

## “WRONG COPS” (Sundance Movie Review)

Written by Olivia Saperstein

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Let’s make this clear: *WRONG COPS* is a party. Oh, and don’t worry, it’s appropriately blood-infused. While writer/director Quentin Dupieux (*STEAK*, *RUBBER*, *WRONG*) may deny the “experimental” classification, he is certainly known for his authentic filmmaking choices, so expect *WRONG COPS* to exceed all levels of dissidence.

The movie takes place from Monday through Sunday in seven chapters, though the Sundance Film Festival only screened the Monday through Wednesday sections of this work in progress. Each day seems to be just another version of an indulgent, humorous hell on Earth. Cue Los Angeles setting: a time period when the crime rate has decreased to a level that police officers are bored and have nothing better to do than hump cars, play with their guns and pick on sorry teenagers (Marilyn Manson convincingly channels insecure high-schooler David Dolores Frank). Dare I say this version of LA is like *MULHOLLAND DR.* on meth?



Mark Burnham’s cop Duke could serve as pack leader, and his performance successfully induces cringing laughter. He pisses on fences to mark his territory, pulls guns on innocents and has a stake in the illegal drug trade. He’s the cop of our nightmares—not because he abides by the law, but because he lethally breaks it. No wonder Dupieux claims his world is supposed to represent the End of Days.

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Our other friends, Sunshine (Steve Little), Shirley (Arden Myrin) and Renato (Eric Wareheim), each possess their own quirks, whether in the form of dirty secrets or shameless sexual harassment. For instance, after Gary (Don Stark) “finds” a dead body in his apartment, Shirley rummages through his refrigerator pointing to its sadness, while Renato flagrantly takes a dump in his toilet.

Dupieux just doesn't do traditional narrative. He challenges us, constantly toying with our expectations. Cop cars take us on a dirty ride where the director's own electro (composed under the name Mr. Oizo) pumps over each bump and sunlight burns the cement of tainted street corners; the feeling of doom is upon us. If policemen can act with such unapologetic immorality, then anything is possible, and this is what provides the film with both its humor and discomfort. It points to a reality of life: that, well, anything is possible.

Speaking in Lacanian terms, if all we have to separate ourselves from the Other (per example, the government) is uniform, then what is it that makes us so trusting? WRONG COPS begs that question. Lacanian scholar Slavoj Zizek would say that pleasure can only be derived through transgression (acting against the Other). If cops exist to police our enjoyment, then what happens when they break this order and transgress themselves? Where do we find our “jouissance” then? This is what throws us off balance.

Yet please, feel free to discard this analysis and enjoy the film as fun for fun's sake, as it certainly plays that way. We can only wonder why more movies aren't so daring and unapologetic. What will happen in the next installment, when actors such as Jennifer Blanc and Ray Wise join in on the shenanigans? Who knows, we may laugh ourselves to death. For now, the movie gets:

