

The Frida Zurema Presents...

# ROAD TRIP

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# THE FRIDA ZINEMA ISSUE #2



The air of existentialism, self-discovery, and introspection often found in road films is enough to make you want to hit the road yourself and transform. This issue, we celebrate our favorite road movies and the beautiful journeys they capture!

Art by Vinay Bakshi (@vbgrphx)



THE POSSIBILITY OF  
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL  
COLLAPSE IS NOW VERY  
REAL... I HATE TO SAY  
THIS, BUT THIS PLACE IS  
GETTING TO ME. I THINK  
I'M GETTING  
THE FEAR!



Ed  
Cobb

## Dueling Conventions

By: Baron Logan

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies, road movies usually explore "themes of rebellion, escape, discovery, and transformation." In Steven Spielberg's debut film *Duel* (1971), these themes are certainly present, but in a mode that acts as an inversion of the road movie's traditional counter-cultural escapism. *Duel* does offer those traditional road movie themes of discovery and transformation, but in witnessing the journey of our protagonist grow into his own and take charge of his world, we are witnessing his *reintroduction* to society as opposed to his escape from it.

*Duel* follows an average man, literally named Dave Mann, driving upstate from the big city on a work trip. He finds himself in a life or death struggle with the unseen driver of an enormous, villainous truck after an incident of road rage gets way out of hand. The truck keeps trying to run him off the road, and nothing Mann does seems to be able to shake the guy.

But not all is as it seems. Every sign in the film's first act points to Mann failing to meet traditional societal expectations for the "man of the household." As Mann starts his drive he listens idly to a radio caller who complains that since his wife is the primary breadwinner in his house and he does all the cooking and cleaning, he doesn't feel comfortable marking himself as the man of the household on a census form. "I'm really not the head of the family...and yet I'm the man of the family" he laments. This radio broadcast not so subtly plants a seed for Mann's character arc in *Duel*. Mann, too, is not the head of his household. Later, while getting help at a filling station, the operator responds to Mann's request with "You're the boss," to which Mann lamely replies, "not at home I'm not."

Even the road rage incident that sets off the whole car chase that forms the center of the film is more accidental than anything. Mann passes a slow truck on the road a few times, the same level of aggression that most everyday drivers engage with in that driving arena of high stakes over minor inconvenience. Mann seems completely exasperated by the intensity of the other truck's response to his passing, more baffled and afraid than angry himself.

But over the course of the film, Mann battles this other trucker on the road, and eventually runs him off a cliff where his truck is smashed in a cloud of dust and fire. Mann watches the sunset from atop the cliff, and jumps with glee. We don't see him return home in a denouement, but one can imagine it: a triumphant Mann returns home once again "the man of the household." Any subversion of gender roles that he may have slid into, however accidentally, must now be a thing of the past.

Therefore, *Duel* subtly upholds tradition through Mann's road transformation, instead of offering him an escape or a new perspective on his position. One might expect a more progressive road movie to explore Mann's relationship with traditional masculinity and even come to accept it through a transformation on the road. Instead, Mann violently runs another truck off the road and triumphs in aggression. If there is rebellion, it is a negative one; a denial of denying subversive ways of masculinity.

# "Y Tu Mamá También"

By Karina Garcia

My mother was the first person to introduce me to this movie. During a trip to Barnes and Noble for the yearly criterion sale, she picked up the Blu-ray of *Y Mamá También* and told me, "This is such a beautiful story of friendship and love," knowing how much I love road trips; she added, "and it takes place on the road," I was sold. I bought it and watched it that same night. Ultimately, I cried in my dark room with the only light coming from my DVD player.

My favorite part of road trips is not the moment you get to your designated location but rather the spontaneous stops along the way, the people you meet, and the stories you hear. I believe *Y Tu Mamá También* highlights these moments better than any movie I've ever seen. Throughout the movie, a narrator cuts into scenes and tells stories of past events, the backgrounds of characters, and their eventual fate. The movie surrounds three characters, Luisa, Julio, and Tenoch. After first meeting Luisa, Tenoch and Julio invite her on a road trip to a beach they have made up called Boca del Cielo. While on their journey to this fabricated beach, a scene that has stuck with me is when they drive past an area that ten years ago was the location of a tragic accident. A truck was flipped over, two men were dead, and one woman next to them was crying hysterically. In the presence, however, there is not a trace of this event left behind. Now, it is just a lonely, quiet road in front of them. Something forever imprinted in another person's mind is something they'll never know.

After the car unexpectedly breaks down, the three are stranded in a small town. During this stop, Julio and Luisa are left with memorabilia of the trip. A man gives Julio his hat and an old woman offers Luisa a small teddy bear. These small gestures leave a lasting impact on them. Later in the future, they will see these possessions that now hold the memories of that trip, and they will think of each other. To me, these moments are the most remarkable and fundamental parts of road trips. The unpredictable situations we get into are also the ways we learn about people we would have otherwise never met.

