













2016 MEDIA CLIPPINGS

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Racing Extinction to Open Doc Soup



Film still: Racing Extinction

(August 18, 2015 – Toronto, Ontario) **H**ot Docs has announced its Doc Soup monthly screening series will kick off the 2015-16 season with the Canadian premiere of *Racing Extinction*, which was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. From the team that delivered the Academy Award®-winning film *The Cove* (2009), *Racing Extinction* will screen on Wednesday, October 7, at 6:30 p.m. and 9:15 p.m., and again on Thursday, October 8, at 6:45 p.m. at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema at 506 Bloor St. West. Oscar®-winning director Louie Psihoyos embarks on an urgent mission to save endangered species in *Racing Extinction*. Never-before-seen images and footage reveal just how close we are to causing mass extinction, potentially losing half of all species by the end of the century. Using covert tactics and state-of-the-art technology, the team delves into the two worlds driving extinction—the dangerous international black-market trade of endangered wildlife and the disastrous environmental consequences of human activity. Emotional and inspiring, *Racing Extinction* is a wakeup call to preserve a thriving planet before it's too late.

Single tickets for *Racing Extinction* are $16 ($12, $10 and $8 for Bloor Hot Docs Cinema members) and can be purchased in advance online at www.hotdocs.ca or in person at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema box office. Student same-day tickets for the Wednesday 9:15 p.m. screening are $8 (with valid student ID). In the event advance tickets sell out, a limited number of tickets may be available at the door on the night of the screening. Subscription packages for Toronto's Doc Soup are available and can be purchased online at www.hotdocs.ca, in person at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema box office, or by phone at 416-637-5150. Upcoming screening dates for Toronto's Doc Soup are November 4 and 5, December 2 and 3, January 6 and 7, February 3 and 4, March 2 and 3, and April 6 and 7. Doc Soup titles are announced at least one month prior to their screenings and, whenever possible, guest directors are in attendance. The Doc Soup monthly screening series brings the latest Canadian and international documentaries to the big screen in Toronto and Calgary. Hot Docs also presents the Bell Media Best of Hot Docs weekends in Edmonton, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Windsor Square – September 2, 2015

Doc Soup: The Race Toward Extinction

(TORONTO, ON) – Hot Docs is opening the 2015-16 season of its Doc Soup monthly screening series with the Canadian premiere of *Racing Extinction*, which was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival.

From the team behind the Academy Award-winning film *The Cove*, *Racing Extinction* will screen on October 7 at 6:30 pm and 9:15 pm, and on October 8 at 6:45 pm, at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, at 506 Bloor Street West.

Oscar-winning director Louie Psihoyos embarks on an urgent mission to save endangered species in *Racing Extinction*. Never-before-seen images and footage reveal just how close we are to causing mass extinction, potentially losing half of all species by the end of the century. Using covert tactics and state-of-the-art technology, the team delves into the two worlds driving extinction; the dangerous international black-market trade of endangered wildlife and the disastrous environmental consequences of human activity.

Emotional and inspiring, *Racing Extinction* is a wakeup call to preserve a thriving planet before it's too late.

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Toronto Star – October 1, 2015

A filmmaker's view of the Earth's destruction

Racing Extinction launches Doc Soup's fall/winter season this week in a suitably urgent fashion



The documentary Racing Extinction opens Friday at the Bloor.

By: **Jason Anderson** Special to the Star, Published on Thu Oct 01 2015

Racing Extinction at Doc Soup: The Earth has already experienced five mass extinction events over the course of its history. According to the many scientists, experts and activists we meet in *Racing Extinction*, humankind's wasteful and destructive habits are hastening on the sixth. A would-be global wake-up call by *The Cove* director Louie Psihoyos, *Racing Extinction* launches Doc Soup's fall/winter season this week in a suitably urgent fashion. Like so many ecologically themed documentaries — such as Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis' *This Changes Everything*, out Oct. 9 — Psihoyos' new film contains a huge bounty of reasons for viewers to be very worried. From the acidification of the oceans to methane buildup due to the cattle industry, there's no lack of pressing threats to the continued survival of every species. Indeed, we're wiping out life on this planet at an even swifter clip than the Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction event that killed the dinosaurs — hey, who needs collisions with giant asteroids when we can get the job done all by ourselves?

Quietly weeping while huddled in your luxury Humvee might seem like the only sensible response, especially since — in an irony that Psihoyos notes with much chagrin — even the making of a film like this has an enormous carbon footprint.

But many of the subjects of *Racing Extinction* emphasize the idea that it's still possible for us to change course. Psihoyos does his best to get people inspired with dramatic underwater footage and suspenseful stories of hidden-video sting operations against illegal sellers of endangered sea creatures. Though his new film may lack a single figure as compelling as *The Cove*'s Ric O'Barry, *Racing Extinction* remains an effective primer on species loss and a manifesto for anyone who'd like their grandchildren to enjoy a world that still has some fish in it.

Racing Extinction plays Hot Docs' popular monthly series on Oct. 7 at 6:30 and 9:15 p.m. and Oct. 8 at 6:45 p.m. (Advance tickets are already scarce but rush ones will be available at the door.)

NOW Magazine – October 6, 2015

DOC SOUP: RACING EXTINCTION

The Cove's Louis Psihoyos is back, this time with a doc about bringing endangered species back from the brink

BY **NORMAN WILNER**
OCTOBER 6, 2015



The monthly Doc Soup series returns to the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema this week with the Toronto debut of **Racing Extinction** Wednesday (October 7) at 6:30 and 9:15 pm and Thursday (October 8) at 6:45 pm. The first and last screenings have already gone rush, but tickets are still available for Wednesday's 9:15 pm show.

The new project from **The Cove**'s Louis Psihoyos, Racing Extinction surveys the ongoing battle to pull the planet's endangered species back from the brink by any means possible. (After The Cove, Psihoyos really understands the value of covert footage.)

The subject matter isn't exactly heartening – in fact it's downright soul-crushing – but the film finds rays of hope in the optimism and commitment of its human subjects. If Jane Goodall hasn't given up yet, neither can I.

Co-producer Gina Papabeis will introduce each screening and hold Q&As afterward. She may need a hug.

Racing Extinction: awe-inspiring images overpowered by activism narrative

by Alex Heeney | Oct 6, 2015 |



Alex Heeney

Editor-in-Chief

We're in an age of mass extinction. For centuries, you might expect one species to go extinct per year, but thanks to human activities, these numbers have increased by orders of magnitude. Director Louie Psihoyos' *Racing Extinction* aims to not just manufacture outrage about this fact, but to create a sense of wonder at the natural world through using stunning high tech imagery to reveal never-before-seen footage or impossible-to-hear sounds.

The film follows a group of environmental activists — nature photographers and retired business executives who have dedicated their lives to saving endangered species — as they track down illegal animal slaughter around the world and expose it, in an effort to stop it. One of the first examples of this we see is a Hollywood techie who sets up a large screen onto which he projects an image of an endangered species of whales, in front of a California restaurant serving the endangered species, to raise awareness about the issue and deter customers from patronizing the establishment. His persistence helped drive the company out of business.



Meanwhile, we follow the group of activists to China and Hong Kong, where sharks are being hunted for their fins. In one terrifying shot, we see a large outdoor storage facility packed with nothing but shark fins, destined to be sold to make the delicacy shark fin soup. We watch our heroes posing as restaurateurs in order to get behind-the-scenes images of just what goes on so that they can expose it. It's horrifying, and showing us this plainly has the desired effect.

Psihoyos also follows his activists on a parallel journey to discover images and sounds of lost or almost lost species. They visit Dr. Christopher W. Clark, a researcher in biofaustics at Cornell, where there is a large library of sounds of different species, including some now extinct. Clark plays the echolocation sounds of a blue whale for us — too low to be heard by the human ear — by speeding up the recording to reduce the wavelength to something our ears can process. Here, we feel just how much would be lost if these sounds were to disappear from the world.

In an effort to explain the connection between burning fossil fuels, the carbon dioxide build-up in the atmosphere, and endangered species, Psihoyus films footage through a carbon dioxide filter. This makes visible the usually invisible carbon dioxide emissions from cars, industrial plants, exhausts, and more. It allows us to visualize the emissions as pollutants rather than just some invisible source of mysterious origins. Similarly, there's also a methane filter to help us see the connection between extensive cattle raising, methane emissions, and the build-up of carbon emissions in the atmosphere.

Because the film's third goal is to cultivate optimism about the future and empower ordinary people to make a difference, it skimps too much on the explanation o the problem and the visuals. The carbon dioxide filtered camera produces dramatic images, but without a thorough explanation of exactly how this is linked to climate change — other than stating plainly that it is — it's unlikely to have the desired effect of really changing how people think about carbon dioxide emissions.

Similarly, the before and after images of the same location in the coral reef in the 1980s and today show a staggering difference: the coral is bleached and the site looks sick. But without an explanation of what we're seeing and how this is linked to human activity — how the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is changing the ocean chemistry which is in turn causing bleaching — it loses its full impact. We can mourn the loss of the reef, but without additional background knowledge, the average viewer won't understand why. Fragments of the puzzle are doled out but never linked into a full picture.



Obscura Digital's projection on the Empire State Building. Courtesy of Ocean Preservation Society.

The last third of the film is dedicated to showing the activists' collaboration with Obscura Digital to create mobile art installations — via powerful projectors — on major landmarks, such as the empire state building, which will educate about endangered species and show the beauty of these creatures. On the one hand, their project is exciting, and the film is successful at getting us engaged and on board wit the project. It may take planning, but it's the kind of thing that a small group of people can do, which can make a difference. We see legions of people stopping in Manhattan to view the light show in awe.

But it forces Psihoyos to sacrifice a lot of time which could have been spent showing us more dramatic images and helping us to better understand the situation. The high-tech visualizations and the beautiful images are what makes *Racing Extinction* a must-see. It's awe-inspiring and vital. As important as it is to get as many people as possible to join the fight, there's really not much more actionable information than in *An Inconvenient Truth*, but there's less background provided to get you to the point where you understand the problem enough to want to address it.

Nevertheless, showing us a successful campaign does have its uses. *Racing Extinction* premiered at Sundance in January alongside the Canadian documentary *How to Change the World*, which chronicled the rise of Green Peace in Canada and its Save the Whales movement. *How to Change the World* documented the problems that can occur when a movement grows too quickly with too many different strategies, and it's got a somewhat cynical message: the thing that changes the world can itself change into something unrecognizable.

Racing Extinction is about a movement that still needs to grow, and it's about encouraging separate, independent, grassroots efforts to help grow it. It leaves you feeling like you can make a difference rather than that changing the world is a nigh impossible feat. And in that, it is valuable. But given how powerful and fantastic the film's images are, I wish the focus had been on creating more of these — important and rare work — and less on activism in action.

Racing Extinction will screen on Oct. 7 and 8 at Bloor HotDocs in Toronto as part of Doc Soup. Tickets are available here. The film will screen on Oct. 17 in Sydney, Australia at the Antenna Documentary Festival. Tickets are available here. The film will have its worldwide broadcast premiere on Dec. 2. For more information about the film, visit the film's website here.

Toronto Film Scene – October 7, 2015 (1 of 2)

REVIEW: RACING EXTINCTION

by Katie O'Connor | Oct 7, 2015 | Independent & Repertory, Reviews | 0 comments



Racing Extinction is a documentary feature presented by Discovery about the mass extinction of endangered species. Directed by documentary filmmaker and photographer Louie Psihoyos, academy award winner for **The Cove** (2009), the film presents a heartbreaking yet in depth look at how human destruction has caused the environmental depletion of wildlife and the Earth. Psihoyos, along with scientists, researchers and activists, argues throughout the film that humanity does not understand the devastation it has caused to the environment and in turn is not doing anything about it.

This documentary will appeal to the animal rights and environment activist in everyone. This film gives attention to a number of aspects in the world of extinction including commercial trade of species where animals are treated with zero compassion and are bought and sold on the market for both trade and human consumption.

Racing Extinction is one of those hit-you-over-the-head-save-our-planet narratives. It is heavily propagated with a Greenpeace angle in its language and cinematic presentation. The film begins with Psihoyos and his crew establishing a sting operation to take down a restaurant that is serving whale meat. Throughout the film, Psyhoyos and his crew travel to China and Indonesia to seek out the industries which are bluntly destructive to the environment and cruel to endangered animals. This is one of the greatest strengths of the film: environmental destruction is exhibited through both a cultural and worldview lens.

Though this film is intriguing, difficult and inspiring, audiences do not receive any new ideas regarding the world in which we live although the message the film communicates is an important one: we can bring change through awareness, education and being more considerate of our actions and how we can help in sustaining the world in which we live.

IS RACING EXTINCTION SCREENING WORTHY?

It will spark the environmentalist and animal rights activist in everyone. Powerful, informative and worth a look.

Racing Extinction screens Wednesday, October 7, 2015 and Thursday, October 8, 2015 as part of Doc Soup at Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. Check their website for more information.

She Does The City – October 28, 2015



AUTHOR **SHEDOESTHECITY**

NOVEMBER'S DOC SOUP TO SCREEN TORONTO PREMIERE OF A BALLERINA'S TALE

POSTED ON OCTOBER 28, 2015

Hot Docs is pleased to announce that November's Doc Soup will present the Toronto premiere of *A Ballerina's Tale* on Wednesday, November 4 at 6:30 p.m. and 9:15 p.m., and on Thursday, November 5 at 6:45 p.m. at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema (506 Bloor St. West). Director Nelson George will be in attendance to introduce the film and answer questions following the screenings.

Doc Soup is a monthly screening series, bringing the latest Canadian and international documentaries to the big screen in Toronto.

A Ballerina's Tale, a remarkable story of how great talent and willpower can open doors in a very exclusive world, sheds light on important issues in the world of ballet.
Tickets are $16 (discount tickets are available for Bloor Hot Docs Cinema members) and can be purchased in advance online at www.hotdocs.ca or in person at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema box office. Check out the website for details on student pricing.
Doc Soup titles are announced at least one month prior to their screenings and, whenever possible, guest directors are in attendance!

Toronto Star – October 29, 2015

Female cabbie's story Driving with Selvi launches Reel Asian film festival

The 19th annual Reel Asian fest begins on Nov. 5 and runs to Nov. 15.

By: **Jason Anderson** Special to the Star, Published on Thu Oct 29 2015

A Ballerina's Tale at Doc Soup



In 2013, Misty Copeland broke through many of the barriers facing African-American dancers when she was given the lead role in the American Ballet Theatre's production of Stravinsky's *Firebird*. But tragedy befell her on the production's first night when six fractures were discovered in her left shin. Making its Toronto premiere in November's edition of Hot Docs' monthly Doc Soup series, *A Ballerina's Tale* is a frank and intimate account of Copeland's struggles. Director Nelson George provides intros and Q&As for each of the three screenings at the Bloor on Nov. 4 and 5.



Director Nelson George on his new documentary A Ballerina's Tale

BRAD WHEELER
The Globe and Mail
Published Friday, Oct. 30, 2015 4:48PM EDT
Last updated Friday, Oct. 30, 2015 4:57PM EDT

In his documentary *A Ballerina's Tale*, author and pop culture commentator Nelson George profiles Misty Copeland, the American Ballet Theatre's first ever black female principal dancer. We spoke to Mr. George from New York.

