

# SCREENDAILY

## AND Festival: Apes, pig bladders and aliens, oh my!

4 October, 2011 | By Wendy Mitchell

Film screenings and much more at the impressive cross-platform festival, now in its third year.

Liverpool's amazing FACT (which wowed me on my first visit) and other venues in the region hosted the third annual Abandon Normal Devices (AND) festival this weekend. The theme this year for the art, digital media and film programme was 'Belief.'

While the festival includes film screenings (including *LA Zombie*, *Melancholia*, *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye*, *Kinatay* and *Finisterrae*), it certainly is about much more than sitting in a cinema seat. As one attending filmmaker noted, AND is a welcome break from the usual film circuit: "Coming to AND is refreshing because it's not strictly cinema," he said.



Acid Mothers Temple play in front of the screening of *Piercing Brightness* at FACT

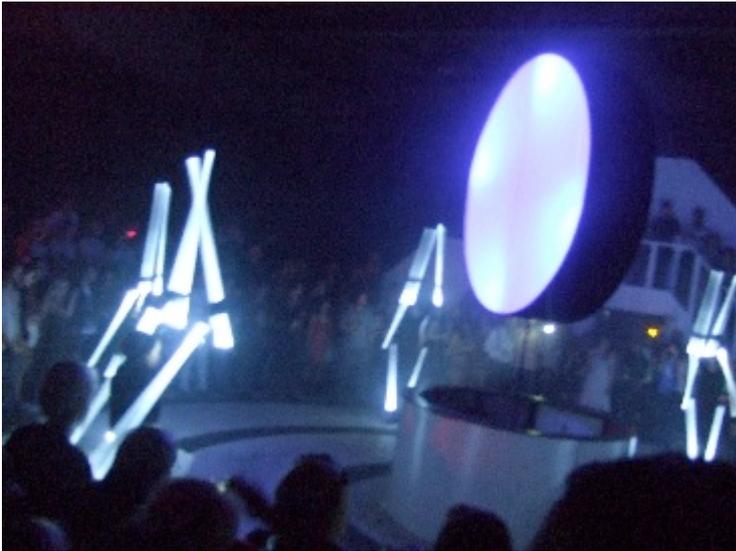
My highlight of the weekend was the preview screening of *Piercing Brightness* by artist Shezad Dawood. The film project (which screened as 40 minutes of footage but will eventually be a full-length feature) was shot in nearby Preston, which also happens to have the highest number of UFO sightings in the UK. Dawood revealed that a friend of his had dubbed the project "My Beautiful Launderette meets Roswell" — I'm not sure that Stephen Frears should be worried (at least until I see the full feature), but the film had some striking images in its portrayal of aliens coming to earth and targeting a special group of people. The screening was accompanied by live music from cult Japanese psychedelic band Acid Mothers Temple. The footage had some narrative but not much dialogue, which made the live music a perfect addition. The experience was quite mesmerising as a whole and I'd definitely recommend having a full rock concert in the front of a cinema more often, it felt like film going to the next level.

The night continued at club Kazimier, which had been transformed into alternate universe Atalonia (an AND commission). In addition to tours of the new world, costume-clad guests were treated to dance performances with light as well a special marching band.

### Party at Atalonia

Sunday saw the well-attended world premiere of Jacqueline Passmore's locally made short film *Khalil The Great*, which was backed by a new scheme from FACT and Vision+Media, which encouraged the filmmaker to create a story idea based on specific Twitter feeds. The project plays on the Kulashev experiment to call into play viewers' projections onto the character of a young black man in Liverpool.

Other AND offerings included Kurt Hentschlagers ZEE, an immersive art installation comprised of fog and



pulsing lights that gave new meaning to 'sensory overload'. The installation was so intense that it required a disclaimer form to be signed before entering — I'm still pondering it.



Zee

AND visitors could also play pigs bladder football (with artist John O'Shea, who is exploring traditional crafts in the modern world) or get a David Shrigley-designed tattoo.



Pigs Bladder Football organiser John O'Shea (left) and Septien director Michael Tully kick around a bladder.

A special kind of film experience came with Rachel Mayeri's *Primate Cinema: Apes as Family*. Mayeri, a Los Angeles-based video artist, made a short film designed for chimpanzees to watch (about a house party during which an outsider ape watches TV and then befriends another group, starring humans dressed as apes). Then she made a film of apes at the Edinburgh Zoo watching the short (if that's not meta enough for you, the apes in the short start watching an animated TV show that has a show within a show that's a nature documentary about apes). The two-screen video installation shows the short for the apes, and the apes watching — somewhat underwhelmingly, the apes in the zoo didn't seem too bothered watching the short (maybe they

missed the surprisingly graphic sex scene!)

I was also there for the UK premiere of my friend Michael Tully's *Septien* (which previously played at festivals including Sundance and Rotterdam.) The low-budget film was genre-bending enough for AND — influenced by horror films, made-for-TV movies of decades gone by, and Southern Gothic works.

In his Q&A, Tully revealed that he will next direct a long-gestating passion project, *Ping Pong Summer*. He said the 1980s-set film will shoot in a coastal town in Maryland where he grew up, about a teenager who loves early hip hop and ping pong.

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