At the end of the trip, Julio and Tenoch have a quiet trip back home while Luisa stays behind for a few more days. Julio and Tenoch never see each other again, and Luisa dies of cancer. They left that trip with the last memories they will ever have of each other, of Luisa and her last words. She told them, "Life is like foam, so give yourself away like the sea." Now, on any road trip, I carry Luisa's words with me. It reminds me to let myself experience new things without fear or judgment before I am one day unable to.

# HOW MAD MAX AND MAGIC MIKE THRUST ME ONTO THE ROAD TO ADULTHOOD

By Isa Bulnes-Shaw

@mnightslammajam on Letterboxd



Nearly a decade ago during the summer after my graduation from high school, my friend group and I were trying to spend as much time together as possible before college began. We'd been friends since middle school, and the five of us were anticipating the unknown and our friend group fading away. Girls' nights were full of camping, concerts, and movies, trying to get as many memories in as we could.

The newly released *Magic Mike XXL's* advertising promised a fun, sparkly comedy/musical. We decided that sounded perfect, but needed to see the first. Luckily, my best friend's older sister had gotten a copy of the original for her birthday (further adding to the idea that it'd be a good time). So, like the mature teenagers we were, we hunkered down in a pillow fort with our salty snacks, ready for some oily dancing.



It was a mess from the start. Sure, we were greeted by Matthew M's crowd work, but less than two minutes in we faced the dreaded color grading. It was so yellow despite being interior shots and for seemingly no reason, that we spent at least 10 minutes messing with the monitor and DVD player trying to figure out what was happening. Combined with the unlikable characters and overall forgettable story, we just couldn't connect. We made it through though, in what I can only explain as an example of the sunk-cost fallacy. Realizing we absolutely did NOT care to go back into Magic Michael's world with the sequel, and began searching for other options. We found solace in our local dollar theater (those were the days). *Mad Max: Fury Road's* trailer looked exciting and it had good reviews, so we took a chance, entered the Citadel, and came out changed.

We were thrust into the world of blood and fire, following Furiosa, the Wives, and The Vuvalini on a harrowing road trip to The Green Place. What better girls' night is there than one filled with badass women of all ages taking to the road, fighting fascists, and taking back the land? We went from men in thongs dancing to "Pony" by Genuwine to a thrilling punk-rock, post-apocalypse with elderly women chasing a War Rig on amalgamations of metal and bones. It was dream-like; it was Valhalla.

Ironically, *Fury Road* was so colorful and dynamic, it left piss-yellow *Magic Mike* feeling more apocalyptic between the two. If one of us had to jam to a single soundtrack, you can bet your ass we'd pick the one with the diegetic shredding guitar and war drums.

George Miller not only delivered my friends and I from a dud of a night, but escorted us in a juggernaut of chrome, propelling us into the new era of our lives as young adults. The films *Magic Mike* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* will be forever intertwined. Indeed, there is much more binding them than their alliterative "M" names, although this just further proves this association was meant to be.



# Hit the Road

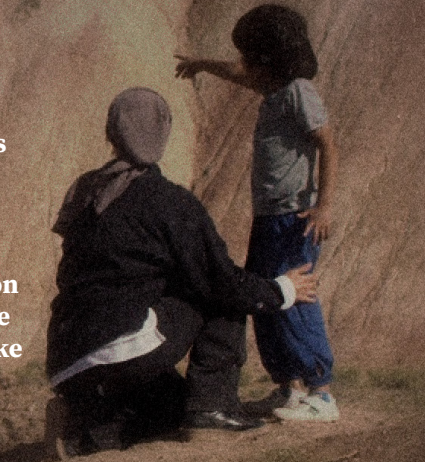
by Brian Ly

Road trips are inherently fun, a forced bonding experience in an enclosed space where the daily irritants that you may tolerate on a daily basis are exacerbated by your claustrophobic death trap where it's impossible to even escape into your own thoughts, the grating voice of your prepubescent little brother bursting into show tunes is your personal soundtrack from hell. While the classical purpose of the road trip is for a summer escapade, a sort of reprieve from the monotony of daily life, for some cultures that have had little reason to venture beyond their hometown much less even enter a car, a road trip inherently implies a reason for sojourning, almost always due to staying put no longer being an option.

In Panah Panahi's critically acclaimed film *Hit the Road*, an Iranian family goes on a road trip with no clear destination, yet a sense of urgency is very much palpable in the air. This isn't necessarily evident from how the film starts out, where it resembles the more typical road trip movie where the clashing personalities of the family are a source of comedy. Over time though, you realize that the overly doting mother and the easily irritated father are internalizing much of the emotional burden of the family, and it becomes clear that the silence from the taciturn older son has less to do with his personality but more with the gravity of the situation he is in, the younger son completely oblivious and obnoxiously causing a raucous, as children are known to do.