You've written on music, pop culture and sports, but what was your exposure to ballet before making this film?

I'd never seen a major ballet company. I'd never been to the Met. I first saw Misty at the Met in *The Firebird* in the spring of 2013, and I was incredibly impressed. Watching them move across the floor, the leaping ability, the power and also the grace.

In the film, we see Misty dealing with a stress fracture in her tibia. She puts on a brave face, but how concerned was she, truthfully, that she'd be able to recover from that injury?

She was very concerned. But come hell or high water, she was going to get back on that stage. How good would she be? How long could she do it? Those were open questions. But she was not going to not attempt to get back on the stage at American Ballet Theatre.

Now that she's back, what kind of priority does she place on being a role model for dancers who don't fit the traditional ballerina type, in terms of skin colour or body type?

The role-model thing she embraced. It's inevitable. At the screenings of the film, we've seen young audiences, girls as young as five with their ballet classes. They're not just black, but white, Hispanic et cetera. She has appeal and it's not all about her blackness. It's a likability. People root for her. Her appeal to young people is unbelievable.

Where does the role model responsibility fit in her career?

Misty will tell you that being a principal dancer now means, in many ways, that her dance career has just begun. They just announced that she's going to dance *The Firebird*, that she's going to dance *Swan Lake*, that she's going to dance *Romeo and Juliet*. All in one season. Her thinking is that she's going to have more time to perfect her craft, with more time to focus on just the lead roles. She fully expects her dancing, and her understanding of each of these significant roles, to increase.

In your book Elevating the Game: Black Men and Basketball, you caution young black males about aspiring to be a professional athlete, because the jobs are so scarce. Do you feel the same way about ballerinas, an even more exclusive profession?

The message of the film is not that everyone is going to be become a principal dancer. Yes, there is a world of ballet, which can be explored if you wish. But the larger interest to me is that ballet as an art form can not go forward without a wider base of appeal. What Misty has done is to make ballet part of the popular conversation, with a pop appeal we haven't seen since Baryshnikov in the seventies. So, the real impact of Misty will not be on stage. It will be in the audience.

A Ballerina's Tale *screens Nov. 4 and 5, with director Nelson George on hand for post screening Q&As. $8 to $16. Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W.,* boxoffice.hotdocs.ca

NOW Magazine – November 3, 2015 (1 of 2)

TALKING, DANCING, CIRCLING

Your mid-week movie options are a little more esoteric than usual

BY **NORMAN WILNER**
NOVEMBER 3, 2015



Misty Copeland in A Ballerina's Tale

If it feels like there are more one-off screenings happening around town, well, that's because there are. This week, for example, finds the latest **Cinema Politica** and MDFF screenings competing for your attention with the monthly **Doc Soup** premiere. Strap in, I'll try to get through them all.

Tonight (Tuesday November 3) at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, Cinema Politica kicks off its 2015 screening series with **On The Side Of The Road**, a documentary about the collective amnesia in Israel – both institutionally and among its individual citizens – about the events that led to the birth of the Jewish state.

Director Lia Tarachansky has an interesting perspective on the material, having grown up on a settlement in the West Bank before moving to Canada with her family in 2000. Returning to the territory to investigate the historical question, she's created a thoughtful (if quietly angry) film that pushes people to face some very uncomfortable questions about history and culpability.

It's definitely worth a look, and Tarachansky's post-screening Q&A should be very lively. The show starts at 6 pm; full details are **here**.

Tomorrow (Wednesday November 4), things get a little experimental with the latest in MDFF's screening series at Camera. Kazik Radwanski and Dan Montgomery have curated **a double-bill of two avant-garde features**, Gina Telaroli's Here's To The Future! – which deconstructs a scene from Michael Curtiz's 1932 drama The Cabin In The Cotton by having an assortment of people perform it over and over again – and Kurt Walker's Hit 2 Pass, which starts out being about some guys and a car and turns into an examination of the human need to construct narratives in the face of an indifferent universe. (At least, that's what I think it's about.)

The two films complement each other in really odd ways, so if anything in the previous paragraph intrigues you, you should definitely take a look. The show starts at 7 pm, and the full details are **here**.

Over at the Bloor, Doc Soup's selection for this month is Nelson George's **A Ballerina's Tale**, which tracks the path of American Ballet Theater dancer Misty Copeland through a potentially career-ending injury and her slow recovery – while also examining her career in the larger context of African-American dancers through the decades. George approaches his subject with a great deal of respect, which sometimes makes the film seem a little remote – but the more we learn about what Copeland's gone through to get to where she is, the more respect we have for her ourselves.

Doc Soup is screening A Ballerina's Tale at 6:30 pm and 9:15 pm on Wednesday evening and again at 6:45 pm on Thursday (November 5), each with an introduction and Q&A from director George, producer Leslie Norville and dancer Deirdre Kelly, who appears in the film. Tickets are **still available** for Wednesday's 9:15 pm show, but the other two have gone rush.

Toronto Star – November 4, 2015 (1 of 2)

A Ballerina’s Tale watches Misty Copeland break down ballet barriers

A Ballerina's Tale profiles dance star Misty Copeland, the first African-American principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre and her comeback from a potentially career-ending leg injury.

A Ballerina’s Tale

Directed by Nelson George. 85 minutes. Screening Nov. 4 and 5, Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. **STC**
A Ballerina’s Tale pirouettes around how rising star ballerina Misty Copeland’s overcame issues involving race and childhood poverty to become the first African-American principal dancer with New York’s American Ballet Theatre.

Although director Nelson George’s documentary touches on how Copeland got to this historic place, including changing long-held opinions about what a ballerina should look like, the bulk of the films focuses on her comeback from potentially career-ending injuries. As a result, those unfamiliar with Copeland’s beginnings may feel something is missing here.

Cameras follow Copeland after excruciating multiple shin stress fractures flare up as she premiered in the lead of *Firebird*. Surgery and a slow recovery followed while Copeland worked toward her biggest role ever — *Swan Lake*’s Odette/Odile — and George has full access to the process.



OSKAR LANDI/SUNDANCE SELECTS VIA AP

Misty Copeland's journey back from injury is documented in A Ballerina's Tale.

While a full comeback was uncertain, what is never in dispute is Copeland's determination and sublime talent. *A Ballerina's Tale* shows her to be a worthy inspiration both as an individual and artist. Archival footage of a young teenage Copeland in ballet class reveals a dance protégé, while a more recent scene of her performing a solo from *La Bayadere* is ethereal.

But as Copeland worked her way into becoming a strong, poised and incredibly lyrical ballerina, she wasn't always a confident one, feeling alone and often disconnected as a black woman in the predominantly white ballet world. A group of influential African-American women acted as nurturing role models while trail-blazing female dancers of colour who went before Copeland inspired her.

One of the best scenes in the film puts Copeland and Raven Wilkinson (recently turned 80) of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in an apartment living room, comparing the steps they learned while dancing in the Swan Lake corps de ballet: two generations of ballerinas who broke down barriers to share their love of dance.

More on thestar.com

Toronto Star – November 4, 2015 (1 of 2)

Ballerina Misty Copeland's 'beauty, poise, talent' inspired director of ballerina documentary

Filmmaker and author Nelson George brings 'A Ballerina's Tale' to the Bloor cinema.



COURTESY A BALLERINA'S TALE

Nelson George directed A Ballerina's Tale.

By: **Linda Barnard** Staff Reporter, Published on Wed Nov 04 2015

It's crystal clear 33-year-old American Ballet Theatre star Misty Copeland is having her big moment.

The first African-American principal dancer with the 75-year-old New York company, she rewrote the rules for what was considered the "proper" esthetic for a female classical dancer — pale, flat-chested and thin — with her powerful, feminine physique.
Recently named one of Glamour's Women of the Year (alongside Caitlyn Jenner and Reese Witherspoon, among others), she's an author, made the cover of Time magazine, earned raves in her Broadway debut in *On The Town* and is producing a dance drama series for television, while her fiercely executed Under Armour video ad has had more than 9 million hits.
Enter filmmaker, producer (*Top Five*, *Finding the Funk*), critic, columnist and author Nelson George, who had never been to the ballet and was only aware of Copeland through her talked-about video and stage performances with Prince.

"I knew it had a complicated legacy and the ballet world was a very white one," said George.
George and Copeland met at a cocktail party in 2012. His first thought: "Wow, a black ballerina."
They talked. "I interrogated her," is how George puts it. Then he saw her dance the lead at the ABT premiere of *Firebird* and the two became friends. When Copeland faced the challenge of coming back — if she could — from potentially career-ending stress fractures in her shin to dance the roles of Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, she agreed to let George film the process.

That became the centre of his documentary about Copeland, *A Ballerina's Tale*.

George will be in Toronto to do post-screening Q&A session when *A Ballerina's Tale* screens at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema Nov. 4 and 5 as part of the Doc Soup series. He spoke to the Star from Brooklyn, N.Y.

Why her time is now

"Ballet needed her. We have an era of very sexualized female performers and reality-star women. We have extreme images in the cultural landscape," said George, pointing out Copeland combines "beauty, poise talent," which takes her beyond ballet. She will continue to go beyond the boundaries of her art, George believes, as a dancer, writer and influencer.

The lesson

"I knew she had a likability she had a poise, that was quiet attractive," said George. "What I didn't know was she was a warrior, which I saw when she came back (from her injuries)."

Spike Lee, Chris Rock, Misty Copeland

"I've been around people who went from unknown to famous: Spike Lee back in the mid-'80s, Chris Rock when he was making his journey from promising comic to big star. When it happens there's something mystical that happens when someone becomes part of the zeitgeist."

The film's audience

"The audiences have been a third to half parents with their daughters. And sometimes groups of girls from dance classes," said George, who observed most women he talked to either dreamed of being involved in ballet as girls, or idolized dance. "It is hitting a chord with young dancers and young women. One of the points I would make about the film is Misty is focused on getting more dancers into the world of classical ballet. She is expanding the audience for ballet."

Copeland as producer

Copeland helped steer the tone of the film as well as ensuring the dance footage was used properly.

"We did tons of interviews and we talked to a lot of people in her life and we both agreed to focus on the now as opposed to her childhood," said George of Copeland's "impoverished background," which both felt was already well documented.

"At the end of the film there is a roll call of (African-American) ballerinas and that was her idea," added George, explaining Copeland wanted to "acknowledge the women that came before her."

Solo dancer, not alone

Being the first at anything is tough and the doc includes an impressive group of black women in leadership roles who helped Copeland confidently grow her career, including ABT board member Susan Fales-Hill.

"That was one of the most important things for me, the idea of mentorship. To quote Hillary Clinton, 'it takes a village'," said George. "She (Copeland) had talent but she didn't have a sense of mission. They helped her develop, pushed her as an artist. Also a lot of the black women who were in the film were people who took ballet and studied classical ballet and were told it wasn't for them."

REVIEW: A BALLERINA'S TALE

by Amanda Clarke | Nov 4, 2015 | Independent & Repertory, Reviews



The popularity of ballerina Misty Copeland has managed to transcend the ballet. As the only black dancer at the prestigious American Ballet Theatre, she is an inspiration to thousands of little girls who dream of being ballet dancers but have been told they don't fit the strict body and image requirements. **A Ballerina's Tale** follows Copeland's life and the importance of her career in bringing ballet out of its white supremacist roots and into the 21st century.

Copeland is a compelling subject for a documentary. She has never shied away from identifying as a black ballerina. Her racial difference within the ballet world is one that she embraces in the hopes of creating a conversation around the issues of race and body image that plague ballet. Copeland is the perfect ambassador for a more diverse ballet—she is technically proficient, charismatic and willing to take on the role of trailblazer and role model.

Unfortunately, director Nelson George never manages to settle on exactly what he wants to accomplish with **A Ballerina's Tale**. The film wants to be an intimate look into the life of Copeland, but it also wants to be a look at the history of black ballet dancers and the massive barriers that they have had to overcome. These two things are not mutually exclusive, but George never manages to integrate them, spending a great deal of time on Copeland training, chatting with fellow dancers and, most inexplicably, a random anecdote about Red Lobster, which while charming, takes up a chunk of the film and adds nothing to the film's overall goal.

The result is a film that almost diminishes Copeland's accomplishments by glossing over any barriers she has had to face. The facts that she grew up in an underprivileged neighborhood or was introduced to ballet at the late age of thirteen are only mentioned in passing as the film jumps ahead to Copeland as an established dancer. Even her rise within the company is missing any drama. There is a brief mention of Copeland feeling out of place as the only black dancer in the American Ballet Theatre, but it is made clear the company has always fully supported her. This works in direct contrast to what the rest of the film seems to be hinting at: that it's extremely difficult for a black ballerina to make it to Copeland's level.

IS A BALLERINA'S TALE SCREENING WORTHY?

If your a fan of Misty Copeland or ballet in general, the backstage footage and dance clips make it worth a look, but you can wait to watch it online.

A Ballerina's Tale screens Wednesday, November 4 and Thursday, November 5, 2015 at Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. Check their website for more information.

Thursday November 05, 2015

Why ballet needs ground-breaking 'pop star' Misty Copeland

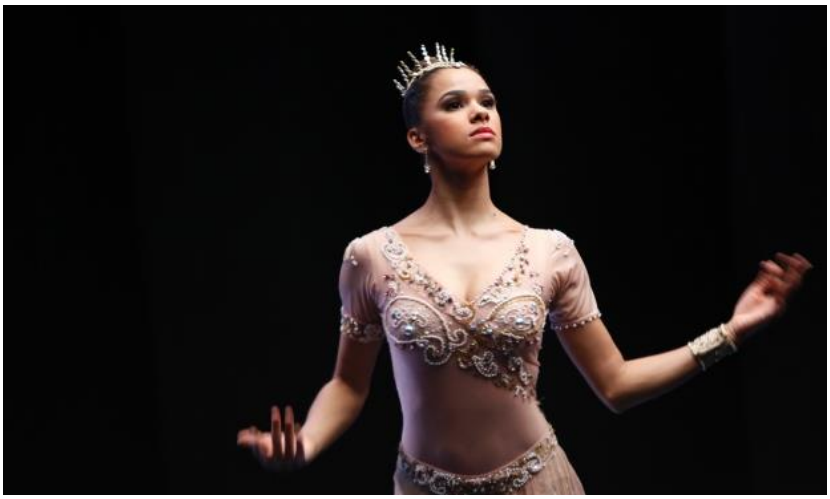
Listen 19:42

A Ballerina's Tale is a new documentary that brings together two fascinating people: the subject, Misty Copeland, and well-known director-producer Nelson George.

Copeland is the first black woman to be a principal dancer at a major international company. She's a groundbreaker, and a crossover figure who's toured with Prince and collaborated with Yo-Yo Ma.

George, a filmmaker and critic specializing in African-American culture, brings a unique lens to her story. He follows Misty Copeland at a major turning point in her career.

Today he joins Shad to discuss the surprising ways Copeland is challenging the culture and aesthetic of the artform.



