

# CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME

"Sweet, Funny,  
Clever Comedy" - Variety

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
2011  
SUNDANCE  
FILM FESTIVAL

**COMPLETELY IN 2D!**

"A hilarious date movie for couples of all orientations" - The Hollywood Reporter

# THE STORY

## LOGLINE

Space aliens are sent to Earth on a mission to save their planet by visiting New York's gay dating scene.

## SHORT SUMMARY

CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME tracks the adventures, misadventures and experiences of three aliens from the planet Zots, sent down to Earth on a mission to rid themselves of romantic emotions, which are considered toxic to their planet's atmosphere. They are told to have their hearts broken on Earth, where such heartbreak is considered a given. Two of the aliens, Zylar (promiscuous and sassy) and Barr (codependent and clutchy) fall into an unfortunate romance with each other, but Zoinx, the third, meets Jane, an Earthling of mild manners who lives an uneventful life and works in a stationery store. Unaware that the sudden object of her affection is an alien (despite her bald head and monotone speech), Jane falls hard for Zoinx. The feeling is mutual.

Meanwhile, two undercover government agents are following Jane in order to find the spaceship and cover up the existence of the aliens. The Senior Agent has been working for years, finding himself passed over again and again for promotions, for reasons he is too dense to understand. The Rookie Agent is mysterious and focused, and something is obviously different about him. Their bizarre, comical espionage is another of the film's odd couplings, and reveals itself to be something other than what it seems. By film's end, the espionage car has one less agent, and the spaceship has one more commuter, in this original mash-up of lo-fi New York City romantic comedy and a sci-fi B-movie spoof.

## LONG SUMMARY

Three Space Aliens land in New York City, unnoticed by jaded New Yorkers. They are love-oriented denizens of the planet Zots, a tiny world near the rings of Saturn. They have been shipped to Earth to cure them of their romantic tendencies—which are believed to be so powerful that they are damaging their planet's ozone.

Meanwhile, Jane (LISA HAAS), a shy greeting-card store employee, is in therapy dealing with her assertiveness issues. Her therapist (RAE C WRIGHT) encourages her to ask women out more frequently. Jane's job at the greeting-card store veers between total boredom and random demented exchanges with a senior citizen (JAY IRVIN) until one day, when Jane is intrigued by the forwardness of her new bald-headed customer, Zoinx (SUSAN ZIEGLER), who speaks in a bizarre monotone. Jane decides to heed her therapist's advice and goes out with Zoinx.

The other two aliens are having no luck in fulfilling their mission. The clingy and codependent Barr (CYNTHIA KAPLAN) has scattered over 2000 one-line love letters; while the tech-savvy and promiscuous Zylar (JACKIE MONAHAN) has gotten a cellphone to call women, and later will even create her own vlog. But neither of them is able to have their hearts broken by Earth women, a condition of their return. So they decide to revert to their mission's "Plan B": bombarding themselves with a list of sad images that cumulatively will have the same effect as heartbreak. In their explorations around the city, they bond deeply over a certain pastry container that reminds them of the tenuousness of existence. They fall into an ill-advised love affair, as a pairing between a codependent individual and a skirt-chasing sex-addict never bodes well.

Meanwhile, a mismatched team of agents– or “Men In Black”– from a fabled secret government agency assigned to both investigate and “cover up” the alien visits – are tailing Jane, in the hopes that she will lead them to the spaceship. The Senior Agent (DENNIS DAVIS) is constantly assigned to work with new agents who are immediately promoted past him. His strangely empathetic and mysterious partner, the Rookie Agent (ALEX KARPOVSKY) seems to have more knowledge and experience. When the Senior Agent panics and reveals to his partner that he doesn’t know what to do when they encounter an alien– since he never has actually seen one before– the Rookie Agent takes charge of the situation, although his tailing methods are something the Senior Agent is too confused by to question.

Through nightclubs, late night coffee, Coney Island visits and film revival houses, the romance between Jane and Zoinx unfolds. Jane’s therapist is alarmed that Jane is now moving ahead so quickly; but in the awkward, uncertain Zoinx, it is as if Jane has found her kindred spirit. And Zoinx, in dutifully following the routine steps of her mission, is caught off guard when she finds herself actually falling for Jane, knowing that eventually she must return to her planet.

With the agents hot on their heels, Jane and Zoinx, and Zylar and Barr, must resolve their relationships before they return to Zots in this original mash-up of lo-fi New York City romantic comedy and a sci-fi B-movie spoof.

U.S. Feature Film – 2011  
75 minutes – HDCAM – stereo mix



# ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



## **Madeleine Olnek**

is Guggenheim-award-winning independent film director, producer, screenwriter, and playwright. She has written, directed and produced 24 plays and three feature films including: “Wild Nights With Emily,” “Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same,” and “The Foxy Merkins.” She is the co-author of the acting text “A Practical Handbook for the Actor” with a foreword by David Mamet, released in seven different languages, and soon to become an audio book. Madeleine has received two Independent Spirit Award Nominations. Her feature films and short films have played at Sundance, SXSW, MoMA, BAMCinemaFEST, the Viennale and the Moscow International Film festival, as well as having theatrical runs. “Wild Nights With Emily” is released by Universal Pictures in North America and MGM in Latin America.

