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## TIFF13 Review: The Strange Little Cat (2013)

Posted by Brandy Dean September 14, 2013 0 Comment 1949 views

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The debut feature film from still-student Ramon Zürcher is precisely the kind of film you haunt a festival in the hopes of seeing. Indeed, this concise and plotless portrait of domestic life has been burning a trail of critical applause from Berlin to Cannes and TIFF13 was abuzz with chatter. *The Strange Little Cat* did not disappoint.

Set almost entirely in the close confines of a middle-class Berlin apartment, *The Strange Little Cat* tracks the day in the life of a single family. Two freshly adult children return for a visit with Mutter, Vater, and pre-teen sister Clara. Then, like a reverse clown car situation, a stream of extras pour into the cramped space: aunts and cousins, narcoleptic grandma, a handy neighbor and his weird kid, Clara's ball tossing friend, plus the family dog and the eponymous orange tabby. The action is a visual ballet, accomplished not with camera movement but the hectic bustle of too many bodies in a too small space.

Compositionally, *The Strange Little Cat* shares much with the films of Ozu. But where Ozu's domestic compositions were the backdrops for simmering familial tensions, *The Strange Little Cat's* illustrate the banal oppression of quotidian life. Sound is important here and the cacophony of life in this apartment makes it impossible to indulge in a single moment of introspection. The washing machine clanks, doors slam, footsteps fall, the dog barks, the cat purrs, five conversations occur simultaneously and none resolve. Is it any wonder that attention starved Clara screams at the top of her lungs each time a kitchen appliance whirs?

It's a bit unfair to say *The Strange Little Cat* is plotless. Things are happening here, or are at least implied to be happening. Mutter is depressed, alienated and possibly in love with her washer repairman. These things, however, do not resolve into action because, as Zürcher continually reminds us, it's impossible for anything to resolve into action in this chaos that makes demands on your flitting attention. The best Mutter can muster is a few random acts of mild violence and the kind of biting jabs that only mother's can deliver to daughters.

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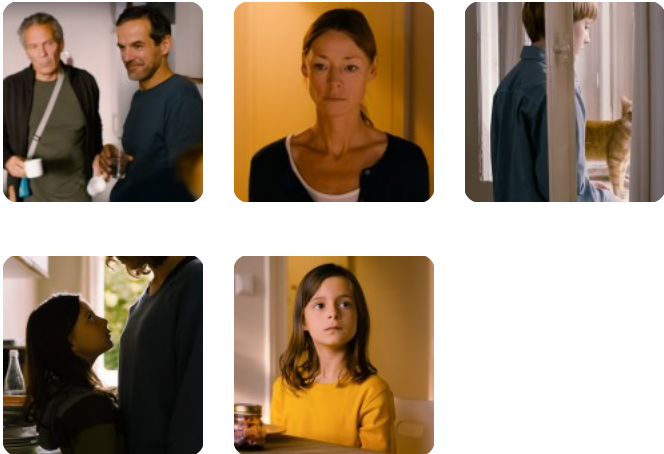
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While this may sound dire and dreary it is not. There's much wit here, as well, some of which is manufactured by our own cinematic expectations. When the neighbor arrives to repair the washing machine he brings along his pale, creepy son. The kid lurks and stares like every homicidal child in cinema and we waited with growing anticipation for the bloody denouement. It does not come of course. That only happens in movies. And *The Strange Little Cat* is just one family, in one apartment, having one Sunday dinner – the utter meaningless filler of every life.

To sit down in a movie theater and see a thing unlike anything else you've ever seen is a rare, rare occurrence. *The Strange Little Cat* is that priceless commodity. No word yet on release dates and distribution, but surely it will appear somewhere sometime. Remain vigilant and keep tabs on Ramon Zürcher who hopefully has years and years of quality work to come.

### A Gallery of Images from The Strange Little Cat



### Watch The Strange Little Cat Trailer



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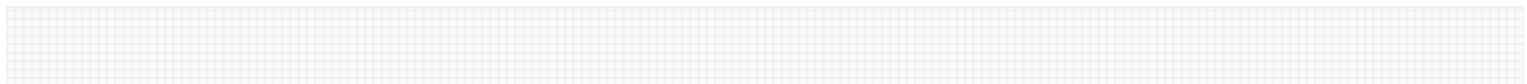


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