Celebrated filmmaker Nelson George on the elaborate dance between filmmaker and subject. (Oskar Landi)

Toronto Star – November 26, 2015

Blood in the Snow festival features Canadian horror movies



HOT DOCS

Very Semi-Serious explores The New Yorker's cartoons.

By: **Jason Anderson** Special to the Star, Published on Thu Nov 26 2015

Very Semi-Serious at Doc Soup: If you're the kind of person who buys The New Yorker just for the cartoons (and there's nothing wrong with that), then you can't afford to miss the latest Toronto premiere in Hot Docs' monthly Doc Soup series. Directed by Leah Wolchok, *Very Semi-Serious* explores the art and craft of the venerable magazine's funny bits as overseen by cartoon editor Bob Mankoff and executed by the indispensable likes of Roz Chast. Special guests for the screenings on Dec. 2 and 3 at the Bloor are the film's executive producer Deborah Shaffer (all three showings), cartoonist Liana Finck (Dec. 2) and Mankoff himself (Dec. 3).

REVIEW: VERY SEMI-SERIOUS

by Sean Kelly | Dec 1, 2015 | Independent & Repertory, Reviews | 0 comments



Since its beginnings as a humour weekly in 1925, cartoons have been a key part of "*The New Yorker*" magazine. Bob Mankoff has been the cartoon editor of the magazine since 1997 and every Tuesday he receives submissions from eager freelance cartoonists looking to get their work bought and published. Some of these—such as George Booth and Mort Gerberg—have been submitting their drawings for decades, while others—such as Liana Finck and Ed Steed—are hoping for their big break.

Very Semi-Serious is a look behind the scenes at the cartoons that appear in "*The New Yorker*." While other publications have lessened or discontinued their inclusions of drawings, they have remained the spirit of "*The New Yorker*," which pays the highest rates to freelance cartoonists. As such, that makes getting into the magazine a very competitive task for cartoonists young and old, all of whom line up every week to show their work to Bob Mankoff. The magazine receives thousands of submissions a week, even though only about fifteen end up being bought and published.

Many different cartoonists are profiled over the course of **Very Semi-Serious**, each of whom have their own individual inspirations for the work that they draw. This includes George Booth, who is one of "*The New Yorker*'s" most prolific cartoonists having 851 drawings published since 1964. There is also Liana Finck, a young woman with Asperger's, who sees art as a way to save herself. Finck is seen in the film having multiple conversations with Bob Mankoff, who encourages her to keep on submitting and improving her work.

A film about the cartoonists of "*The New Yorker*" wouldn't be complete without showcasing the cartoons themselves. Indeed, **Very Semi-Serious** features multiple cartoons that have appeared within the magazine's history. This includes the Gothic-inspired work of "*The New Yorker*'s" most well-known cartoonist, Charles Addams, who is better known as the creator of the Addams Family.

"The New Yorker" continues to make the "familiar strange and the strange familiar," with the magazine still remaining one of the primary outlets for aspiring cartoonists everywhere. In turn, **Very Semi-Serious** a very interesting look at the process of choosing the cartoons that go into the magazine and how "*The New Yorker*" continues to make it by, in a world where magazines are less of a focus.

IS VERY SEMI-SERIOUS SCREENING WORTHY?

Showcasing both the cartoons and cartoonists of "*The New Yorker*" magazine, **Very-Semi Serious** is a film worth watching for aspiring artists everywhere.

Very Semi-Serious screens Wednesday, December 2, 2015 and Thursday, December 3, 2015 as part of Doc Soup at Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. Check their website for more information.

blogTO – December 2, 2015

Doc Soup: VERY SEMI-SERIOUS



Take an unprecedented behind-the-scenes tour of The New Yorker and discover the art, inspiration and madness that go into creating the magazine's iconic single panel cartoons.

Executive producer Deborah Shaffer will be in attendance at all screenings to introduce the film and answer questions. She will be joined by cartoonist Liana Finck on Wednesday, December 2, and The New Yorker cartoon editor Bob Mankoff on Thursday, December 3.

WED, DEC 2 - 6:30 PM & 9:15 PM

THU, DEC 3 - 6:45 PM

Single Ticket: $16

Bloor Member Ticket: $12, $10, $8

Student Same-Day Ticket: $8 (with valid student ID, Wednesday 9:15 p.m. screening only)

NOW Magazine – December 2, 2015 (1 of 2)

WHEN FILM SCREENINGS FACE OFF

The cinephile's dilemma: a pair of premieres on the same Wednesday night.

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

DECEMBER 2, 2015



Very Semi-Serious screens at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema

It happened last month, and it's happening again tonight (Wednesday December 2): **a Doc Soup premiere** at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema is squaring off against MDFF's **latest indie evening** at The Royal. Fortunately, the two screenings aren't really in competition for the same audience.

MDFF's event, the latest in an ongoing series giving Toronto audiences a chance to see independent documentaries and features that might otherwise miss out on theatrical exposure, pairs Khalik Allah's hour-long documentary Field Niggas – a stylized ethnographic study of the people Allah's been photographing on the corner of 125th Street and Lexington Avenue in New York City – with Isiah Medina's experimental short Time Is The Sun.

Doors open at 7 pm with the screening at 8 pm, and both filmmakers will be present for a post-screening discussion. Tickets are available **in advance** for $8, or $10 at the door.

Over at the Bloor, Doc Soup is presenting something a bit lighter than its usual fare: Very Semi-Serious, a look at The New Yorker's signature cartoons. You know, the ones that contain an entire satirical universe in one black-and-white panel – and which, it turns out, can almost always use "**Christ, What An Asshole**" as an alternate caption.

Director Leah Wolchok investigates the magazine's selection process by following cartoon editor Bob Mankoff and his ever-shifting stable of newbies and veteran freelancers. If you've ever wondered how much work goes into those little scribbles – and why some of them seem so deliberately obtuse – you'll definitely want to check this out.

Tickets are $16 apiece, with a discount for Bloor members, and available **right here**. As is customary, Doc Soup is screening Very Semi-Serious not once but three times – at 6:30 pm and 9:15 pm tonight, and again tomorrow (Thursday December 3) at 6:45 pm. Executive producer Deborah Shaffer will be present for Q&As at all three screenings, accompanied tonight by cartoonist Liana Finck (who also appears in the documentary) and tomorrow night by Mankoff himself.

Maybe catch the MDFF screening tonight and check out Very Semi-Serious tomorrow? Covers all the bases, and you get the maximum exposure to Toronto's cinema culture. Seems like a good idea to me.

Toronto Star – December 31, 2015 (1 of 4)

Peter Howell's 10 most anticipated films for 2016

Discovery is the greatest pleasure for movie buffs, critics included. But sometimes you can see a film coming that looks like it might have the cinematic right stuff. Here's 10 for 2016.



TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICES

From left, Leslie Jones, Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wiig and Kate McKinnon star in the upcoming reboot of Ghostbusters. The film will be released on July 15.

By: **Peter Howell** Movie Critic, Published on Thu Dec 31 2015

When people ask me which movie I'm most looking forward to, my usual answer is, "The one I haven't been expecting."

Discovery is the greatest pleasure for movie buffs, critics included. It's the thrill of finding a wonderful film you want to tell people about, either by a new director or a seasoned one who found fresh inspiration.
I didn't anticipate, for example, the delights that were the Sundance discovery*Tangerine* or the *Star Wars* franchise reboot *The Force Awakens*, both of which ended up on my Top 10 list for 2015.

The former wasn't on my radar; the latter I feared as another disappointment like the dreaded prequel trilogy. Happy surprises in both cases.

But some films you can see coming, and remain hopeful about. So here are 10 movies among the 2016 arrivals that I'm most looking forward to seeing, or viewing again as the case may be. Release dates are subject to change:

The Russian Woodpecker

(Doc Soup Jan. 6-7)
This documentary winner from Sundance 2015, directed by first-timer Chad Gracia, makes conspiracy dramas such as The X-Files seem like cheap thrills. Fedor Alexandrovich, a Ukrainian artist turned sleuth, ominously links mysterious radio blips to the Chernobyl nuke plant disaster and brutal Russian politics. Gracia will introduce and answer questions at these Doc Soup screenings at Bloor Hot Docs cinema, details at bloorcinema.com.

Operation Avalanche
(Sundance premiere Jan. 22, release TBA)
This space-race thriller of U.S. versus Russia espionage by Toronto's Matt Johnson (*The Dirties*), world-premiering at Sundance 2016, adds intriguing authenticity to its speculative premise of Apollo 11 fraud. It was filmed in the studio where Stanley Kubrick made *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a connection that figures into conspiracy theories that the 1969 moon landing was faked.



Toronto director Matt Johnson addresses the Apollo 11 fraud conspiracy with Operation Avalanche.

Hail, Caesar!
(Feb. 5)

The Coen Bros. skewer Hollywood's Golden Age (1930-'60), with a period comedy sparked by the kidnapping of a difficult movie star, played by the dapper George Clooney. Drawn into the mayhem are a director (Ralph Fiennes), a studio fixer (Josh Brolin), a singing sailor (Channing Tatum), a manoeuvering mermaid (Scarlett Johansson) and gossipmonger Hedda Hopper (Tilda Swinton).

The Witch
(Feb. 26)

When a baby is kidnapped from the clutches of a hardworking family on the outskirts of a 17th-century village, is a wolf to blame or something far more sinister? Another Sundance 2015 prize winner finally arrives, but again the wait is worth it, especially if you count the shudders. First-timer Robert Eggers exhibits complete mastery of form and menace behind the camera while newcomer Anya Taylor-Joy excels in front of it.

Knight of Cups

(March 4)

No recent year would be complete without at least a rumour of a new Terrence Malick film, since the monkish auteur has been uncommonly busy. This drama of Hollywood alienation premiered at last year's Berlinale, but it's finally hitting local screens. Christian Bale plays a Tinseltown screenwriter who is aroused by financial and carnal pleasures but haunted by death and family dysfunction. Cate Blanchett, Natalie Portman, Antonio Banderas and Teresa Palmer co-star.

Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice

(March 25)
There will be a slew of comic book and superhero movies in 2016, as usual, but this one promises an interesting combination of old and new ideas. Henry Cavill gets a second shot at playing Superman and Ben Affleck takes over the role of Batman that Christian Bale departed following *The Dark Knight Rises*. Will Affleck make a convincing Caped Crusader? Jesse Eisenberg plays supervillain Lex Luther, potentially great casting.



Scarlett Johansson stars as a synchronized swimmer in Hail, Caesar! The film, directed by the Coen brothers, will be released Feb. 5.

Ghostbusters

(July 15)

Purists may squawk — and many have been — but who can resist this gender-flipped take on the spook-tacular 1984 comedy of rentable ghost wranglers? Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wiig, Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones star as the new Ghostbusters, donning the jumpsuits and grabbing the proton packs as they do battle with recalcitrant spirits. Paul Feig directs and co-writes (with Katie Dippold), Ivan Reitman produces. For a conceptual shakeup like this, who you gonna call?

Suicide Squad

(Aug. 5)
Superheroes can get awfully predictable, which is why this assembly of semi-virtuous super creeps looks promising, even if it is a contradiction in terms. Filmed in Toronto with *Fury*'s David Ayer at the helm and pen, with Jared Leto's vibrantly unsettling Joker leading a colourful cast that also includes Will Smith, Margo Robbie and Viola Davis, this has solid franchise potential. Can villains get on the good foot while doing the bad thing?

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story

(Dec. 16)
Ever wonder how Princess Leia got the plans to Darth Vader's Death Star? That's the reported premise of this *Star Wars* spinoff. The word "prequel" is grounds for concern, after the three non-masterpieces series creator George Lucas foisted upon fans. But this one is directed by Gareth Edwards (*Monsters*), with a top-flight cast that includes Felicity Jones, Mads Mikkelsen and Forest Whitaker. As Yoda might say, a new hope we have.

Passengers

(Dec. 21)
Not much is known about this sci-fi romance starring Jennifer Lawrence (*Hunger Games*) and Chris Pratt *(Jurassic World*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*), directed by Morten Tyldum (*The Imitation Game*). But with this cast and director, I'm already in line and so are many other curious people, I expect. Lawrence has been describing this in interviews as her first movie with a sex scene, but let's hope it has more going for it than just that.

Wylie Writes – January 5, 2016

THE RUSSIAN WOODPECKER

JANUARY 5, 2016 ADDISON WYLIE



What we have here is a patchy documentary that works to great effect in spurts.

The Russian Woodpecker, Chad Gracia's collaborative effort with Ukrainian artist Fedor Alexandrovich, is dry as talc – almost as if the filmmakers realized there were no other ways to deliver their factual information. Alexandrovich – as well as his scathing history with the unforgettable Chernobyl disaster – is almost always the centre of attention, and his stature and integrity is restless as he evaluates the motivation behind the documentary and the mission driving the film. This makes Fedor an erratically transfixing focal point, which comes in handy when the film's events call for Alexandrovich and Gracia to switch gears. The same payoff doesn't exactly come to fruition during formal "talking head" interviews.

The Russian Woodpecker is Gracia's filmmaking debut and he shows some strengths with how he delivers spontaneity. However, I would like to see what he could do (as well as award-winning cinematographer Artem Ryzhykov) within the guidelines of a news outlet. The final scenes of*The Russian Woodpecker* has Gracia thinking on the fly and collecting tons of poignant B-roll that chronicles an important place in our modern era – the images are gripping, disturbing, and meaningful.

Somebody, please, hire Chad Gracia and issue him an assignment that entails consequential content in life-or-death situations. I don't wish ill will towards the filmmaker by dropping him in dire conditions, but his expertise will be put to better use here than within the bounds of a feature-length doc.

REVIEW: THE RUSSIAN WOODPECKER

by Jordan Adler | Jan 5, 2016 | Independent & Repertory, Reviews | 0 comments



Fedor Alexandrovich is an artist from Kiev who is fascinated by the Chernobyl disaster. He still has remnants of radioactivity in his body from the mishap, which affects his mental health. The Ukrainian believes that there is a connection between the nuclear accident from 1986 and the failure of a nearby Cold War weapon, the Duga. He speculates and hopes to uncover the ties between Soviet policy and that dreadful chapter of Ukraine's history. However, the more Alexandrovich speaks with Russian officials about that disaster, the farther down the rabbit hole he falls.

The Russian Woodpecker is an absorbing conspiracy theory thriller, although it only works up until a point. This is a documentary that revolves around one man's efforts to clear the mud surrounding a major event in history and prove his theory. The conclusion he seeks has potentially explosive consequences. As a result, much of the film hinges on the material and data that Alexandrovich finds to help his thesis.

The documentary is mostly devoted to Alexandrovich and his crew hoping to find some big revelations. They speak with weapon designers, Chernobyl investigators and ministers—sometimes, with a hidden camera. The subject is desperate to find a breakthrough to prove his hypothesis; unfortunately, Alexandrovich doesn't come up with much, and his argument soon falls apart.