**The OFFICIAL WEBSITE:** <http://www.codependentlesbianspacealienseekssame.com>

## **WATCH SHORT FILMS DIRECTED BY MADELEINE OLNEK:**

**“Hold Up”** online at LOGO the best in short film:

<http://www.logotv.com/video/misc/400396/hold-up.ihtml?id=1609489>

**“Countertransference”** dubbed a “Sundance Classic,” presented in the Youtube Screening Room in a program curated by Sundance programmers; in conjunction with Sundance 2011.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkwnQJCmjw8>

# CAST BIOS



**LISA HAAS** (Jane) is an actor best known for playing the character of Jay Duplass's assistant on HBO Max's "Search Party." Her starring role in the Sundance cult comedy "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same" was followed by the Sundance film "The Foxy Merkins" (also directed by Madeleine Olnek) which was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award. She has a featured role in Madeleine Olnek's third film, the SXSW and Independent Spirit nominated film "Wild Nights With Emily" currently streaming on Hulu.



**SUSAN ZIEGLER** (Zoinx) is an actor with extensive film, TV, and Off Broadway credits. She co-stars opposite Molly Shannon in the SXSW film, "Wild Nights With Emily" currently streaming on Hulu. She also stars in several other films directed by Madeleine Olnek, the Sundance film and Independent-Spirit-Award-nominated comedy "The Foxy Merkins," and the Sundance short film "Countertransference."

## CAST BIOS



**JACKIE MONAHAN** (*Zylar*) She toured the country featuring for Amy Schumer which included opening for her monthly in Vegas. You may have seen Jackie on Adult Swim's "The Eric Andre Show", Last Comic Standing, or Comedy Jam on Showtime. In addition, Jackie starred in and co-wrote Madeleine Olnek's beloved Sundance feature film "The Foxy Merkins" which was also nominated for an Independent Spirit award. Jackie starred in Olnek's Sundance hit "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same" which received rave reviews from both Variety and The Hollywood Reporter. Roger Ebert called Monahan "A delight, and the Queen of Deadpan. Her stand-up comedy album "These Lips" is available on Amazon.



**CYNTHIA KAPLAN** (*Bar*) has appeared in many plays and some movies, including Rachel Reichman's "Work" and John Walsh's "Ed's Next Move" and "Pipe Dream," which she co-wrote. She has worked extensively with Madeleine Olnek, appearing in the short "Hold Up" at Sundance in 2006. She is the author of two widely acclaimed books, "Why I'm Like This: True Stories" and "Leave the Building Quickly," and her comic essays have been published in many newspapers, magazines, journals, and anthologies. She has performed in rock clubs throughout the U.S. and just released FANGRY, her debut album of comedy rock songs, with her band, The Cynthia Kaplan Ordeal.

## CAST BIOS



**DENNIS DAVIS** (*Man in Black #1*) appears in three short films by Madeleine Olnek: The Sundance shorts "Hold Up," and "Countertransference." And plays a polyamorous husband in "Make Room for Phyllis. Dennis is also featured in the Sundance film "The Foxy Merkins."



**ALEX KARPOVSKY** (*Man in Black #2*) can be seen in a recurring role on HBO's acclaimed show "Girls," and will make his major motion picture debut in the Coen Brothers' upcoming flick "Inside Llewyn Davis." He completed his first feature-length film, "The Hole Story," in 2006; the existential black comedy earned Alex a slot in Filmmaker Magazine's annual "25 New Faces of Independent Film." Alex's award-winning follow-up, "Woodpecker," premiered at the 2008 South by Southwest Film Festival. Alex's most recent film, "Trust Us, This Is All Made Up," premiered at the 2009 South by Southwest Film Festival. As an actor, Karpovsky was featured in "Beeswax," "Grand Theft Auto IV," "Harmony and Me," "Lovers of Hate," "Bass Ackwards," "Tiny Furniture," (2010 South by Southwest Film Festival - Narrative Jury Prize for Best Feature Film); and "The Grownups."

## CAST BIOS



**RAE C WRIGHT** (*Therapist*) is an OBIE-Award winning writer/performer, a 2010 Fulbright Fellow, and a Professor in NYU's Film & Television Department. She's both performed and directed at The Public Theater, appeared in countless obscure independent films -- including "Borders" with Steve Buscemi and "Joe's Apartment." She is currently in "Goodbye NY Goodbye Heart" at HEREArts in New York, and she recently played Bernie Madoff at PS122, "Mum in Family" at Ontological--Hysteric Theater, and Taylor Mac's "The Lily's Revenge." She's author of "The Moon in Vain" (a 'fifth act' to "The Seagull"); "She's Just Away!" (a comedy about grieving); "Animal Instincts! Tales of Flesh and Tales of Blood" and "Vicki Weaver & I...a comedy about hate."







