

Short Film Sunday: Ian

[Malu Rocha](#) reviews Ian, a touching animated short that brings awareness to children with disabilities

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Fundación Ian

Directed by Abel Goldfarb, *Ian* is an animated short film (part stop-motion, part CGI) centred around a young boy with cerebral palsy. His only desire is to have fun with the other kids inside the fenced playground but is constricted by his disability and confined to his wheelchair. Even though the story deals with a serious issue, there is no particular evil in the story, just unfamiliarity towards Ian's disability, which affects nearly 20% of physically handicapped children in the world. With this in mind, the film sets out to raise awareness of the issue through beautiful storytelling techniques.

The film depicts feelings of loneliness and isolation, but also of trust and solidarity; people can be nicer than they seem. It plays with the idea and the metaphor of crossing the thin line between indifference and compassion, all while providing 9 minutes of wonderful entertainment and poignant storytelling.

The story is told from Ian's point of view, which is perfect to show his desires, successes and failures. The characters are extremely touching and true to the real world; their only reason for bullying being lack of awareness. It's worth mentioning the film's success at inclusivity without bringing attention to it, because after all the characters are just kids in a playground. The focus lies, instead, on the idea that every single person is made of the same pieces, just arranged in a slightly different way, which is beautifully shown through the characters' dismantling and reconstructions. The film is therefore, a very true depiction of the real world. In fact, it heavily relies on metaphorical storytelling, which is audacious for a children's animation. However, it would be a mistake to imply that the sole audience of the film are children, considering that it does have an emotional appeal to all ages and genders.



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Visually, the story is as poignant as its narrative. From the lettering font in the opening and closing titles to its colour palette, it truly reflects the melancholic yet optimistic mood of the film. The colours used to depict the real world are outstanding, especially the vibrant oranges and greens in the trees and grass in the playground, which add a much-appreciated overarching magical tone. The inspiration for this style possibly came from the director's appreciation of expressionist and fauvist paintings. The film is an exemplary illustration of what visual storytelling can do: tell a fascinating story without words.

The audience is invited to lay back and enjoy the sheer beauty of it, while nonetheless being deeply involved in thought and appreciation. On a deeper level, it displays the character's inner thoughts and emotions in a highly effective way, mostly due to the freedom inherent to the animated form of filmmaking. Special attention should be brought to the use of sound as well; when the protagonist is blown across the fence, the breaking sound of small building pieces (such as Legos) alludes to the audience's emotions of a possible broken heart, feeling compassion and sorrow for Ian. The viewer is left with a strong desire to act, to help him, and on an even bigger scale, to make a change in the world.

The film's overall success is due to its honest depiction of universal feelings of loneliness and acceptance, which ultimately is the whole point of why we tell stories in the first place: to understand the world in which we live in.



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