Since the subject's agitated state makes him sometimes hard to trust, the documentary also becomes frustrating to follow. He remains insistent that the Chernobyl disaster was no accident. However, the small suggestions that tilt toward his side are too slight to ultimately help his argument. Watching **The Russian Woodpecker** is sometimes akin to rummaging through YouTube comments: what is well-argued truth and what is highfalutin fallacy can be unclear. On the other hand, Chad Gracia's film does a potent job of illustrating the testy relations between Russia and Ukraine through the past century. He compresses a lot of world history into a slim 81 minutes. Still, the context is usually clear and one rarely feels overwhelmed by the subject. (The turmoil from Ukraine in 2014 bookends the film, giving the subject matter even more primacy.) Unfortunately, as Alexandrovich's mystery becomes enigmatic, **The Russian Woodpecker** only raises more questions than it truly answers. It is an unfinished, and likely misleading, passion project.

IS THE RUSSIAN WOODPECKER SCREENING WORTHY?

Cold War history buffs and those intrigued by conspiracy theories may be entertained. Otherwise, stay at home and flip through a Tom Clancy novel instead.

The Russian Woodpecker screens Wednesday, January 6 and Thursday, January 7, 2016 at Bloor Hot Docs Cinema as part of the Doc Soup screening series. Director Chad Gracia will be in attendance to introduce the film and participate in a Q&A with the audience. Check their website for more information.

NOW Magazine – January 6, 2016 (1 of 2)

SHADOW OF THE COLD WAR

The latest Doc Soup selection is chilling, to say the least

BY **NORMAN WILNER**
JANUARY 6, 2016



If you caught Michael Mann's **Blackhat** last year, you'll remember the eerie sequence in which super-hacker Chris Hemsworth is sent into an evacuated, highly radioactive Chinese nuclear plant to retrieve a hard drive. Those few minutes are the best thing about a highly problematic movie, creating a constant, squirming tension that had audiences cringing from an invisible threat.

The tension quickly dispersed as Hemsworth and company got their prize and bugged out, but imagine grappling with that for an entire movie and you'll have an understanding of Chad Gracia's **The Russian Woodpecker**, which Doc Soup presents tonight (Wednesday January 6) and tomorrow (Thursday January 7) at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema.

A documentary constructed as a conspiracy thriller, The Russian Woodpecker follows Ukrainian activist Fedor Alexandrovich, who grew up close enough to Chernobyl that he has mildly radioactive isotopes in his bones and has come to believe, after decades of admittedly obsessive research, that the 1986 meltdown was somehow connected to a nearby Soviet military installation called the Duga-1.

History tells us the Duga-1 was a **massive radar array**, part of the distant early warning system designed to track an inbound nuclear strike. The apparatus was powerful enough to cause shortwave radio interference that sounded like a rapid clicking noise – thus, the nickname "Russian Woodpecker" – but it also ran insanely over budget, to the point where the whole thing was about to be written off as a failure.

Alexandrovich has come to believe that the Chernobyl meltdown was triggered to cover up that failure, and while it's an outlandish theory it's not exactly preposterous: you just have to believe that certain politicians could be so monstrously cynical as to contaminate or kill thousands in order to protect their own position. And given that Alexandrovich's investigation takes place in the shadow of the Ukraine revolution, well, monstrous cynicism just seems like a reasonable point of view.

The Russian Woodpecker screens tonight at 6:30 pm and 9:15 pm, and again tomorrow at 6:45 pm, with director Gracia present for Q&A's after each showing. Tickets are available in advance **here**. You should check it out.

The top 5 film events in Toronto this winter

Posted by **Jeanie Tran** / JANUARY 10, 2016



Film events in Toronto this winter will shelter you from the cold and transport you to other worlds. On now, there's still time to check out Canada's Top 10 Film Festival at the TIFF Bell Lightbox but if you miss it, don't fret - there are still plenty of upcoming and ongoing film events to keep you on the edge of your seat.
Here are my picks for the top film events in Toronto this winter.

Doc Soup at the Bloor
This annual series, showcasing "the world's hottest docs," screens at the Bloor Cinema until mid-April starting with the Fear of 13 on Feb 3 and 4. Screenings take place on the first Wednesdays and Thursdays of each month, and are often followed by Q&As with special guests. Also check out Doc Soup Sundays (runs until June), a spin-off of the regular series featuring docs about art, culture and design.

Canadaland at the Movies
Podcaster Jesse Brown of Canadaland is teaming up with the Revue Cinema to launch the inaugural series. The programming will consist of news- and media-focused films. The first film on the roster is Deadline-U.S.A.starring Humphrey Bogart, which will screen on January 27. Check out The Revue's schedule for more details.

The Great Digital Film Festival
Taking place at the Scotiabank Theatre and the Cineplex Cinemas Scarborough (and at other select Cineplex theatres across Canada), from February 5 to 11 this festival will screen both recent and older sci-fi, fantasy and cult films. Titles include Dirty Harry, True Romance and Star Trek: Into Darkness.

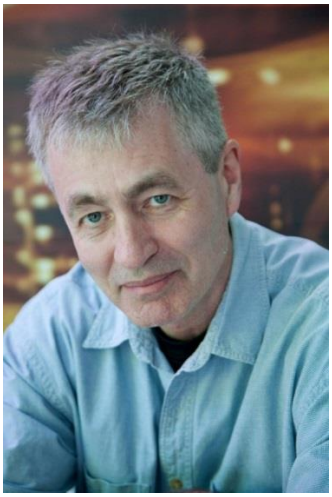
Toronto Black Film Festival
TBFF will take place from February 10 to 14. Now in its fourth year, the festival will showcase films about black people's experiences and perspectives from around the world. The opening film will be Thina Sobabili, which is South Africa's submission to the upcoming Academy Awards in the bid for Best Foreign-Language Film nomination.

Food on Film
TIFF Bell Lightbox will host its fifth season of Food on Film, which starts in March and runs until the end of June. The screenings will give film buffs and food lovers the chance to come together to enjoy "the best in culinary cinema."

Canadian Press – January 19, 2016

'Hoop Dreams' director Steve James to be honoured by Hot Docs

by THE CANADIAN PRESS



TORONTO – “Hoop Dreams” director Steve James will be honoured by Toronto’s Hot Docs International Documentary Festival this year.

Organizers for the festival say a retrospective program of James’ films will be timed for Hot Docs, which runs April 28 to May 8.

James has produced and directed a number of popular documentary films, including “Life Itself,” focused on the life of film critic Roger Ebert, and “The Interrupters,” about a group of people trying to protect their Chicago communities from violence.

“Hoop Dreams” received critical acclaim when was released in 1994, garnering widespread attention for its subjects, a rarity for a documentary at the time.

The film also generated controversy when it was snubbed by the documentary wing of the Oscars.

“Over a career spanning three decades his body of exceptional work has demonstrated his commitment to illuminating stories of grit, honour and personal sacrifice, and solidified his status as a master of the documentary form,” said Hot Docs’ director of programming Shane Smith in a statement.

The Hollywood Reporter - January 19, 2016

'Hoop Dreams' Director Steve James to Get Career Tribute at Hot Docs Festival



North America's largest doc festival will also honor the American filmmaker with a movie retrospective.

Steve James, whose Roger Ebert appreciation film *Life Itself* was snubbed 20 years after his 1994 film *Hoop Dreams* was also left off the Oscar doc shortlist, is to be feted at the upcoming Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

James is to receive North America's largest doc festival's outstanding achievement award and a film retrospective at the April 28 to May 8, 2016 event in Toronto.

"Over a career spanning three decades his body of exceptional work has demonstrated his commitment to illuminating stories of grit, honor and personal sacrifice, and solidified his status as a master of the documentary form," Hot Docs director of programming Shane Smith said in a statement Tuesday.

Hoop Dreams, a film about the lives of two inner-city basketball players, being glaringly shut out of the Oscar doc race in 1994 is widely credited with raising the profile of documentaries at the Academy Awards. James' other films produced by Kartemquin Films includes *Stevie* (2002), *The New Americans* (2004), and *The Interrupters* (2011).

Previous winners of Hot Docs' outstanding achievement awards include Werner Herzog, Errol Morris, Nick Broomfield, Frederick Wiseman, D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, and Albert Maysles.

Indiewire - January 19, 2016

'Hoop Dreams' Director Steve James to Receive Hot Docs 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award

By Mike Lown | Indiewire

Past recipients include Werner Herzog, Errol Morris and Albert Maysles.



For over twenty years, Steve James has been a highly acclaimed director and producer in the world of documentary filmmaking. His influential "Hoop Dreams" dazzled audiences in 1994 and is widely considering to be one of the genre's leading titles, and he has had continued success with films like "The New Americans," "The Interrupters," and the recent Roger Ebert doc "Life Itself."

Now, James' work will be recognized with an Outstanding Achievement Award by the Hot Docs Festival, the largest documentary festival in North America. Past recipients of the award include Werner Herzog, Errol Morris, Frederick Wiseman, D.A. Pennebaker and Albert Maysles. Along with the award, the festival will be screening an extensive retrospective of James' work.

"It's an honor to celebrate a filmmaker of such depth, humanity and integrity as Steve James with the Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award," said Hot Docs Director of Programming Shane Smith in an official statement. "Over a career spanning three decades his body of exceptional work has demonstrated his commitment to illuminating stories of grit, honour and personal sacrifice; and solidified his status as a master of the documentary form."

The 23rd edition of the festival has also announced plans to showcase recent work from Australia as part of its Made In program. The Made In Program was established to celebrate a specific country or region's contribution to documentary film, with past programs including films from India, South America, and Southeastern Europe. More details on Made In, along with the Steve James retrospective, will be announced sometime in March. Hot Docs will take place April 28 – May 8.

Realscreen - January 19, 2016 (1 of 2)

Hot Docs to recognize Steve James, Rosie Dransfeld

by Daniele Alcinii



Canadian festival Hot Docs is to celebrate American director-producer Steve James (pictured) with its 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award, while filmmaker Rosie Dransfeld will be honored with this year's Focus On retrospective.

Hot Docs is slated to screen a retrospective on James' career during the 23rd annual festival, which this year runs from April 28 to May 8. Having worked in partnership with Chicago-based producer Kartemquin Films for more than 30 years, James' film credits include the Oscar-nominated *Hoop Dreams*, *Life Itself*, *Prefontaine*, *At the Death House Door*, *Stevie* and *The Interrupters*.

"It's an honour to celebrate a filmmaker of such depth, humanity and integrity as Steve James with the Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award," said Shane Smith, festival director of programming, in a statement. "Over a career spanning three decades, his body of exceptional work has demonstrated his commitment to illuminating stories of grit, honor and personal sacrifice; and solidified his status as a master of the documentary form."

Dransfeld, meanwhile, is to be presented with the Focus On retrospective, which showcases the work of a mid-career Canadian filmmaker. Her filmography includes *Bosses*, *The Dogwalker*, *Home Movies*, *Who Cares*, *The Ward, Anti-Social Limited* and *Broke,* for which she received a Gemini Award for Best Social-Political Documentary in 2010. Dransfeld is currently producing two documentaries as part of 'The Transplant Project' for Canadian pubcaster CBC's *The Nature of Things* and the Documentary Channel.

“Rosie Dransfeld’s deeply humane films shine a light on the forgotten and the marginalized, her vérité filmmaking sensitively revealing their resilience and resolve,” added Smith.

The films screening in both retrospectives are to be announced in March.

Previous Outstanding Achievement Award honorees have included Patricio Guzmán (2015), Adam Curtis (2014), Les Blank (2013), Michel Brault (2012), Terence Macartney-Filgate (2011), Kim Longinotto (2010), Alanis Obomsawin (2009), Richard Leacock (2008), Heddy Honigmann (2007), Werner Herzog (2006) and Errol Morris (2005).

Meanwhile, the past Focus On recipients were Carole Laganière (2015), John Zaritsky (2014), Peter Mettler (2013), John Kastner (2012), Alan Zweig (2011), Tahani Rached (2010), Ron Mann (2009), Jennifer Baichwal (2008), Kevin McMahon (2007), Serge Giguère (2006), Larry Weinstein (2005), Nettie Wild (2004), Shelley Saywell (2003) and Zacharias Kunuk (2002).

Hot Docs Announces Recipient of Outstanding Achievement Award



The Hot Docs Board of Directors is pleased to announce that it has chosen Steve James as the recipient of its 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award. As part of the honour, Hot Docs will screen a retrospective during the 23rd annual Festival, April 28 to May 8, celebrating James's distinguished career as a director and producer.

"It's an honour to celebrate a filmmaker of such depth, humanity and integrity as Steve James with the Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award," says Hot Docs director of programming Shane Smith. "Over a career spanning three decades his body of exceptional work has demonstrated his commitment to illuminating stories of grit, honour and personal sacrifice; and solidified his status as a master of the documentary form."

Steve James produced and directed Oscar-nominated Hoop Dreams (1994), universally acclaimed by critics and winner of several major awards, including the George Foster Peabody Award and Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award. This began his 30 year affiliation with Kartemquin Films, with whom James has produced numerous award-winning films, including: Stevie (2002), winner of the Sundance Excellence in Cinematography Award: Documentary and the IDFA award for Best Feature-Length Documentary; The New Americans (2004), named Best Limited Series at the IDA's Distinguished Documentary Achievement Awards; The War Tapes (2006), winner of the Best Documentary Feature award at the Tribeca Film Festival; and The Interrupters (2011), winner of the Emmy for Outstanding Informational Programming - Long Form and the Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary. James's most recent documentary, Life Itself (2014), was named the best documentary of the year by over a dozen critics associations, Rotten Tomatoes, The Critic's Choice Awards, The National Board of Review, and The Producers Guild of America.

Films in the 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award Retrospective program will be announced in March, and Hot Docs is pleased to announce that James will be in attendance at this year's Festival.

The Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award is presented annually by the Hot Docs Board of Directors in recognition of a filmmaker's enduring contribution to the documentary form. Past recipients and Hot Docs guests include Patricio Guzmán (2015), Adam Curtis (2014), Les Blank (2013), Michel Brault (2012), Terence Macartney-Filgate (2011), Kim Longinotto (2010), Alanis Obomsawin (2009), Richard Leacock (2008), Heddy Honigmann (2007), Werner Herzog (2006), Errol Morris (2005), Michael Maclear (2004), Nick Broomfield (2003), Frederick Wiseman (2002), D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus (2000) and Albert Maysles (1999).

Industry registration for Hot Docs will open online (www.hotdocs.ca) January 26, 2016.

Screen International - January 19, 2016 (1 of 2)

US Briefs: Tamoor Shafi to lead digital efforts at Relativity Media

19 January, 2016 | By Jeremy Kay



Relativity Media LLC has appointed Tamoor Shafi Chief Digital Officer, effective January 19.

Shafi, founder and former CEO of Omnia Media, will report directly to chairman and CEO Ryan Kavanaugh and will lead digital marketing and brand partnerships for the company.

The Toronto native will also oversee Relativity Digital Studios, which released its first feature, Summer Forever, last July.

- **Hot Docs will pay tribute to Gemini Award-winning producer and director Rosie Dransfeld** with this year's Focus On retrospective during the 23rd annual festival from April 28-May 8. Her credits include *Broke*, *Who Cares?* and *Anti-Social Limited*. Steve James will receive the 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award.
- **The US Department Of State and Film Independent have launched Global Media Makers**, an international film exchange programme to connect filmmakers with US professionals such as Dear White People director Effie Brown and filmmakers Ava DuVernay, Jay Duplass and Kirby Dick. Twelve content creators will be selected for the first intake from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Turkey.
- **The Sundance Institute and the Dolby Institute**, along with the Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund, said on Tuesday that Sundance entries Swiss Army Man and Hunt For The Wilderpeople have both been selected as the 2016 recipients of the Dolby Family Sound Fellowship.
- **YouTube and Sundance Institute have expanded their multi-year collaboration** to support emerging storytellers. New initiatives in 2016 include a curated festival experience and storytelling intensive workshop for YouTube creators and a joint Sundance Institute | YouTube Lab to discover and support new artists creating episodic content.
- **Tyler Perry Studios has started production on a new Madea film, *Boo! A Madea Halloween***, to star Perry. Lionsgate will release the film on October 21.

- **The Writers Guild Of America, West will present comedy screenwriter-director-actress Elaine May** with its 2016 Laurel Award for Screenwriting Achievement at the 2016 Writers Guild Awards Los Angeles ceremony on February 13.
- **Netflix original film *Pee-wee's Big Holiday* will premiere on March 18** at 12:01am PT. following its world premiere at SXWX.
- **Dwight Yoakam has joined Stay Fly LLC's *Boomtown***, the directorial debut of Sabyn Mayfield about a man with modern-day oil fever. Yoakam joins previously announced newcomer Tyler Riggs, Boyd Holbrook, Rachel Brosnahan and Jocelin Donahue. The film is wrapping production in Los Angeles.
- **XLrator Media has acquired North American rights to the thriller *Sun Choke*** and will release this summer via its Macabre genre label. Ben Cresciman wrote and directed.

Hot Docs names Iikka Vehkalahti as 2016 Doc Mogul

by Kevin Ritchie



Former YLE commissioner Iikka Vehkalahti (pictured) will receive this year's Doc Mogul Award during the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

The award recognizes individuals who have "made an essential contribution to the creative vitality of the documentary industry, both at home and abroad." Past recipients include NHK's Takahiro Hamano, DR TV's Mette Hoffmann Meyer, Women Make Movies' Debra Zimmerman and Participant Media's Diane Weyermann.

Vehkalahti was the commissioning editor for Finnish pubcaster YLE from 1998 to 2015 and is now the executive producer of IV Films Ltd, Rough Cut Service and Dare To Dream Asia.

He started his career as a director in 1987 with Finnish prodco Epidem and later launched his own shop, Musafilm. While at YLE, he commissioned *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia*, *Recipes for Disaster*, *The Steam of Life* and *The Punk Syndrome*.

He is also a co-founder and board member of non-profit organization STEPS, which works with AfriDocs and co-produced the series *Why Democracy?* He co-authored the documentary filmmaking book *Steps By Steps* and exec produces for Rough Cut Service, a collective of global documentary editors, as well as the Dare To Dream Asia documentary series, a group of 17 projects in development from Asian filmmakers and aimed at an Asian and global audience.

As an executive producer, his credits include several docs produced in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, including all 34 films in the *Steps for the Future* series. He has also supported *The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence* and *Armadillo*.

“It has been a pleasure to witness documentaries emerge as a celebrated global art form throughout my career,” he said in a statement. “Working with filmmakers from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and beyond, and seeing these incredible stories get made, often with limited resources, has been very rewarding and fun.”

Vehkalahti will receive the honor during a luncheon on May 2.

Before he retired from YLE, IDFA Forum organizer Adriek van Nieuwenhuyzen presented Vehkalahti with a parting gift during last year’s Forum in Amsterdam and commended him for his contributions to the event over the years.

This year’s Hot Docs will also celebrate American filmmaker Steve James with its 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award, and filmmaker Rosie Dransfeld will be honored with this year’s Focus On retrospective.

The 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival takes place from April 28 to May 8 in Toronto.

Playback - January 20, 2016

Hot Docs to honour Rosie Dransfeld

Dransfeld will be honoured with a "Focus On" retrospective at the Hot Docs '16 festival, which also named its 2016 "mogul" as well.



Hot Docs has named the winners of two special awards for the 2016 edition of the festival, and announced it will be honouring Canadian filmmaker Rosie Dransfeld with a “Focus On” retrospective.

Over the past 15 years, Dransfeld she has both produced and directed a number of documentaries, including 2008′s *Broke*, which one the Donald Brittain Award for Best Social/Political Documentary. Her other documentary credits include *Who Cares?*, *Anti-Social Limited* and CBC doc *The Wand*. She is currently producing two more documentaries for *The Transplant Project*, set to air on CBC’s *The Nature of Things* and the Documentary Channel. Previous “Focus On” honourees include Carole Laganiere (2015), John Zaritsky (2014), Peter Mettler (2013) and John Kastner (2012). The films to be showcased in Dransfeld’s retrospective will be revealed in March.

Hot Docs also announced this week it would award the 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award to American documentary filmmaker Steve James. His credits include the 1994 Oscar-nominated documentary *Hoop Dreams*, *Stevie* (2002), *The War Tapes* (2006) and *The Interrupters*, which won the Emmy for Outstanding Informational Programming – Long Form. His most recent documentary *Life Itself* won the best documentary of the year award from a number of associations, including The Producers Guild of America and The Critics’ Choice Awards.

Finally, Hot Docs will present Finnish filmmaker and former YLE commissioning editor Iikka Vehkalahti with the Doc Mogul Award. The prize is meant to recognize an individual who has made an essential contribution to the “creative vitality” of the doc industry. While at Finnish pubcaster YLE, he commissioned hundreds of documentaries, including *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia* (2004), *Recipes for Disaster* (2008) and *The Steam of Life* (2010).

Broadcaster - January 20, 2016

Hot Docs to pay tribute to Producer Director Rosie Dransfeld

Hot Docs will pay tribute to Gemini Award-winning producer and director Rosie Dransfeld with this year's Focus On retrospective, an annual program showcasing the work of a mid-career Canadian filmmaker. Hot Docs will screen a selection of Dransfeld's films in the Focus On program during the 23rd annual Festival, April 28 to May 8, 2016.

"Sometimes it takes an outsider to show us our own blind spots as a society, and to give a voice to those too often ignored," says Hot Docs director of programming Shane Smith. "Rosie Dransfeld's deeply humane films shine a light on the forgotten and the marginalized, her verité filmmaking sensitively revealing their resilience and resolve. We're excited to be highlighting her rich body of work at Hot Docs this year."



Rosie Dransfeld is an internationally renowned producer and director of feature documentaries. Her films are powerful encounters of the human condition and invite audiences to take another look at reality, balancing on a thin line between laughter and tears. In 2010, her documentary Broke (2009) won the prestigious Donald Brittain Award for Best Social/Political Documentary. Hot Docs programmer Lynn Fernie called Dransfeld a "master of vérité cinema" for her film Who Cares?, about the gritty and dangerous world of sex trade workers, which had its world premiere at the 2012 Hot Docs Festival. She won the Edmonton Film Prize for Anti-Social Limited (2014), a powerful portrait of a self-proclaimed psychopath. Dransfeld also directed and produced The Ward (2014), a CBC documentary about life on dialysis. She is currently producing two high profile documentaries as part of The Transplant Project for CBC's The Nature of Things and the documentary Channel. Through ID: Productions, Dransfeld has worked with a wide range of broadcasters, such as CBC, TVO, Knowledge, CTV, OMNI, ARD, ZDF and Arte. Dransfeld's career has been a whirlwind and she is excited to look back and celebrate 15 years of boundary pushing cinema.

The films in Focus On Rosie Dransfeld will be announced in March, and Hot Docs is pleased to announce that Dransfeld will be in attendance at this year's Festival.

Past Focus On honourees include Carole Laganière (2015), John Zaritsky (2014), Peter Mettler (2013), John Kastner (2012), Alan Zweig (2011), Tahani Rached (2010), Ron Mann (2009), Jennifer Baichwal (2008), Kevin McMahon (2007), Serge Giguère (2006), Larry Weinstein (2005), Nettie Wild (2004), Shelley Saywell (2003) and Zacharias Kunuk (2002).

Industry registration for Hot Docs will open online (www.hotdocs.ca) January 26, 2016.

Toronto Star – January 29, 2016

8fest reviews art of the narrow filmstrip

The 8fest presents a wealth of new and old works.

By: JASON ANDERSON Special to the Star, Published on Fri Jan 29 2016

The Fear of 13 at Doc Soup: Hot Docs' monthly Doc Soup series returns with the Canadian premiere of one of the most unconventional works of non-fiction filmmaking to debut in the last year. British director David Sington leaves audiences guessing what exactly they should believe in the story spun by The Fear of 13's sole speaker and subject: Nick Yarris, a convicted killer who recounts his life in and out of prison when not explaining his request for his execution. Sington may be a little more forthcoming than his film is about what's staged, speculative and true when he does Q&As after *The Fear of 13*'s three screenings on Feb. 3 and 4 at the Bloor.

REVIEW: THE FEAR OF 13

by Andrew Parker | Feb 2, 2016 | Independent & Repertory, Reviews



After spending two decades on death row in Pennsylvania, car thief, prison escapee, and recovering meth addict Nick Yarris petitioned the court to carry out his sentence. Fed up with an escalating series of circumstances, setbacks, and crippling regret, Yarris begged upon the court for all appeals and petitions from his lawyers cease and for the state to move forward with his execution.

That's all you should really know about David Sington's harrowing, uplifting, and sometimes enraging documentary, **The Fear of 13**—this month's Hot Docs Doc Soup selection. Told entirely from the verified point of view of Nick Yarris, it's an inventive and engrossing look at a remarkable and somewhat forgivable life spent on the wrong side of the law and the strength it takes to get through a traumatic life.

Told via a single interview with Yarris—a gregarious and intelligent storyteller who got heavy into reading classic literature in prison despite only having an eighth grade education—Sington allows the man's energy, pain, and inflection deliver most of the film's dramatic beats. Outside of very brief glimpses of archival materials and a small handful of dramatic recreations, Sington wisely stays focused almost entirely on the way Yarris tells his life story. The results are unflinching and complex, not so much looking to indict the prison system but to call light to a truly remarkable case and the unlikely inspirational figure at the heart of it.

It's very hard to talk about the film without giving away the most important and surprising details. It's as if a true crime novel had been co-written by Elmore Leonard, Stephen King and Cormac McCarthy before being given to Errol Morris and Werner Herzog to adapt for the screen. The story isn't linear; it starts at a point in Yarris's life where he had already been in prison for several year. It takes 45 minutes before the viewer even knows why this man was arrested and convicted of a crime in the first place. Even Yarris's cadence takes a lot of patience and intelligence to understand. But patient and thoughtful viewers will be led on a heart- and gut-wrenching journey they'll likely never forget.

IS THE FEAR OF 13 SCREENING WORTHY?

Yes. Absolutely. Hopefully it gets an even wider release following the boost from the Doc Soup screenings.

The Fear of 13 screens on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 at 6:30 and 9:15 pm and Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 6:45 pm at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema as part of the Doc Soup screening series. Check their website for more information. Filmmaker David Sington will be on hand at all screenings for a post-film Q&A.

NOW Magazine – February 3, 2016 (1 of 2)

DOC SOUP: LETTER FROM DEATH ROW

This month's Doc Soup premiere goes deep, and dark

BY **NORMAN WILNER**
FEBRUARY 3, 2016



It's a coincidence, but Doc Soup – the **monthly Hot Docs series** – is screening **The Fear Of 13** at exactly the right cultural moment. We've spent the last few weeks watching Making A Murderer on Netflix and listening to the second season of Serial, and now The People Vs. O.J. Simpson has sparked a new wave of true-crime coverage in pop culture.

The Fear Of 13 is a true-crime story, but the crime being investigated isn't what you think it will be. Directed by the British documentarian David Sington, it examines the case of Nicholas Yarris, a Pennsylvania drug addict and car thief sentenced to death for the brutal 1981 rape and murder of a young woman, Linda Mae Craig, in Delaware County.

There's a lot to unpack in there, but it's what happened after the conviction that proves the most compelling: in after two decades on death row, Yarris wrote to the governor of Pennsylvania asking for his sentence to be expedited: he wanted to be put to death with no further delays.

The Fear Of 13 lets Yarris tell his own story, straight to the camera, which will be your first hint that things didn't turn out as he'd requested. (You can Google him easily enough, but if you have any interest in seeing this documentary, I'd advise going in knowing as little as you can.)

Sington approaches Yarris as if he's delivering a monologue, enhancing his delivery with sound effects and stylized imagery that isn't an attempt at straight re-creation or dramatic re-enactment, but an illustration of the speaker's perspective. It works really well, both to drive the narrative and create an emotional pull in the material: Sington finds the midpoint between the hypnotic lull of Randall Dale Adams in Errol Morris's The Thin Blue Line and the escalating panic of Spalding Gray in Jonathan Demme's Swimming To Cambodia.

The film plays simultaneously on two levels: there's the personal history, which is absolutely gripping, and the picture Yarris's story creates of the American justice system, which either actively ensures human suffering or is monstrously indifferent to it. (And it's hard not to see echoes of Steven Avery's persecution in the circumstances of Yarris's first trip through the courts.)

As a performer, Yarris is a natural, bringing incidents to life through the rhythms of his speech, his assured physicality and the occasional mimicked sound effect. I was initially amazed at his facility, but then I realized two things: first, that he's obviously comfortable telling the story of his life, and second, he's had plenty of time to think about it.

Doc Soup screens The Fear Of 13 at the **Bloor Hot Docs Cinema** tonight (Wednesday February 3) at 6:30 pm and 9:30 pm, and Thursday (February 4) at 6:45 pm. (Tickets can be purchased **here** or at the theatre's box office.)

Sington will be present for Q&As after each screening. You'll want to stick around for those.

Sean Kelly on Movies – February 4, 2016

Hot Docs Doc Soup: The Fear of 13



A death row prisoner tells his story in The Fear of 13. After spending 23 years on death row, convicted murderer Nick Yarris decides to drop all appeals and ask to be executed. Through one highly performative monologue, Yarris tells his story and why he ultimately reached this final decision.

From British documentary filmmaker David Sington comes the story of death row inmate Nick Yarris. The entirety of The Fear of 13 is built around an extended interview with Yarris, which is supported by reenactments. As such, the film is highly evocative of an Errol Morris film, with the film combining the true-crime narrative of The Thin Blue Line with the single interviewee narrative of The Fog of War. Nick Yarris is quite a charismatic individual, who is often quite passionate in the retelling of his story. The events of his life and incarceration are told out of chronological order, with new pieces of information being revealed as the film progresses.

It is in the opening moments of The Fear of 13 when the opening text reveals that Nick Yarris has asked the courts to go through with his execution. As such, the ultimate goal of the film is the reveal why Yarris reached this decision. Nick Yarris is a very captivating subject and his story is quite interesting, even though we all supposedly know how it is going to end right from the get go. That said, their are quite a few surprising revelations in Yarris' narrative. Altogether, The Fear of 13 is an enthralling story of this death row inmate.