**DOWNLOAD FILM STILL ON FLICKR:**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/codependentlesbianspacealienseekssame/>

To download images: Click on the image, then click on the larger image again with the magnifying glass icon, then click “view all sizes” in the upper right hand corner, this will take you to a page where you can download the largest sized photo.



# The New York Times

MOVIE REVIEW

## Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same



Lisa Haas, left, and Susan Ziegler as an extraterrestrial in "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same."

Nat Bouman

## Lesbian Alien Looks for Love Light Years Away

By JEANNETTE CATSOULIS  
Published: January 5, 2012

In ["Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same,"](#) Madeleine Olnek's witty ode to urban love and shoestring sci-fi, a lonely Manhattanite and an exiled extraterrestrial find interspecies contentment.

On the Earthling side is Jane (a perfect Lisa Haas), a sweet, unlucky-in-love store clerk surviving on fantasies and regular therapy. About to realize those fantasies is Zoinx (Susan Ziegler), one of three female aliens whose overabundance of "big feeling" is believed to be destroying their planet's ozone layer. Bald as eggs and with gills secreted beneath their Elizabethan collars, the aliens hope to save their home by getting their hearts broken — a task at which humans are thought to excel. Who knew ["The Bachelorette"](#) was beaming into outer space?

Photographed in crisp black and white by Nat Bouman, this enormously likable movie keeps sexual politics on the back burner and the universal search for connection front and center. The budget probably had trouble stretching to a box of tinfoil, but the film's pleasures are in the details, like Jane's casual warning to "watch out for the syringes" when she and Zoinx ponder a Coney Island swim.

A clever subplot involving the odd-couple relationship of two government agents — as well as [actual news footage](#) of a 2010 U.F.O. scare in Chelsea — cements the lighthearted tone, and toilet-flushing noises exemplify the sophistication of the special effects. Ed Wood would have been proud.

## “CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME” — A HAMMER TO NAIL REVIEW

By [Holly Herrick](#)

(*Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same* world-premiered in the “Park City At Midnight” section at the [2011 Sundance Film Festival](#). It opens for a one-week theatrical run at the [reRun Gastropub](#) in New York City on Friday, January 6, 2012. Visit the film’s [official website](#) to learn more.)

“I have to make it clear that I hate all dramas,” Madeleine Olnek told me in an interview the other day. “I think making dramas is immoral, if you are capable of making a comedy.”

Olnek is a New Yorker who writes and directs comedy films. Plays too. As she’s predominantly worked in the short film arena up to this point, her cinematic talents have been under-appreciated. Her Sundance-vetted shorts, *Hold Up* and *Countertransference*, are replete with an original sense of humor and the kinds of completely unpredictable, fully New York, totally pathological characters who inadvertently impose their insanity on everyone around them. The victims are often hilariously hapless, slightly wounded creatures, incapable of defense or comeback. One of my favorite examples is the lesser-seen *Make Room For Phyllis*, in which a shy woman is made to believe she’s being invited to participate in a romantic/sexual threesome situation with a heterosexual couple, when in fact the couple is luring her into their domicile to take care of all the household chores.

As such, like the very best comedies, Olnek’s are tinged with pain. And while all the shorts feature queerness, the action or conflicts in the films are only indirectly related to gay life or identity. This has recently changed with the release of her first feature, *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same*, a black-and-white sci-fi retro-New York micro-budget completely absurdest independent comedy, which also manages to thoughtfully address the pain and confusion of sexual prejudice. Now Olnek has proven that she can make an important film without having to make a dramatic one.

No need to explain the splashy, immediately clear metaphors: Olnek’s lesbian aliens arrive in New York City looking for love, trying not to be noticed by the literally straight-laced federal authorities who have the power to control their destinies and send them back home to their planet, separating the lesbian aliens from their earthbound loves. Set apart by their obvious strangeness and unable to blend seamlessly into the foreign landscape, the aliens are exceedingly vulnerable. Not far off, however, are their earthly counterparts; feeble loner Jane (Lisa Haas), soon to be Zoinx’s (Susan Ziegler) love interest, is practically living in hiding as a greeting card store clerk.

In defense of this outlandishly high concept, anyone questioning the applicability of the creative choice to represent gay life metaphorically as alien invasion might consider that we still live in a society where people of the more popular sexual orientation have decision-making power over the basic civil rights of the less popular one. This disjunction between where we think we are socially with gay integration and where we still find ourselves within the law and greater society is also brilliantly studied in the aesthetic of *Codependent*; taking place in an unspecified contemporary time period with references to both 1950s sci-fi and independent films of the '80s and '90s, the film seems to introduce future and past all at the same time, while retaining a retro feel.

