http://www.audiowells.com)

Vocalist.....KYRSTYN PIXTON  
Trombone.....DANIEL LAMB  
Shaker.....RICHARD CAWLEY  
Trumpet, flugelhorn, guitar, vocals, piano.....JASON WELLS

“Picture This”

Written and Performed by DURANGO PARK  
Courtesy Tiny Beat Records

“Iron Long (Part I and Part II)”

Written and Performed by WITCH MOUNTAIN  
Courtesy Mountastic Records

“Imagine That”

Written and Performed by SHELLEY SHORT

“Empire Song”

Written and performed by POINT LINE PLANE  
Courtesy Mountastic Records

“Electronica”

Written and Performed by ENDLESS PLASTICS

“Mouth and Hands”

Written and Performed by THE PLANET THE  
Courtesy 54/40 or Fight Records

“8-Bit Graveyard”

Written and Performed by POINT LINE PLANE  
Courtesy Xeroid/Sincere Brutality Records

“Thank Your Stars”

Written and Performed by MAN OF THE YEAR  
Courtesy Tiny Beat Records

“Texas Flyer”

Written and Performed by MAN OF THE YEAR  
Courtesy Tiny Beat Records

“For Tomorrow”

Written and Performed by DURANGO PARK  
Courtesy Tiny Beat Records  
FILM GEEK

# The Oregonian

## Wow, is that me? No, it's really . . . 'me'

Sunday, January 08, 2006

SHAWN LEVY

There are lots of ways to shirk work in this life, and I've stumbled onto a darned cool one without even trying.

On Friday, "Film Geek," the latest movie by Portland writer-director James Westby, will open at Cinema 21, and I can't review it because . . . heh-heh . . . I'm in it.

The film is a fictional account of the adventures of Scotty Pelk, a neurotic Portland video store clerk whose inability to connect with people (or disconnect from them when he ought) is exemplified by his creation of a Web site, [www.scottysfilmpage.com](http://www.scottysfilmpage.com), which tells all about his love for movies and gets almost no visitors. Overnight, however, the site becomes a freak Internet hit and Scotty evolves into a local celebrity, appearing on the cover of Willamette Week and chumming around with the likes of . . . um . . . me.

Late in the movie there are several interview clips with "me" (I punctuate the word thus because somehow it's not me up on that screen, not really) sitting in "my" home office and discussing Scotty's unique genius and "our" collegial bond. There "I" am, in "my" clothes and "my" house, talking about "my" experiences with a fellow whose obsessions and deficiencies make him rather like . . . ahem . . . me . . . the real me.

Now, I might have had to recuse myself from writing about "Film Geek" even if I weren't in it. I've known Westby, a longtime staple of the local indie/underground film scene, for about four years. We first met at a barbecue at the home of my estimable Oregonian colleague John Foyston, who happens to be Westby's father-in-law. Soon after, Westby and his family moved into my neighborhood and we'd occasionally run into one another in the park with our dogs and kids in tow. (Kinda hard to review a guy you know from the swing sets . . .)

He first contacted me about "Film Geek" some 20 months ago, explaining that I would be among a group of Portland film critics appearing in the movie, including David Walker and D.K. Holm. I said sure -- I was on book leave from the paper at the time and desperate for human contact -- and we made an appointment for him to visit my house one summer day.

He came by himself and handled the lighting, sound and camera duties on his own. He told me something of the story of the film (crucially not mentioning the last scene, which, should you see it, you'll realize was a stroke of directorial genius) and then coached me through my scenes. "I'll ask you something like this," he would say, offering a question and explaining what he needed me to say in response. I ad-libbed some answers, and the ones he liked we filmed. It took maybe 90 minutes: Easy-peasy.

And then he went off and finished the movie and -- whattayaknow! -- won a couple prizes for it, including a cash one, at the Sarasota Film Festival last winter. Soon after that, "Film Geek" nailed a distributor for limited theatrical run and an eventual DVD release. Last spring, the film had its

local premiere at the Longbaugh Film Festival, where I got to see it for the first time. Now it's getting a weeklong run.

But back to that screening at the Hollywood Theatre. I'm not sure at all that I can emphasize how strange it was. Walker and Holm had already appeared in the film to laughs and a little applause. When "I" popped up, there was more laughter and even a boo (right back at ya, pallie!). "I" spoke maybe three or four times, the last bit in close-up (gaaahhh!). And soon after that the whole thing ended with the wonderful surprise that really does make the film.

Afterward, I congratulated Westby and his wife and wandered over to a party, where people came over to tell me -- even before they'd hit the sponsored bar -- that they thought I was great as . . . myself.

I was then and remain now grateful for those kind words, but the critic in me isn't so sure: Having seen videotape of myself on TV over the years, I know I'm prone to bobbing my head nervously on camera. I've only seen "Film Geek" once, so I don't know if I fell prey to my habit -- the whole thing went by in a surreal blur -- but I'd bet on it.

All in all, it was a charming experience, I must admit, and I at least entertained for a fleeting moment -- after visiting the sponsored bar -- the passing thought that George Clooney better watch his back. (I have long since sobered up, thanks . . .)

Oh, one more thing: Also on Friday, "The Libertine," starring Johnny Depp as the dissolute 17th-century poet and courtier the Earl of Rochester, opens in Portland, and I can't review that one, either. No, I'm not in it, but it's produced by Mr. Mudd, the company that last fall bought the film rights to my latest book, "The Last Playboy."

Couple of more weeks like this and I might actually have the perfect job: an all-year paid vacation due to conflicts of interest!