Review: 'The Fear of 13'

Storytelling as Catharsis

By Patrick Mullen • Published February 4th, 2016



The Fear of 13
(UK, 96 min.)
Dir. David Sington

"True storytelling is the telling of life," says former Death Row inmate Nick Yarris in the chilling film *The Fear of 13*. Yarris is a compelling speaker: expressive, authoritative, and convincing. His skill for storytelling and his flair from drama are good fortune for director David Sington, as *The Fear of 13* rests entirely on the subject's testimony. The simplicity of the film is as frustrating as it is remarkable since the film essentially offers a 90-minute monologue in which the former Death Row inmate recounts his 23-year experience in prison for a murder he didn't commit. It's hard not to feel compelled by this story, but one wants to hear more.

Yarris's story offers a sobering account of a troubled man. He talks directly into the camera about his life of petty crime (mostly auto theft) and substance abuse that led to a string of run-ins with the law. His narrative sets the mood by conveying the eerie silence of the Pennsylvania prison, which he describes as being developed by Quakers who created tightly confined cells that deprived inmates of sound and sunlight. Yarris conveys that the prison's "no speaking rule" offers the deadliest effect on jailbirds, as it accentuates isolation and leaves every prisoner alone with his or her thoughts. The years of incarceration and isolation show their toll on Yarris, as he delivers his narrative with twitchy verbosity and markers of paranoia.

When the monologue reaches the act that pertains to the murder for which Yarris was wrongfully convicted, the film's omnipresent narrator makes some surprising omissions in his tale. Few, if any, details of Yarris's defense appear in his story. His testimony tells more about a trial that preceded the murder case and he explains how he was acquitted of a string of charges while the murder trial loomed. *The Fear of 13* doesn't find the same engrossing courtroom bungle that, say, *West of Memphis* does with its fascinating account of the circus-like trial of the Memphis Three. The absence of information pertaining to Yarris's trial is curious, especially since the DNA evidence becomes crucial to his exoneration.

The subject approaches the story of his conviction for the 1981 rape and murder of Linda Craig in a roundabout way. Yarris starts his tale with a tangential account about an escape from his guards during a routine transfer. He talks about running away during one cold night and evading the police by stealing a car and other peoples' belongings, which he pawned for quick cash. The story doesn't invite the audience to like Yarris; rather, he boldly frames the narrative by sounding like a career criminal who doesn't stand accountable for his actions. This first impression comes in hand as the film progresses and *The Fear of 13* asks the viewer if a person like this can find redemption.

The film finds its most powerful episode in the section of Yarris's monologue that explains the point at which he lost all hope in the case. He recalls submitting a request to cease all appeals and expedite his execution. This chapter of *The Fear of 13* chillingly and effectively conveys the hopelessness and despair of Yarris's experience in isolation. Like many good stories, however, *The Fear of 13* moves towards a happy ending as Yarris' traumatic odyssey on Death Row gradually becomes brighter. The film features notable interludes in Yarris's tale that illuminate how literature and stories brought him a kind of salvation in the prison. Yarris explains how a simple exercise in repeating and remembering new words let him taste a range of new experiences through literature. He tells of how books and pulp novels let inmates appreciate life through savouring a good story. By letting Yarris create his own true crime saga, *The Fear of 13* brings the cathartic power of storytelling to life.

However, Yarris's account never sounds like a response to a question, and one never hears the filmmaker pose a query or interject. The dramatic delivery of the story also comes a decade after Yarris's exoneration, so one senses that the subject has reframed and reshaped memories by reliving this trauma repeatedly in his mind. The choice to give the subject full reign of the story feels intermittently manipulative as gaps in the narrative go unquestioned. (The opening credits indicate that independent researchers have verified all of Yarris's testimony.)

Sington adds to Yarris's story by accentuating elements of his narrative in various ways. He uses sound effects, like gunshots, when the speaker notes the retort of a pistol, and these additions help shake the viewer and lend sympathy towards the subject. Sington uses visual cues such as cutaways to shots of objects and stand-ins for figures from Yarris's story. These intercuts make the single-interview format a bit more dynamic, but they also betray the absence of other figures from the story—which is perfectly exemplified when a glass of fizzy Coca Cola gets a lengthy close-up.

The simplicity of the film, however, lets Yarris's experience convey the effect that the prison system has on an individual. It's a powerful account and the simple direction respects the subject's journey.

Yarris is a born storyteller and his narrative hits every emotional tenor about the hell one endures in isolation—doubly so when one serves for a wrongful conviction. The film doesn't make a direct case against the death penalty or confinement, nor does it preach about a broken legal system, but it doesn't need to do so because it lets a victim relate the experience in his own words.

The Fear of 13 screened at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema on Feb. 3 and 4 as part of the Doc Soup series.

Hot Docs ’16 unveils 15 special presentations



Josh Kriegman and Elyse Steinberg’s Sundance award-winning doc *Weiner* (pictured) and Werner Herzog’s *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World* are among the special presentations slated for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

The spring fest today (March 1) revealed 15 documentary premieres screening as part of its Special Presentations program, consisting of the international and Canadian premieres of various high-profile docs from the festival circuit.

Other Sundance selections joining *Weiner* - which won the fest’s U.S. Grand Jury Prize for documentary – and *Lo and Behold* include Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk’s *Audrie & Daisy*, Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing’s *Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You* and Chris Hegedus and D A Pennebaker’s *Unlocking the Cage*.

World premieres in the program so far include Beth Murphy’s *What Tomorrow Brings*, on the first school in an Afghan village to accept female students, and Kevin McMahon’s *Spaceship Earth*, an astronomic perspective on Earth’s problems.

Here is the complete list of 15 premieres, with synopses provided by Hot Docs:

Ants on a Shrimp
Maurice Dekkers | Netherlands | Canadian Premiere
Foodies rejoice! When celebrity chef René Redzepi of "The World's Best Restaurant" Noma heads to Tokyo for a five-week pop-up, he pushes his culinary creativity, exacting business model and the very boundaries of food to an outrageously delicious boiling point.

Audrie & Daisy
Bonni Cohen, Jon Shenk | USA | International Premiere
Two teenage girls suffer major trauma as victims of devastating and callously filmed sexual assaults. As their heartrending stories unfurl, the dark intersections of social media, bullying, critical misunderstandings surrounding consent and a rigid justice system reveal themselves.

Gary Numan: Android in La La Land
Steve Read, Rob Alexander | UK | Canadian Premiere
Eighties electro-pop pioneer Gary Numan has re-emerged from the wilderness—anxiety, depression and creative block in check—with a renewed love of performing; but is his new hometown of Hollywood ready for this singular British rock star?

I Am the Blues
Daniel Cross | Canada | Canadian Premiere
From smoky juke joints to spirited church halls, this musical travelogue immerses us in the heart of the American South in search of wisdom and rhythm from the last of the original blues legends, including Bobby Rush, Lazy Lester and Barbara Lynn.

Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World
Werner Herzog | USA | Canadian Premiere
"Does the internet dream of itself?" Werner Herzog deep dives into the murky morass that is the Internet today—from hacking to cyberbullying, robot sentience to scientific breakthroughs, no bits or bytes are left unturned in this thought-provoking, brain-tickling reverie.

Mr. Gaga
Tomer Heymann | Israel, Sweden, Netherlands, Germany | Canadian Premiere
Stunning performances and rehearsal footage create a feast for the senses, immersing viewers in the creative process of Ohad Naharin, the Israeli choreographer and cultural maverick whose joyous approach has redefined the language of dance.

Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You
Rachel Grady, Heidi Ewing | USA | International Premiere
Still feisty in his 90s, Norman Lear transformed television with such groundbreaking sitcoms as *All In the Family*, *Maude* and *Good Times*, which brilliantly injected hot button issues of race, class and feminism into America's living rooms.

Obit
Vanessa Gould | USA | International Premiere
How do you distill a rich life into a mere 500 words? This engrossing encounter with *New York Times* obituary writers reveals the unexpected joys and existential angst of chronicling lives on the front lines of history.

The Peacemaker
James Demo | USA | International Premiere
From Northern Ireland to Iraq, untrained mediator Padraig O'Malley has brokered agreements in the world's most intractable conflicts through dogged determination and unorthodox methods, but can this former addict find salvation for himself?

Spaceship Earth
Kevin McMahon | Canada | World Premiere
Illuminating McLuhan's sentiment that we are all crew on spaceship earth, awesome images of our planet taken from space inspire prominent thinkers, from astronauts to activists, to make an urgent call to solve the problems we've created before it's too late.

Strike a Pose
Ester Gould, Reijer Zwaan | Netherlands, Belgium | Canadian Premiere
The scene-stealing dancers from Madonna's wildly popular concert doc *Truth or Dare* open up 25 years later about life after suddenly becoming queer icons at a young and, for some, unready age.

Thank You Del: The Story of the Del Close Marathon
Todd Bieber | USA | International Premiere
An inspiration to iconic improv group Upright Citizens Brigade, under-appreciated comedy giant Del Close is given an uproarious tribute as his students—from Amy Poehler to Bill Murray—recount stories of the pioneering mad genius at work.

Unlocking the Cage
Chris Hegedus, D A Pennebaker | USA | Canadian Premiere
Legendary duo Hegedus and Pennebaker focus their lens on a devoted and savvy lawyer in the midst of a ground-breaking case that seeks legal protection for chimpanzees and, ultimately, equality for all creatures under the law.

Weiner
Josh Kriegman, Elyse Steinberg | USA | International Premiere
This Sundance Award winner captures up close the epic—and utterly riveting—political meltdown of the titular disgraced ex-congressman as his surprise comeback campaign in the New York mayoralty race crashes and burns amidst new sexting allegations.

What Tomorrow Brings
Beth Murphy | USA | World Premiere
Optimism and excitement imbue a remote Afghanistan village's first school to accept female students—an all-girls institution founded by an inspiring local woman. As U.S. troops depart, the next generation of Afghans study their past and dream of their future.

Hot Docs runs from April 28 to May 8. The complete Special Presentations program and the full line-up will be announced on March 22, including the festival's opening night film.

Toronto Star – March 1, 2016

Hot Docs unveils first batch of films for spring festival

Documentaries that explore food, music, dance and the both comic and tragic sides of life have been announced as part of Hot Docs' slate.



Mr. Gaga, documenting the creative process of Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin, has its Canadian premiere at Hot Docs this spring.

By: Linda Barnard Staff Reporter, Published on Tue Mar 01 2016

Hot Docs has announced the first 15 features in the Special Presentations program at this spring's festival, including films that explore food, music, dance and the both comic and tragic sides of life.

Hot Docs runs April 28 to May 8.

Among the titles announced Tuesday, ahead of the March 22 reveal of the full slate, are docs about celebrity chef René Redzepi (*Ants on a Shrimp*), '80s synth-rocker Gary Numan (*Gary Numan: Android in La La Land*), Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin (*Mr. Gaga*), TV comedy genius Norman Lear (*Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You*), disgraced politician Anthony Weiner (*Weiner*) and the Voguing backup dancers who found fame 25 years ago working with Madonna on her *Truth or Dare* tour (*Strike a Pose*).

What Tomorrow Brings, which has its world premiere at Hot Docs, explores how a remote Afghanistan village continues educating female students, while *Audrie & Daisy* examines the horrific fallout after two young teen girls are victims of videoed sexual assaults.

For a full list of films, go to hotdocs. ca.

CTV News – March 1, 2016

Hot Docs to feature documentaries on Anthony Weiner, Norman Lear



Elyse Steinberg, left, and Josh Kriegman, co-directors of "Weiner," accept the U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize for the film during the 2016 Sundance Film Festival Awards Ceremony on Saturday, Jan. 30, 2016, in Park City, Utah. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

TORONTO -- Documentaries about '80s pop star Gary Numan, TV guru Norman Lear, and disgraced politician Anthony Weiner are headed to Toronto's Hot Docs film festival.

Organizers revealed 15 features on the way, including the Sundance award-winner "Weiner," about the ex-congressman.

Also in the lineup are: "Gary Numan: Android in La La Land," which follows the electro-pop pioneer as he emerges from depression to return to the stage, and "Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You," which looks at the man behind the groundbreaking sitcoms "All In the Family," "Maude" and "Good Times."

"Thank You Del: The Story of the Del Close Marathon" is a tribute to the comedy giant with appearances by famous students including Amy Poehler and Bill Murray, while "Strike a Pose" revisits the dancers from Madonna's 1991 concert doc "Truth or Dare."

Meanwhile, the Canadian doc "I Am the Blues" dives into smoky juke joints and spirited church halls in the U.S. south in search of "the last of the original blues legends."

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs April 28 to May 8.

Hot Docs Announces 19 Projects Being Presented at Hot Docs Forum

Hot Docs is pleased to announce the 19 projects that will be presented during this year's Hot Docs Forum. Recognized as North America's essential market for the international documentary community, the Hot Docs Forum will take place the mornings of Tuesday, May 3 and Wednesday, May 4, during the 2016 edition of Hot Docs, April 28 to May 8. This year's projects represent 16 different countries and were selected from over 200 submissions.

"We want to congratulate this year's incredibly diverse projects, which showcase a plethora of unique topics and extraordinary protagonists for the consideration of the community of decision makers. Further, we are so proud that the 19 projects that make up the 2016 Hot Docs Forum include representation from 16 countries, 11 female directors, and 26 female producers," says Hot Docs industry programmer and Forum producer Dorota Lech.

"The Hot Docs Forum is the keystone industry event for documentary in North America," says Hot Docs industry programs director Elizabeth Radshaw. "This year's selected projects and attendees reflect the outstanding and outspoken stories for which Hot Docs has become known for."

Attended by over 500 leading industry professionals, the Forum is focused around a schedule of pre-selected international project presentations made to a roundtable of key international commissioning editors and an observers gallery composed of fellow producers, distributors, sales agents, funders and other buyers. Participating decision makers confirmed to date include Amazon, ARTE, ARD-WDR, BBC Storyville, Discovery Communications, CANAL+, Channel 4, CNN Films, Condé Nast Entertainment Group Digital, DR Danish Broadcasting, EBS, FOX International Channels, HBO, ITVS, ARD-MDR, MTV, Netflix, NHK, NY Times Op-Docs, Participant Media, PBS-WNET, POV, Shaw Media, Showtime, Super Channel, Sundance Institute, SVT Sveriges Television, TVOntario, Vimeo, YLE, ZDF, and many more.

For the eighth consecutive year, the Shaw Media-Hot Docs Funds Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize will be awarded to the best Canadian pitch at the event, as determined by a committee of international (non-Canadian) commissioning editors in attendance. The winner will receive a $10,000 cash prize to be used toward the production and completion budget for their project.

The Cuban Hat Award will return to the 2016 Hot Docs Forum, continuing with their "real cash, no strings attached" prize. All the money raised over the two days of the event will be given to the observers' favourite pitch, as determined by ballot. The Entertainment One Mounties' Hat Pitch gives Hot Docs Forum observers the chance to secure a last minute presentation slot during the event. A business card will be drawn and the individual will be granted the available 2016 pitch slot.