Never giving a reason for their manhunt, the two government agents (Dennis Davis and Alex Karpovsky) who tool around town in search of lesbian aliens seem all the more insidious; their motives speculative, and potential actions dangerous. While they label lesbians and aliens as outsiders, they postulate (to great comedic effect) about their own questionable ethics and bizarre, privileged obsessions—such as the senior agent's *Little Mermaid*-themed wedding. The agents' senseless disparaging, superiority complexes, and social advantage point heartily to real-world-straight-people aloofness, making the agents' buffoonery genuinely unsettling.

And while Olnek can brilliantly maneuver a script that both slices and entertains in a satirical breath, there are moments of pure, unfettered comedy, from the absurd to the slapstick, that feel classic and even quotable. Like most movie aliens, Olnek's have a childlike fascination with Earth's most pedestrian innovations: a revolving dessert case is true love incarnate, a commercial clothes dryer better than psychedelics. As the aliens move with great difficulty through their new lives in New York City, their wit is so sharp that the original concepts and jokes become even funnier as the movie progresses. Olnek's grasp of her comedic arc is enviable. She sustains, and even pushes the laughs further, with each successive one-liner.

One hopes that Madeleine Olnek will continue to work in the feature realm, and that her future films will be as hilarious as this one, our sides splitting open further with each sucker punch of ugly truth.

# VARIETY

## Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same

**A wry homage to '50s sci-fi, urban dating and interspecies romance.**

By JOHN ANDERSON

"Sweet, funny, clever comedy seeks crossover" would be the Craigslist come-on for "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same," and it may well come true via Madeleine Olnek's wry homage to '50s sci-fi, urban dating and interspecies romance. "Codependent" could pass as a family film, given the right family. But small arthouse and huge DVD/VOD seem more likely.

On the planet Zots, the ozone layer is being depleted because of too much "big feeling": Left unchecked, individual Zotsians radiate love, which destroys the atmosphere. To save their planet, several women of Zots travel to the Earth -- where hearts are routinely broken -- to find someone who will love them, dump them and render them environmentally friendly.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, the good-natured but lonely Jane (Lisa Haas) is working in a New York stationery store into which all manner of Manhattan oddballs wander to use the copy machine, so it's not that strange to Lisa when she's confronted by Zoinx (Susan Ziegler) or for that matter, the visitor's strange mating rituals (Zotsians hold each other's noses for erotic satisfaction). Meanwhile, the sexual trajectories of two other aliens -- Zylar (Jackie Monahan) and Barr (Cynthia Kaplan) -- are on a collision course, which will make them (metaphor alert!) an outsider minority among codependent lesbian space aliens.

The pic's seat-of-the-pants aesthetic recalls "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" and the interplanetary paranoia of its genre; the odd-couple romance (and a scene near the Queensboro Bridge) suggests Woody Allen's "Manhattan"; the parallel storyline of two government agents (Dennis Davis, Alex Karpovsky) is a little bit "X-Files." But Olnek's sensibility is singular, and the work of the cast -- notably the sweetfaced Haas and the hilariously robotic Ziegler -- make for a movie that seeks, and earns, affection.

Production values are appropriately Eisenhower-era when they need to be; the Zots language consists of dialogue run backwards, and the skullcaps on the aliens won't sucker anyone. But Clay Drinko's music and d.p. Nat Bouman's on-the-run New York shooting lock the film into contemporary times.

## SUNDANCE REVIEW: Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same

3:04 PM 2/5/2011 by Justin Lowe

### The Bottom Line

*A hilarious date movie for couples of all orientations.*

### Venue:

*Sundance Film Festival, Park City at Midnight*

### Cast:

*Lisa Haas, Susan Ziegler, Jackie Monahan, Cynthia Kaplan*

### Director-Screenwriter:

*Madeleine Olnek*

PARK CITY -- (Park City at Midnight) Tongue firmly in cheek, **Madeleine Olnek's** lesbian sci-fi comedy lovingly spoofs the black-and-white B-movies of yesteryear, complete with low-grade special effects, stiff acting and government paranoia. Sure to become a staple of festival midnight-movie programs, it should also live long and prosper on DVD and late-night TV.

Jane (**Lisa Haas**) is a lonely greeting-store clerk with even less going on in her dating life than in the often-deserted shop. She fills the void with an active imagination involving spaceships and aliens, although her therapist is pretty sure that visitors from beyond earth aren't trying to contact her client -- but she couldn't be more wrong.

On the planet Zots, somewhere in the neighborhood of Saturn, nosy bureaucrats recognizable to any species in the universe are hustling Zotsians off-planet, convinced that their abundance of romantic emotions is damaging the world's ozone layer. Banished to earth to overcome their "big feelings" by having their hearts broken by fickle earthlings, they'll be allowed to return once they cease to pose a threat.