As much as the film sounds like a complete downer, it isn't without a light at the end of the tunnel, an analogue to the persecution faced by intellectuals taking a stance against the censorship by the Iranian government. Much like the characters of his film, Panah Panahi takes a sort of road trip of his own in his filmmaking process as he has to actively shoot his films in secret to avoid the numerous arrests that his father has faced. Though the human rights crisis in Iran is actively stifling one of the most creative film movements to emerge in the world cinema scene, there is still a clear passion from Iranian filmmakers to tell uniquely Iranian stories regardless of how much friction and pushback they may face in the process.

What ultimately keeps filmmakers like the Panahis and their other contemporaries going is that they have something to say that demands to be heard on the world stage, in hope that their sacrifices and struggles are not in vain and that they may someday induce change to perhaps create a healthier ecosystem where Iranian filmmakers do not fear persecution for expressing themselves through art.





# The Best Road Movie Already Exists

By: Jen McLean



**Picture this:** It's 1979 and you're at the movies. You sit down thinking you're in for a sweet cinematic spinoff of your favorite puppets, but in reality you're actually buckling in for a semiole classic of movies set on the road that would forever change the genre altogether.

The film you're watching is none other than Jim Henson's *The Muppet Movie*.



Full of twists and turns, a forever classic car, and an iconic soundtrack, *The Muppet Movie* never ceases to amaze the masses in the decades since its release.

Exactly like Homer in *The Odyssey*, Kermit faces a similar call to action bringing him to start his hero's journey. The film opens up on a swamp as Kermit is plucking along on his banjo, where he is then given the chance of a lifetime by that of a movie producer looking for famous frogs. In the 97 minutes that follow we watch as Kermit gains disciples at each new stop, but not without danger. While Homer evades sirens, the Cyclops, and fights his way to the Land of the Dead, our motley crew faces an undercurrent of murderous intent as Kermit evades Frog Leg hungry businessmen and their henchmen, all the way to Hollywood. Kidnappings, electrocutions, several attempted murders, a western duel, and MORE earn this movie my stamp of action packed approval.

Furthermore, no road trip could be possible without an iconic ride. While people may *think* Thelma and Louise set the blueprint for badass runaways in their teal 66' thunderbird, I'd argue Kermit and Fozzie started the trend with their 51' Studebaker Commander. Clunky in shape and pale yellow in color, it chugs along their route picking up each new character of their wacky ensemble. Had Fozzie picked an Aston Martin on the used car lot (owned by Milton Berle might I add) the tone of the movie would have been a tad different.

But then what even is a road trip without good music? Nothing can ruin the entire vibe like some misplaced tunes and it seems like Paul Williams and Fred Asther were determined to not let us down. (And while awards aren't everything, it is worth mentioning that this soundtrack won a Grammy, Golden Globe, TWO Academy Awards, AND reached no 25 on Billboard's top 100 for "Rainbow Connection," but again who's counting?) The bunch of misfits cross state lines to bops such as "Movin' Right Along" (my personal favorite), "America," "Can You Picture That?," and of course "Rainbow Connection." Many road trip movies have their one hit wonders, but seldom has there been such an encapsulation of lyricism and storytelling so perfectly matched to its subject in a single soundtrack.

Since its dazzling release on the silver screen some 45 odd years ago, *The Muppet Movie* represents a very special place in storytelling set on the road. Nothing quite captures the goofy elation that comes from being sardine packed into a car for a long trip as these funky felted friends and the goofy antics that come with it. There is a reason for me that "Movin' Right Along" comes on every time I take a road trip and I'd argue more people should start doing the same!



# QOTM

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

# What is your favorite road film?

Fan Favorites:

*Diamonds of the Night*  
(1962)

dir. Jan Nemec

*Il Sorpasso* (1962)

dir. Dino Risi

*The Last Detail* (1973)

dir. Hal Ashby

*The Muppet Movie*

(1979)

dir. James Frawley

*Leningrad Cowboys Go America* (1989)

dir. Aki Kaurismäki

*The Living End* (1992)

dir. Gregg Araki

*The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994)

dir. Stephan Elliott

*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998)

dir. Terry Gilliam

*Y Tu Mamá También* (2001)

dir. Alfonso Cuarón

*Crossroads* (2002)

dir. Tamra Davis

*The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006)

dir. Justin Lin

*Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015)

dir. George Miller

*Paris, Texas* (1984)

dir. Wim Wenders



*Little Miss Sunshine* (2006)

dir. Jonathan Dayton, Valerie



*Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985)

dir. Tim Burton



Art by Haley Harmicar (@haleyharmicartaccount)





# FRIDA CINEMA



The Frida Cinema is a gathering place for movie lovers of all kinds. The lobby is a place of film discussion and friendly gathering, a venue of its own where perspectives from all backgrounds are welcomed and engaged with. We have started the Frida Zinema to replicate this experience in printed form. We welcome all who love film to submit their artwork, writings, and thoughts, and to connect to other artists in a space of creativity and understanding. We love films, and we love people who love films. Please, share your thoughts and artwork, and enjoy the ones within.