The following projects will be presented at this year's Hot Docs Forum:

AMERICAN MONSTER

Production Company: Yellowbelly Films, LLC (USA)

Director: Patricia E. Gillespie

BILLY

Production Companies: Parabola Films, Little By Little Films (Canada, United Kingdom)

Director: Lindsey Dryden

DISASTER CAPITALISM

Production Company: Media Stockade Pty Ltd (Australia)

Director: Thor Neureiter

DOLPHIN MAN

Production Companies: Anemon Productions, Storyline Entertainment, Les Films du Balibari (Greece, Canada, France)

Director: Lefteris Charitos

DOZHD', IT'S RAINING ON MOSCOW

Production Company: Petit à Petit Production (France)

Director: Alexandra Sollogoub

EATING UP EASTER

Production Companies: Mara Films, LLC, Kartemquin Films (USA, Chile)

Director: Sergio Rapu

FAMILY IN THE BUBBLE

Production Companies: Documoon, Shangma Pictures, napafilms ltd. (South Korea, Finland)

Director: Minji Ma

HAPPY WINTER

Production Companies: Indyca S.n.c., Zenit Arti Audiovisive (Italy)

Director: Giovanni Totaro

MUDFLOW

Production Company: Cynthia Wade Productions, Inc. (USA)

Directors: Cynthia Wade, Sasha Friedlander

OBJECTIVE: CHANGE THE WORLD

Production Company: Structure Films (USA)

Directors: David Alvarado, Jason Sussberg

OVER THE LIMIT

Production Companies: Telemark, Ventana-Film GmbH. (Poland, Germany)

Director: Marta Prus

RULES TO LIVE BY

Production Company: Little Darkroom Films, LLC (USA)

Director: Hope Litoff

THE ACCIDENTAL KING

Production Company: Made in Copenhagen (Denmark)

Directors: Emil Langballe, Lukasz Konopa

THE JUDGE

Production Company: Idle Wild Films, Inc. (USA)

Director: Erika Cohn

THE LAST ANIMALS

Production Company: Atlas Films (USA)

Director: Kate Brooks

THE PATRIOT

Production Companies: T.T.V Productions Ltd., One Man Show (Israel)

Directors: Daniel Sivan, Alon Sahar

PROJECT LOVE - Working Title

Production Company: Pulse Films (United Kingdom)

Director: Tim Travers-Hawkins

YOGHURT UTOPIA

Production Companies: Chimerica Media, Massa D'or Produccions (United Kingdom, Spain)

Directors: David Baksh, Anna Thomson

SHOWGIRLS OF PAKISTAN

Production Company: Nomad Films Inc. (Canada, Pakistan)

Director: Saad Khan

Hot Docs will also be announcing projects selected for its one-on-one pitch program Hot Docs Deal Maker in early April, taking place May 3 to 5.

The Hot Docs Forum wishes to thank founding partner Telefilm Canada, and presenting partner Rogers Group of Funds for their generous support. The Hot Docs Forum receives additional support from the Ontario Media Development Corporation, C21 Media, Blue Ice Group, Realscreen, Bell Fund, Gardiner Roberts LLP, Shaw Media, Indiewire, A&E, Entertainment One, Shutterstock, Bell Media, Vimeo, and City of Toronto.

Hot Docs unveils 19 projects in Forum slate

by Daniele Alcinii



David Alvarado and Jason Sussberg's *Objective: Change the World*, about scientist and TV "Science Guy" Bill Nye (pictured), and Sergio Rapu's *Eating Up Easter* are among the 19 projects headed to this year's Hot Docs Forum, an international documentary market and pitching event.

Selected from more than 200 international submissions, the projects will be presented to a round table of leading commissioning editors, film fund representatives, financiers, programming executives and delegates during the mornings of May 3 and May 4. Projects come from 16 countries, and are helmed by 11 female directors and 26 female producers.

Commissioners confirmed to date will hail from such outlets as Amazon, ARTE, BBC Storyville, Discovery Communications, CANAL+, Channel 4, CNN Films, Condé Nast Entertainment Group Digital, DR Danish Broadcasting, Fox International Channels, HBO,

ITVS, ARD-MDR, MTV, Netflix, NHK, *The New York Times'* 'Op-Docs,' Participant Media, Shaw Media, Showtime, Super Channel, Sundance Institute, Vimeo, ZDF and others.

The Shaw Media-Hot Docs Funds Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize will award CDN$10,000 to the best Canadian pitch at the event, as determined by a committee of non-Canadian, international commissioners on hand.

The Cuban Hat Award, meanwhile, will see money raised over the course of the Forum's two days given to the observers' favorite pitch, as determined by ballot. Additionally, the Entertainment One Mounties' Hat Pitch will provide an observer with the opportunity to pitch their own project.

The 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival runs from April 28 to May 8 in Toronto. The following projects will be presented at this year's Hot Docs Forum:

American Monster
Production Company: Yellowbelly Films, LLC (USA)
Director: Patricia E. Gillespie

Billy
Production Companies: Parabola Films, Little By Little Films (Canada, United Kingdom)
Director: Lindsey Dryden

Disaster Capitalism
Production Company: Media Stockade Pty Ltd (Australia)
Director: Thor Neureiter

Dolphin Man
Production Companies: Anemon Productions, Storyline Entertainment, Les Films du Balibari (Greece, Canada, France)
Director: Lefteris Charitos

Dozhd', It's Raining on Moscow
Production Company: Petit à Petit Production (France)
Director: Alexandra Sollogoub

Eating Up Easter
Production Companies: Mara Films, LLC, Kartemquin Films (USA, Chile)
Director: Sergio Rapu

Family in the Bubble
Production Companies: Documoon, Shangma Pictures, napafilms ltd. (South Korea, Finland)
Director: Minji Ma

Happy Winter
Production Companies: Indyca S.n.c., Zenit Arti Audiovisive (Italy)
Director: Giovanni Totaro

Mudlow
Production Company: Cynthia Wade Productions, Inc. (USA)
Directors: Cynthia Wade, Sasha Friedlander

Objective: Change the World
Production Company: Structure Films (USA)
Directors: David Alvarado, Jason Sussberg

Over the Limit
Production Companies: Telemark, Ventana-Film GmbH. (Poland, Germany)
Director: Marta Prus

Rules to Live By
Production Company: Little Darkroom Films, LLC (USA)
Director: Hope Litoff

The Accidental King
Production Company: Made in Copenhagen (Denmark)
Directors: Emil Langballe, Lukasz Konopa

The Judge
Production Company: Idle Wild Films, Inc. (USA)
Director: Erika Cohn

The Last Animals
Production Company: Atlas Films (USA)
Director: Kate Brooks

The Patriot
Production Companies: T.T.V Productions Ltd., One Man Show (Israel)
Directors: Daniel Sivan, Alon Sahar

***Project Love* (working title)**
Production Company: Pulse Films (United Kingdom)
Director: Tim Travers-Hawkins

Yoghurt Utopia
Production Companies: Chimerica Media, Massa D'or Produccions (United Kingdom, Spain)
Directors: David Baksh, Anna Thomson

Showgirls of Pakistan
Production Company: Nomad Films Inc. (Canada, Pakistan)
Director: Saad Khan

(With files from Barry Walsh)

Playback – March 10, 2016

In brief: Tribeca, Hot Docs, spring Canadian TV

Two Canadian shorts announced for Tribeca, three copros land at Hot Docs, plus YTV sets return dates for two series.

By Playback Staff

Three Canadian copros lands in Hot Docs Forum

Canadian copros *Dolphin Man*, *Showgirls of Pakistan* and *Billy* are among the 19 projects headed to this year's Hot Docs Forum, an international documentary market and pitching event. Selected from more than 200 international submissions, the projects will be presented to a round table of leading commissioning editors, film fund representatives, financiers, programming executives and delegates during the mornings of May 3 and May 4. Projects come from 16 countries, and are helmed by 11 female directors and 26 female producers. Prodcos attached to Lefteris Charitos' *The Dolphin Man* (Greece/ Canada/France) are Anemon Productions, Storyline Entertainment, Les Films du Balibari, while Saad Khan's *Showgirls of Pakistan* (Canada/Pakistan) will be produced by Nomad Films Inc. Prodcos attached to Lindsey Dryden's *Billy* (Canada/U.K) are Parabola Films and Little by Little Films. The 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival runs from April 28 to May 8 in Toronto. (should this have a – *Realscreen writer* byline?)

- with files from Realscreen

Indiewire – March 15, 2016 (1 of 4)

New docs from Rothwell, Byrne head to Hot Docs

1 day ago by Manori Ravindran



A new documentary from How to Change the World director Jerry Rothwell and Brendan Byrne's Bobby Sands: 66 Days (pictured) will have their world premieres at next month's Hot Docs festival.

The Toronto-set event has revealed 14 more documentaries featured in its Special Presentation program, joining the 15 films announced earlier this month. The section includes a selection of world and international premieres, in addition to stand-out docs from recent international festivals.

Rothwell, who screened his Greenpeace documentary at Hot Docs last year, will return with *Sour Grapes*. Co-directed with Reuben Atlas, the doc centers on wine fraudster Rudy Kurniawan, who deceives the American market with fake vintages valued in the millions. Netflix and ARTE are attached to the film.

Brendan Byrne's *Bobby Sands* doc, meanwhile, tackles a turning point in the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as told through the diary entries of the titular activist, while Darby Wheeler's *Hip-Hop Evolution* finds Canadian rapper Shad traveling to the Bronx and Harlem to talk with hip-hop icons including Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash.

Rounding out the world premieres is *Requiem for the American Dream* helmer Jared P. Scott's latest entry, *The Age of Consequences*. The climate change doc examines resource scarcity, mass migration and conflict through the lenses of global stability and national security.

International premieres headed to Toronto include Bill Ross IV and Turner Ross' *Contemporary Color*, Dawn Porter's *Trapped*, Roger Ross Williams' *Life, Animated*, Stephanie Soechtig's *Under the Gun*, Clay Tweel's *Gleason*, and Ferne Pearlstein's *The Last Laugh*.

Remaining titles in the Special Presentations program and the full selection of films at the festival are to be announced on March 22, including the opening night selection. Hot Docs runs from April 28 to May 8.

A complete list of newly added Special Presentation titles follows, with synopses provided by Hot Docs:

American Movie
Chris Smith | U.S. | Cinema Eye Legacy Screening
In this beloved cult classic, an aspiring filmmaker struggles to complete a hilariously lo-fi horror film, only to be derailed by personal demons and the staggering ineptitude of his production team.

Bobby Sands: 66 Days
Brendan Byrne | Ireland, UK | World Premiere
This riveting account of a turning point in the Troubles in Northern Ireland is taken straight from the diary of Bobby Sands, who led protests of imprisoned Irish Republicans and a hunger strike with momentous consequences.

Contemporary Color
Bill Ross IV, Turner Ross | U.S. | International Premiere
An extraordinary lineup of top music stars including event mastermind David Byrne of The Talking Heads, Nelly Furtado, St. Vincent and more perform live with 10 "color guard" teams—perfectly synchronized students in pep-rally choreography—in this one-of-a-kind, kaleidoscopic event.

De Palma
Noah Baumbach, Jake Paltrow | U.S. | Canadian Premiere
From *Carrie* to *Mission: Impossible* to *Scarface* and beyond, Brian de Palma has created some of cinema's most iconic work. In this career-spanning, funny and candid conversation, he reveals his unique perspective on life, work and the past 50 years in film.

Gleason
Clay Tweel | U.S. | International Premiere
At age 34, former NFL defensive back and New Orleans hero Steve Gleason was diagnosed with ALS. With limited time left to live, he purposefully records his spirited and inspiring life—a heartfelt time capsule for his newborn son.

Hip-Hop Evolution

Darby Wheeler with Scot McFadyen, Sam Dunn | Canada | World Premiere

Acclaimed Canadian rapper Shad travels to the Bronx and Harlem to talk with hip-hop's originators and biggest stars—Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash among others—tracing its evolution from underground to global phenomenon.

Life, Animated

Roger Ross Williams | U.S. | International Premiere

Disney cartoons play a key role in helping a young autistic boy communicate and understand the world around him in this moving testament to coming-of-age through fantasy, from Academy Award–winning director Roger Ross Williams.

Sonita

Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami | Iran, Germany, Switzerland | Canadian Premiere

After her family attempts to sell her into marriage, a young Afghan refugee in Iran channels her frustrations and seizes her destiny through music. Grabbing the mic, she spits fiery rhymes in the face of oppressive traditions.

Sour Grapes

Jerry Rothwell, Reuben Atlas | U.S., UK, France | World Premiere

Controversy erupts when an unassuming young man floods the American wine market with fake vintages valued in the millions, bamboozling the wine world elite, in this humorous and suspenseful tale of an ingenious con on the eve of the 2008 stock market crash.

The Age of Consequences

Jared P. Scott | U.S. | World Premiere

Sounding an alarm over the critical and disturbing effects of societal inaction, this revealing film highlights the irreversible impacts of climate change—resource scarcity, mass migration and conflict—through the lens of global stability and national security.

Trapped

Dawn Porter | U.S. | International Premiere

American women's right to abortion is no longer clear, as 288 dubious laws slyly crafted by the right have decimated access. While a watershed Supreme Court battle looms, witness the human stakes of the right to choose.

Under the Gun

Stephanie Soechtig | U.S. | International Premiere

With razor-sharp arguments and insight, Stephanie Soechtig and Katie Couric (the team behind *Fed Up*) craft a gripping indictment of American gun culture, meeting communities shattered by shootings and exposing the politics that allow the epidemic of violence to persist.

The Legacy of Frida Kahlo

Tadasuke Kotani | Japan | Canadian Premiere

A renowned Japanese photographer inventories iconic Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's wardrobe and personal belongings, recently discovered 58 years after her death, lending deserved importance to fashion and "women's work," while resurrecting the dead through clothing and talismans.

The Last Laugh

Ferne Pearlstein | U.S. | International Premiere

Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman, Carl Reiner, a 90-year-old Auschwitz survivor and others uproariously debate and test the limits of comedy's ultimate taboo: how to joke about the Holocaust, or if it's even ethical to try.

Canadian Press – March 15, 2016

Hot Docs adds films about Holocaust humour, US gun culture to lineup



David Byrne performs during the Bonnaroo Arts and Music Festival in Manchester, Tenn., Friday, June 12, 2009. Films featuring activist Bobby Sands, musicians Byrne, Nelly Furtado, Shad and Grandmaster Flash, and comics Mel Brooks and Sarah Silverman are heading to the Hot Docs festival. THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP Photo/Dave Martin

TORONTO - Films featuring activist Bobby Sands, musicians David Byrne, Nelly Furtado, Shad and Grandmaster Flash, and comics Mel Brooks and Sarah Silverman are heading to the Hot Docs festival.

Organizers said 14 documentary features have been added to the lineup, including "Under the Gun," in which Stephanie Soechtig and Katie Couric investigate U.S. gun culture.

Also added are the Ireland-U.K. film "Bobby Sands: 66 Days," based on the diary of the Irish Republican Army fighter who died during a hunger strike in 1981, and "Contemporary Color" with Byrne, Furtado and others performing alongside student pep rallies.