Dressed in curve-hugging jumpsuits with upright, conical collars framing their bald heads, the female Zotsians don't attract so much as a backward glance after landing in Brooklyn, where Jane catches the eye of Zoinx (**Susan Ziegler**), a typically expressionless alien lesbian. Willing to overlook their differences, Lisa and Zoinx are soon dating, a development that draws the scrutiny of a couple of black-suited government agents (**Dennis Davis, Alex Karpovsky**), charged with disrupting earthling-alien relationships. Meanwhile Zylar (**Jackie Monahan**), liberated from her homeworld's expectations, is turning into a dating machine, hitting on every available woman. But her fellow traveler Barr (**Cynthia Kaplan**) feels heartbroken, since she has no interest in New Yorkers and only wants to be with Zylar.

Writer-director Olnek, an veteran playwright, stage director and short filmmaker debuting her first feature, deftly parodies the myriad tropes of low budget sci-fi with obvious glee, from the alien's monotonal speech to wobbly camera-handling and cheesy special effects.

Performances are aces all around, considering the low marks that need to be hit. The portrayal of lesbian dating situations will resonate with singles of all persuasions, as the film nails earthlings' obsessions with both romance and extraterrestrials.

# SCREENDAILY

## Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same

3 February, 2011 | By David D'Arcy

Dir/scr: Madeleine Olnek. US. 2011. 75mins

**Screwball comedy reaches earth in black-and-white in *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same*. On a budget that could barely get you on the subway, Madeleine Olnek gets laughs and style out of interplanetary love.**

*Codependent* will be in demand at festivals for the gay and geek public. Theatrical interest will probably be for the arthouse circuit, but the comedy's wacky black and white retro-aesthetic could give it strong international pull. Home video will also be significant for this odd but tender lesbian love story.

When three bald lesbian aliens are sent to Earth from Zotz to have their hearts broken so that strong emotions won't contribute to destroying their planet's ozone layer, one of them connects with Jane, a tender soul working at a stationery store. Despite difficulties dancing and expressing physical fondness, this odd couple falls in love.

Madeleine Olnek, best known for her shorts, directs her cast as if they're in a hybrid of classic screwball farce and super-cheap early 1960s sci-fi. Her aliens, especially Zoinx (Susan Ziegler), face all the challenges of Earth with absolute anti-romantic deadpan.

Olnek's script plays closer to the screwball formula. A well-meaning innocent who can't find love ends up having it fall from outer space. Her glamorous blonde therapist (Rae C. Wright), a stock figure from the 1960's, attributes it all to "a rich fantasy life."

The cast here is as strong as the no-frills production design by Rebecca Conroy that creates its own parallel universe. Lisa Haas is the earnest lonely Earth-woman who trusts her feelings against overwhelming improbability. Jackie Monahan and Cynthia Kaplan are aliens who fall for each other, endangering the mission. Dennis Davis plays a CIA agent tracking the lovers who can't stop talking, but who's too dense to grasp what's going on – Olnek's symbol of the non-lesbian world out there?

Cinematographer Nat Bouman sets a shadowy spare tone for the space satire. Costumes by Lina Gui have the flair of a futurist vision that went out of style 50 years ago.

"No one I've had feelings for has ever returned them," says a bewildered Jane when Zoinx announces that she must return to the planet Zots, "I should have known you were from Outer Space."

No-budget UFOs were the staples of the first wave of commercial independent films in the early 1960s. In a year when Sundance celebrated the king of those movies, Roger Corman, Madeleine Olnek has found a place in same satirical constellation.



# Shorties: Codependent Lesbian Space Aliens and Cranky Autos

June 26, 2011 - 00:08 — Brandon Judell

## 1) *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same*

"Straight" from Sundance, *CLSASS* might just be the most hilarious film of 2011. This deliriously demented celluloid laugh-fest was screened the other night by Rooftop Films, the weekly summer venue that showcases "independently produced shorts and feature-length films" for a rather hip crowd on a Big Apple roof.

Before the film could begin, however, the hyperkinetic, all-girl, punky Japanese band The Suzan energized the audience, prompting several couples to start dancing in the aisles.

Then there was breaking news: the New York State Senate had passed the Gay Marriage Bill. The attendees roared with glee.

What better ways are there to get an audience fired up for the ultimate lesbian comedy?

*CLSASS* begins with a calamity on a faraway planet. It seems the inhabitants of the same are experiencing a crisis with their ozone layer. The cause of this disaster: three lesbians who love too much. To cure these baldheaded and gilled lasses of their malady, they are sent to Earth to experience heartbreak. Why? Heartbreak will make them numb to tender passion, and then they'll become model citizens and be able to return to their planet.

Immediately on that pronouncement, a spaceship lands the trio in New York City, where two of the gals find getting dates with earthling lesbians quite easy, although transforming these encounters into soul-shattering affairs is not. In their search to experience dramatic depression, the only things that really shake the gals up is the sad sight of cheesecakes moving away from them continually on those revolving dessert trays in better diners, and the calling of Lotto numbers on TV.

