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Tribeca Film Festival: Filmmaker and Futurist Jason Silva On How Humans Are Hardwired for Story and Cinema



Jason Silva

NATGEO

As part of Tribeca Film Festival's "Future of Film" series, tomorrow, April 22, filmmaker and futurist Jason Silva (dubbed the "Timothy Leary of the Viral Video Age" by The Atlantic) will muse about how humans are hardwired for story and cinema.

We recently caught up with Silva, who is the host of "Brain Games," NatGeo's highest rated series ever and the creator and host of "[Shots of Awe](#)," a series of micro-documentaries that explore human imagination for Discovery Digital's TestTube Network, for a preview of his talk.

Your talk is titled 'Your Brain on Story.' What does that mean exactly?

I will be speaking about how exactly do these "technologies of rhetoric" (cinema, storytelling) so effectively control and manage *attention*, and lead viewers into immersive trance states? Some experts have even said when we watch a film, it's the closest thing we can get to dreaming with our eyes open.

I'm interested in what are the tools and techniques and technologies we can use to induce these liminal trance states in ourselves. It might have started with cinema, but now we're moving into a world with Oculus Rift and IMAX and 3D immersion. They're really tangible examples of our desire to push the envelope when it comes to immersion. We immerse ourselves to the point where we forget to remember it's an immersion and experience something closer to being a child for the first time watching a movie.

Despite technology, isn't it still about storytelling?

I see these human yearnings to virtualize reality fully and-- when we are in the movie world, that magical border land, we're in the realm of the imagination where anything is possible. The appeal of cinema as the most immersive technology is appealing because it allows us to soar at the speed of thought. One of the coolest ideas behind the film "Inception" is that the entire film was widely reported on the internet to be a metaphor for cinema. Cinema creates an

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artificial dream world and invites the audience into that dream that we then fill with our subconscious. We already have dream sharing technology. It's called cinema.

I am a story junkie and I am immersion junkie.

[Read More: Tribeca Film Festival's Jane Rosenthal on the Future of Film](#)

Why are you so fascinated about what happens to our brains when we watch movies?

Diana Slattery writes that *Immersion* is a "necessary precursor for any kind of interpersonal persuasion or transformation to occur".. Janet Murray writes that we "long to be immersed" and that we "actively metabolize belief in story"... because we are effectively narrative beings.

I'm fascinated by the liminal spaces we enter when we are absorbed by cinema: that magical borderland between dreams and reality, the space of archetype, of myth, of madness and ecstasy, the landscape of the imagination, freed from the constraints of time/space/ distance.

Cinema is the realm of subjectivity. The only technology that allows us to enter the mind of another. Cinema is cartography for the mind. As Gene Youngblood wrote: "cinema reflects mankind's historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind in front of his eyes"....

Art is the lie that reveals the truth, as they say. During the talk, I will talk about the lust for immersion we have, the moment we forget ourselves and become part of the movie consciousness and we leave our own consciousness behind.

We want to hold up a mirror to ourselves. Film is the only technology that allows us to share subjectivity with someone else. A film allows us to enter the world of somebody else and the mind of another. I'm such a fan of that power that cinema has. I just find it endlessly inspiring.

My short films, which I call "Shots of Awe" are trailers for the mind-- they explore these topics and many more.

Watch a couple of Silva's short films below and find out more about Silva [here](#).