Zylar (Susan Ziegler), the deliciously obtuse third alien, though, snags a lonely, hefty gal pal, Jane (the superb Lisa Haas), who works in a stationery store, and the two do fall into a meaningful relationship even though Zylar's version of kissing is holding onto Jane's nose.

If this weren't enough, throw into the mix two dysfunctional U.S. government agents keeping their eyes upon all of the above proceedings.

With a sure hand, director/writer Madeleine Olnek wittily captures how the aliens fumble and bumble lovingly with modern dyke mating rituals. Imagine *When Harry Met Sally* meets *Ellen* meets *Planet 9 from Outer Space*.

Kudos also to Nat Bouman's solid black-and-white cinematography, Curtis Grout's inventive editing, and Rebecca Conroy's campy production design.





## Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same

by Steve Weinstein  
EDGE Editor-In-Chief

Inspired by the same syndrome that made people pay attention (at least until they saw the films) to "Surf Nazis Must Die" and "Snakes on a Plane," I threw the dice and watched **Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same**, based entirely on the catchy, clever name.

Usually, one rolls snake-eyes in these situations, but I lucked out and got a seven. "Space Alien," it turns out, is a funny comedy of manners, a satire that encompasses 1950s second-billed drive-in sci-fi, those incredibly adventurous and annoyingly sincere lesbian indie romances, suspense thrillers involving mysterious government agents in black suits and black town cars, and U.S. consumer culture in general.

Playwright Madeleine Olnek takes the old Conehead skits from "Saturday Night Live" as the model for her monotone-spouting, seemingly non-affecting aliens whose outsider look at modern America provide deeply funny commentary on consumer culture. Exiled from their planet because their emotions are believed to be destroying its ozone layer, the all-female alien invaders all land in the one city where everyone pointedly ignores their weirdness: New York.

Paralleling the aliens' alienated affections is the poignant back-story of Jane, a homely, overweight, dowdy woman (beautifully underplayed by Lisa Haas) who has a beyond-dead-end job in the kind of stationary store where the photocopying machine is a major source of income.

In an example of the kind of subtle, satiric-but-warm gentle humor that makes this little film such a gem, we witness Jane's interactions with a senile old man as exemplary of her lonely, loveless existence. We first meet her, however, in a session with her therapist, whose clueless words of wisdom parallel Jane's own utter lack of personal insight.

Next we get a montage of a newly arrived space alien's blind dates with several women whose responses to meeting an attractive, bald-headed mechanical-speaking woman range from horror to mild outrage. For Jane, however, the alien presents the perfect blank slate to write her own long-delayed book of love.

A subplot involves a pair of agents for a government agency (unnamed, but I presume the CIA) who are tailing Jane as part of a secret program to keep the public uninformed about the existence of aliens in their midst. The film's funniest, laugh-out-loud segment incorporates real ABC News footage of an incident in which Manhattanites mistook congratulatory balloons for space ships.

The interactions between the two agents -- a dimwitted trainer and his secret-alien protégé -- are as hilariously deadpan as all of the other dialogue. Consider the one thing on earth that brings the aliens to an emotional boil: the dessert carousel in a diner.

Aided by wonderful cinematography that brings to mind Woody Allen's "Manhattan," Olnek clearly has a real affection for New York. Her deadpan style and sympathy with life's losers and outsiders brings to mind Jim Jarmusch's landmark indie film "Stranger in Paradise."

"Space Aliens" is not only a worthy successor to that film, but it plants Olnek in the very best tradition of Downtown Manhattan indie filmmaking. Olnek takes her obviously very, very low budget and uses it for some nice, Ed Wood-like effects. She's also helped by a very talented cast.

As someone who normally rolls his eyes at the pretentiousness of most indie films, I was pleasantly surprised by "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same." I'm not sure what kind of theatrical roll-out the distributor has planned, but keep an eye out for it when it comes to DVD.



## [NewFest Is Now \(thru Jul 28\)](#)

By [Matthew Connolly](#) on July 22, 2011

### ***Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same* (2011)**

Madeleine Olnek's debut feature has some of the deadpan delivery, single-take timing and wry visual humor of early Kevin Smith—that is, if Jay and Silent Bob wandered into an East Village gay bar screening an Ed Wood double feature. Early scenes shuttle back-and-forth between present-day Manhattan, where lovelorn Jane (Lisa Haas) waits for Ms. Right while working in a stationary store; and Zots, a faraway planet whose ozone is being punctured by the intensity of its inhabitants' feelings. In need of emotional adjustment, Zots-inhabitant Zoinx (Susan Ziegler) is sent to Earth to have her heart broken by a human being. The two women meet cute when the no-nonsense Zoinx offers Jane one of her own cards at the stationary store. Jane accepts demurely and begins a tentative romance with this mysterious stranger. So what if Zoinx has a head as smooth as a cue ball, wears a high-collared cape, and seems to possess second-hand knowledge (at best) of basic social mores? We're all human, sort of.

Olnek has fun magnifying the small absurdities of contemporary courtship within the New York lesbian scene. In addition to Zoinx, two other visitors from Zots roam the streets of Manhattan looking for love. Zylar (the hysterical Jackie Monahan) is a more-the-merrier horn dog, launching pick-up lines at startled (and not always unwilling) women in classic extraterrestrial flatness. Her exploits eventually begin to fluster Barr (Cynthia Kaplan), who felt mutually-reciprocal sparks between herself and Zylar while gazing at some diner cheesecake. (You have to see it.)

The film pays cheerful homage to cheapo sci-fi B-movies of yore, but remains surprisingly grounded when chronicling its characters' romantic exploits. Olnek inserts a baseline recognition of her script's absurdity while playing the individual scenes largely straight. In this way, Jane and Zoinx's low-key romance feels at once comically distanced and charmingly accessible: a knowing celebration of accepting your partner's idiosyncrasies with a wink and a smile. Olnek's good nature extends beyond her characters to the larger milieu. She and DP Nat Bouman take time to leisurely track through the streets of Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, capturing bodegas and apartment buildings in fleeting black-and-white glimpses. For a film concerned literal and figurative alienation, it's a pleasing irony that *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien* has the loose, warm vibes of a day hanging out on your own beloved turf.

## **Critical response to "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same":**

"Why She's On Our Radar: Her debut feature, the hilarious black-and-white sci-fi romantic comedy "Codependent..." charmed the pants off critics and audiences at the Sundance Film Festival where it world premiered. The film's since gone on to slay at a slew of festivals" – indieWIRE

"Sweet, funny, clever comedy...Olnek's sensibility is singular, and the work of the cast– notably the sweetfaced Haas and the hilariously robotic Ziegler– make for a movie that seeks, and earns, affection." – Variety

"Clever...witty...this enormously likable movie keeps sexual politics on the back burner and the universal search for connection front and center...Ed Wood would be proud." –New York Times

"'Codependent...' is silly, cheesy and surprisingly enjoyable. As goofy and singular as its look-twice title...["Codependent..." is] a memorable curio." –Los Angeles Times

"A hilarious date movie for couples of all orientations" – Hollywood Reporter

"Aided by wonderful cinematography that brings to mind Woody Allen's "Manhattan," Olnek clearly has a real affection for New York. Her deadpan style and sympathy with life's losers and outsiders brings to mind Jim Jarmusch's landmark indie film "Stranger in Paradise." "Space Aliens" is not only a worthy successor to that film, but it plants Olnek in the very best tradition of Downtown Manhattan indie filmmaking. Olnek takes her obviously very, very low budget and uses it for some nice, Ed Wood-like effects. She's also helped by a very talented cast. As someone who normally rolls his eyes at the pretentiousness of most indie films, I was pleasantly surprised by "Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same." - Edge

"Inspired silliness... satisfyingly incongruous—and slyly subversive" - The Village Voice

"Seriously funny" - Velvet Park

"Really, really sweet and funny...hysterical...I watched it twice." – KPCC Film Week, an affiliate of NPR

"The title reads like a personal ad from the Twilight Zone. But it actually refers to a family-friendly lesbian sci-fi movie...a distinctively indie film, it lightheartedly pokes fun at the underlying strangeness of our courtship rituals."- INTERVIEW magazine

"Straight" from Sundance, CLSASS might just be the most hilarious film of 2011... [a] deliriously demented celluloid laugh-fest.. the ultimate lesbian comedy... Kudos also to Nat Bouman's solid black and white cinematography, Curtis Grout's inventive editing, and Rebecca Conroy's campy production design. - Culture Catch

"Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same embodies Sundance and all its aspirations...with gravitas, and (\*gasp) heart." -Salt Lake Magazine

"Dispensing with realism, melodrama, and suffering, writer-director Madeleine Olnek's *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same* makes a return to cheesy, 1950s-era science fiction: black-and-white footage, Twilight Zone sound effects, and all. ...Olnek's pointed jokes and sweetheart ending mark *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same* as a modern-day lesbian fairy tale." -B. Ruby Rich, "Film Quarterly"

"Madeleine Olnek's beaming and daffy intelligence manifests elegantly in this, her first feature, a black & white film that reminds me of early Jim Jarmusch...Olnek makes the noirish surface of her film more drum tight by including a couple of hapless g-men, who follow the women around in a nondescript car... these guys banter is spot on, delivered with an unerring indie flatness that courts our recognition that this foolishness actually means something." - Eileen Myles, Art in America

"Olnek has a genuine gift for comic dialogue...it's FUNNY, and that is what counts." -Rooftop Films Blog

"These wide-eyed baldies are just priceless."- screenjunkies.com

"The funniest lesbian movie ever made." - Jennifer Morris, Artistic Director of the Frameline Film Festival

"Whimsical... engaging" - WeAreMovieGeeks.com

"Warm, witty, irresistible" - Queerty.com

"You had me at Lesbian" - Quietearth.us (sci-fi fan site)

“Not down to earth at all (and all the better for it) was the wacky, Woody Allen - inspired Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same, a black and white riff on 50’s schlock sci-fi, starring, of course, a lesbian space alien. You’d be hard pressed to find a flick more dedicated to its bizarre (and wonderful) vision this year” - AFTERELLEN.COM

“Madeleine Olnek’s debut feature has some of the deadpan delivery, single-take timing and wry visual humor of early Kevin Smith—that is, if Jay and Silent Bob wandered into an East Village gay bar screening an Ed Wood double feature. The film pays cheerful homage to cheapo sci-fi B-movies of yore, but remains surprisingly grounded when chronicling its characters’ romantic exploits. Olnek inserts a baseline recognition of her script’s absurdity while playing the individual scenes largely straight. In this way, Jane and Zoinx’s low-key romance feels at once comically distanced and charmingly accessible: a knowing celebration of accepting your partner’s idiosyncrasies with a wink and a smile. Olnek’s good nature extends beyond her characters to the larger milieu. She and DP Nat Bouman take time to leisurely track through the streets of Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, capturing bodegas and apartment buildings in fleeting black-and-white glimpses. For a film concerned literal and figurative alienation, it’s a pleasing irony.” - ALT screen

“[Madeleine Olnek] exhibits an intuitive talent and sophistication that can put more "professional" names to shame...Ms Olnek appears to have the gift for taking the hoariest cliches of both the sci-fi genre and the rom-com and infusing them with new life via a combination of charm, honesty (particularly in the performances) and a now-and-then surprise. The writing is crisp and often clever...and the acting - which ranges from the necessarily bizarre (those space aliens) to absolutely real and dear (the leading lady, beautifully portrayed by Lisa Haas) to another smart and well-considered stint by the increasingly versatile Alex Karpovsky.” -TrustMovies.com

"A film comedy of such seeming simplicity and charm!" - Janet Coleman, WBAI Radio

“Amusing...sweet-natured...[it has] things to say about love and about being an outlier...I’m already quoting it!” - Huffington Post

TOP FIVE AND TOP TEN LISTS for LGBT FILM- AFTERELLEN.COM, QUEERTY and others

## **CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME AWARDS**

CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME “Special Programming Award from OUTFEST” citation:

“For her witty and creative vision, her skill at eliciting memorable performances, for deftly blending old school science fiction and deadpan comedy, and for believing that true love exists even if it means going to another planet to find it.”

CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME “Outstanding First Feature Honorable Mention at FRAMELINE” citation: “Madeleine Olnek’s smart, laugh-out-loud funny ode to B-movie aesthetics and the thrills and hazards of the contemporary big-city dating scene, Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same deserves the jury’s Honorable Mention for its snappy script, inventive filmmaking trickery and hope for love beyond earthly boundaries.”

CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME “Best Feature” Award Winner of the Honolulu Rainbow LGBTQQ Festival.

CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME Gotham Award Nominee of 2011

CODEPENDENT LESBIAN SPACE ALIEN SEEKS SAME “Audience Award Winner at The Melbourne International Queer Film Festival”

# WHAT CRITICS HAVE SAID ABOUT MADELEINE OLNEK'S WORK

"unforgettable...a comedic goldmine." –Filmmaker Magazine

"Uproariously Neurotic Comedy" –New York Newsday

"Olnek's latest short made me laugh by the fifteen second mark and kept getting funnier from there." –Hammer to Nail

"Hilarious... Olnek directs at a breathless pace." –The Village Voice

"["Countertransference" was] The funniest short film made in the year 2008." –Jenni Olson, Planet Out

"originally hilarious." –Bay Area Reporter

"A delightful playground of bizarre moments." –Time Out NY

"I've yet to see Madeleine Olnek's first Sundance kissed short Hold Up, but if it's even a shadow of the comedy Countertransference is, then no explanations are necessary as to why Olnek is racking up festival awards and screening selections like they're going out of style." –Short of the Week

"Funny, darkly obsessive, often fascinating... The work is disturbing, sexy and pithy, all at once." –Greenwich Village Press

"A really unusual little gem of a film... It was brilliant... nicely shot and nicely written – very, very nicely written. I thoroughly enjoyed Countertransference." –Iris TV review, Wales, UK

"If Madeleine Olnek's 'Hold up' were an SNL skit, it would be buzzed about at water coolers and on blogs across the country the next Monday... If only more movie comedies were this wry and skilled." –Baltimore City Paper

"Madeleine Olnek is producing incredible contemporary masterpieces" –Paula Vogel in American Theater Magazine