"The Squid and the Whale" director Noah Baumbach and filmmaker Jake Paltrow team up for "De Palma," a portrait of "Scarface" and "Carrie" director Brian de Palma. "The Last Laugh" features Brooks, Silverman, Carl Reiner and others debating how — and whether — to joke about the Holocaust.

In Canada's "Hip-Hop Evolution," homegrown rapper Shad travels to the Bronx and Harlem to talk to hip-hop originators including Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash, while the U.S.' "Gleason" profiles former NFLer Steve Gleason after he was diagnosed with ALS.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs April 28 to May 8. The complete program will be announced March 22.

The Hollywood Reporter – March 15, 2016 (1 of 2)

Hot Docs Fest Adds Films About Gun Culture, Climate Change



'Under the Gun'
Courtesy of Sundance Institute

The Special Presentations sidebar is likely to generate heat with Dawn Porter's 'Trapped' and Stephanie Soechtig's 'Under the Gun,' executive produced by Katie Couric.

A slew of documentaries on gun culture, abortion and climate change were unveiled Tuesday by the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival for its Special Presentations sidebar.

These include international premieres for Dawn Porter's *Trapped*, the Sundance jury award winner about legal challenges to U.S. abortion clinics, and Stephanie Soechtig's *Under the Gun*, about rising U.S. gun violence.

North America's largest documentary festival also is giving world bows to Jared P. Scott's climate change impact film *The Age of Consequences*, and *Bobby Sands: 66 Days*, Brendan Byrne's portrait of an imprisoned hunger striker in Northern Ireland.

Also headed to Hot Docs is *Life, Animated*, another Sundance award winner by Roger Ross Williams; Bill Ross' and Turner Ross' *Contemporary Color*, about musicians David Byrne, Nelly Furtado and St. Vincent; and Noah Baumbach's and Jake Paltrow's *De Palma*, about Hollywood director Brian de Palma.

The Toronto fest also booked *Gleason*, Clay Tweel's film about former NFL defensive back Steve Gleason; Ferne Pearlstein's *The Last Laugh*, where Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman, Carl Reiner and others debate how and whether to joke about the Holocaust; and Darby Wheeler's *Hip-Hop Evolution*.

Rounding out the Special Presentations sidebar is *Sonita,* Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami's film about an Afghan rapper and activist; *The Legacy of Frida Kahlo*, Japanese director Tadasuke Kotani's film about the famous Mexican artist; and Jerry Rothwell and Reuben Atlas' *Sour Grapes*, which recalls an unassuming young man flooding the American wine market with fake vintages as part of an elaborate con.

Hot Docs will unveil its full film lineup, including the opening night title, on March 22. The 2016 edition is set to run from April 28 to May 8.

Playback – March 15, 2016

PLAYBACK

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Hip-Hop Evolution to bow at Hot Docs

The doc, which follows Shad (pictured) as he travels to the Bronx and Harlem to talk to some of hip-hop's originators, will screen in the Special Presentations program.

By Julianna Cummins

4 hours ago



The doc, which follows Shad (pictured) as he travels to the Bronx and Harlem to talk to some of hip-hop's originators, will screen in the Special Presentations program.

Canadian film about birth of hip hop on Hot Docs program

Hot Docs announces more films on the Special Presentations slate.



Martin Hawkes / Banger Films

Coke La Rock, left, with Canadian rapper Shad in Hip-Hop Evolution. The Canadian documentary about the origins of hip hop has its World Premiere at Hot Docs.

By: Linda Barnard Staff Reporter, Published on Tue Mar 15 2016

World premieres of a Canadian documentary about hip hop's originators, narrated by rapper and CBC Radio host Shad, along with stories of a posh wine con artist and imprisoned IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands are among new titles announced for Hot Docs' Special Presentations slate.

Hip-Hop Evolution, from Darby Wheeler, co-directed by Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn (Metal: A Headbanger's Journey, Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage) sees Shad travel to the Bronx and Harlem to talk with hip hop's originators and biggest stars, including Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash.

Also among 14 films made public Tuesday is *Under the Gun*, directed by *Fed Up*'s Stephanie Soechtig, teaming again with executive producer and narrator Katie Couric to look at the toll of gun violence in America.

Also on the bill for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, running April 28 to May 8:

The Last Laugh (international premiere): Going too far? Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman, Carl Reiner and a 90-year-old Auschwitz survivor are among those who delve into one of comedy's final taboos — Holocaust jokes — in director Ferne Pearlstein's doc.

The Age of Consequences (world premiere): Director Jared P. Scott explores the cost of climate change and how its effects are felt on global stability and national security.

The Legacy of Frida Kahlo (Canadian premiere): Director Tadasuke Kotani follows photographer Miyako Ishiuchi's exploration of Kahlo's clothing and belongings, discovered 58 years after the Mexican artist's death.

The complete program for Hot Docs 2016 will be announced on March 22. Go to hotdocs.ca for tickets and info.

Canadian Press – March 22, 2016 (1 of 3)

Hot Docs fest unveils O.J. Simpson, Tony Robbins docs on lineup

Toronto director Rama Rau's profile of aging burlesque dancers in Las Vegas opens fest

By Victoria Ahearn, The Canadian Press



A five-episode look at the O.J. Simpson trial and a profile of motivational speaker Tony Robbins are among the projects screening at this year's Hot Docs festival, which will open with Toronto director Rama Rau's profile of aging burlesque dancers in Las Vegas.

(Note: CBC does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of external links.)

A five-episode look at the O.J. Simpson trial and a profile of motivational speaker Tony Robbins are among the projects screening at this year's Hot Docs festival, which will open with Toronto director Rama Rau's profile of aging burlesque dancers in Las Vegas.

O.J. Simpson: Made in America director Ezra Edelman is expected to be at the Toronto fest along with New York Times sports columnist Robert Lipsyte and a "special guest." The title is sure to be a buzzy one, as it comes on the heels of the hit FX drama *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story*.

"What drew us to the series was just how damn good it is, what a great story it is, and this perspective 20-plus years later on a case that anyone that was around knew about, was engaged by, was dipping into," said Shane Smith, Hot Docs director of programming.

"It's beautifully constructed, it's really smart, it delves into racial issues at the time, the creation of celebrity, the myth of celebrity."

Robbins is also expected to attend the fest, along with director Joe Berlinger, for *Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru*.



Play Media

Rama Rau on The League of Exotique Dancers

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival kicks off April 28 with Rau's *League of Exotique Dancers*, about Burlesque Hall of Fame members who still perform onstage.

"It has entertainment, sex, issues, comedy, humour — it's got everything that a film could possibly have," said Rau.

"And the women are absolutely amazing. They are the ones who really make this film, so I think it's really great that Hot Docs has chosen this for opening night.

"It will set the tone for the festival."

Indeed, the empowerment of women is felt in several films at the fest, which has 232 titles from a festival-high 51 countries.

Other examples include director Tiffany Hsiung's *The Apology*, about former "comfort women," a euphemism given to over 200,000 young girls and women who were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during the Second World War.

"It's a story that really touches on the contemporary fight for justice and the fight against their own silence and shame," said Hsiung.

Canadian Press – March 22, 2016 (3 of 3)

'Participating in the documentary is a form of resistance'

In Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami's *Sonita*, a young Afghan refugee in Iran makes the rebellious leap into a rap career in a culture in which women are forbidden to sing.

Tempest Storm by Nimisha Mukerji features Annie Banks, "the world's greatest exotic dancer."

And *Migrant Dreams* by Min Sook Lee gives voice to low-wage migrant women workers in Canada.

"The women are fighting back and speaking out," said Lee. "Participating in the documentary is a form of resistance for the migrant women in the program.

"Right now we're not releasing the images of the women workers because we're working to ensure their status is secure before the film's world premiere."

Other titles in the 11-day lineup include *De Palma*, about director-screenwriter Brian de Palma, by Noah Baumbach and Jake Paltrow (yes, Gwyneth's brother).

Spirit Unforgettable by Pete McCormack follows Spirit of the West frontman John Mann as he deals with the early onset of Alzheimer's at 52.

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's *Angry Inuk* looks at how Inuit have been affected by animal-rights campaigns that focus on seal hunting in Canada.

Oscar-nominated director Werner Herzog examines our relationship with the Internet in *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World*.

And Matt Johnson's *Operation Avalanche* is a "fake documentary" that's set in the 1960s and follows two CIA agents who discover that NASA can't make it to the moon and decide to fake the lunar landing to get a promotion.

The fest runs through May 8.



Mar 22, 2016

Hot Docs Festival announces music documentaries on Madonna, Gary Numan, David Byrne's Contemporary Color

Article posted by Melody Lau in Here's The Thing

Toronto's Hot Docs Festival announced its full lineup of documentary screenings today and among them are 12 highly anticipated music films. Taking place from April 28 to May 8 in theatres across the city, Hot Docs will present films about Madonna, Gary Numan, David Byrne's Contemporary Color and more.

On April 29, Hot Docs will screen *Madonna: Truth or Dare*, the 1991 film that follows the pop star on her Blond Ambition tour. That same day will be the world premiere of *Hip-Hop Evolution*, a four-part Canadian series that explores the history of the genre with CBC Radio One's *q* host Shad travelling to the Bronx and Harlem to meet with hip-hop originators Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash. Parts 1 and 2 of the series will premiere at the screenings.



Gary Numan: Android in La La Land will make its Canadian premiere on May 1. The documentary on the famous British singer, songwriter and producer, whose prominence in the '70s and '80s influenced the likes of Nine Inch Nails, Dave Grohl, Marilyn Manson and more, will follow the artist's move to Los Angeles. May 2 will see the international premiere of *Contemporary Color*, a film following the Talking Heads frontman David Byrne's 2015 live project that paired artists St. Vincent, Nelly Furtado and more with 10 "colour guard" teams to create pep-rally choreography.



Other music doc titles include *Aim for the Roses*, *Raving Iran*, *I Am the Blues*, *Sonita*, *Strike A Pose*, *The Revolution Won't Be Televised*, *Spirit Unforgettable*, *Screening with Andy Barrie: The Voice*, *The Wonderful Kingdom of Papa Alaev*, and *Screening with Joe's Violin*.

For a full list of documentaries screening at this year's Hot Docs, head over to the festival's website.

CBC News – March 22, 2016

Rama Rau on The League of Exotique Dancers

Posted: Mar 22, 2016 3:21 PM ET



Rama Rau on The League of Exotique Dancers 1:47

The filmmaker behind the 2016 Hot Docs opening night selection talks burlesque legends, showing darkness as well

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CTV News – March 22, 2016

Burlesque documentary kicking off Toronto's Hot Docs film fest



A Canadian-made documentary exploring the golden age of burlesque is promising to kick-off Toronto's Hot Docs Film Festival next month with "fun and feathers."

The program for the festival was announced Tuesday, and the coveted opening night spot goes to director Rama Rau's "League of Exotique Dancers." The film celebrates pioneering burlesque entertainers from the 50s and 60s who are invited to shimmy one more time at the 2015 Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekender in Las Vegas.

"It's about time we celebrated our bodies in mainstream media," an enthusiastic Rau told the media and industry insiders on hand for the news conference at the Bloor Cinema, while also touting the documentary's all-female crew.

In fact, Hot Docs organizers said 40 per cent of the documentaries that will be shown at the film festival are made by women.

In all, 232 documentaries from 51 countries will be screened at the 11-day festival.

Hot Docs runs from April 28 to May 8.

The Globe and Mail – March 22, 2016 (1 of 2)



Hot Docs Festival Will Bring New Technologies, Hybrid Storytelling Forms To Toronto

BARRY HERTZ

Go big or go home. That seemed to be the mantra from newly installed Hot Docs director of programming Shane Smith after he announced the full lineup for this year's film festival Tuesday. With 232 titles spread across 12 programs, this year's film fest represents a significant boost from last year's edition in both size and scope.

"With films from a festival high of 51 countries, this year's Hot Docs truly does span the globe, bringing Toronto audiences the best in documentaries from at home and abroad," Smith said in a statement.

While 2015's festival delivered 210 shorts and features and included a number of high-profile premieres, this year's expanded slate promises an even more ambitious lineup, including zeitgeist-catching profiles (*O.J.: Made in America*), interdisciplinary work that breaks the documentary mould (*Brent Green and Sam Green: Live Cinema*) and even a rare foray into narrative fiction (the Canadian mockumentary *Operation Avalanche*).

"Documentaries are at a very exciting moment in their evolution and history," Smith told The Globe and Mail this past August, when his appointment was announced. (The former director of special projects for the Toronto International Film Festival took the helm of Hot Docs after Charlotte Cook departed to launch Field of Vision, a "filmmaker-driven visual journalism film unit.") "These new technologies and hybrid documentary forms – animated works, mixed genre, documentary arts … I'm very excited about the potential to bring them to Toronto audiences."

One festival program that intends to deliver on this promise is DocX, which will include traditional screenings as well as live performances, interactive installations, exhibitions and the ever-expanding field of virtual reality. Highlights include Cyrus Sundar Singh's *Brothers in the Kitchen*, a "site-specific documentary hybrid" that will be performed inside a fully functional restaurant set up inside the Isabel Bader Theatre; Robinder Uppal and Marc Serpa Francouer's *The World in Ten Blocks*, an interactive installation where audiences explore the streets of Toronto's Bloorcourt neighbourhood; the aforementioned *Brent Green and Sam Green: Live Cinema*, a one-night-only event that combines cinema and live music; and The Globe and Mail's VR project *Surviving Solitary*, which immerses users in the experience of solitary confinement in Canadian jails.

"We're excited to provide a platform for these artists and organizations that are pushing the boundaries of what documentary can do," Sarafina DiFelice, associate director of programming, said in a statement.

The festival will also feature some of the world's best-known documentarians working in the traditional form. *Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru* comes from acclaimed filmmaker Joe Berlinger (*Paradise Lost*, the Metallica documentary *Some Kind of Monster*) and tells the story of one of the world's best-known inspirational speakers. Werner Herzog's *Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World* explores the Internet as only the German master can. And sports documentarian Ezra Edelman (ESPN's *30 for 30* series) delivers the nearly eight-hour epic *O.J.: Made in America*, which examines the so-called trial of the century just as FX winds down its miniseries on the same topic.

While the festival places a high priority on Canadian filmmakers, another country will also grab the spotlight this year, thanks to the Made in Australia program. Eva Orner's *Chasing Asylum* promises to drop a few bombshells about Australia's approach to asylum seekers; Hollie Fifer's *The Opposition* goes behind the scenes of the fight to build sustainable industry in Papua New Guinea; and Aaron Petersen's doc *Zach's Ceremony* is being sold as a tender coming-of-age tale.

Indiewire – March 22, 2016

Hot Docs Exclusive: Trailer For 'Age Of Consequences' Explores The Massive Risk Of Climate Change



That the discussion around climate change is framed as a "debate" in many quarters, enables the perception that there isn't already reams of scientific data pointing to an alarming increase in the temperature of the globe. It creates an aura of doubt that prevents real change in the energy sector and how we live our daily lives that could prevent catastrophic consequences down the road. And putting a spotlight on just how reckless enabling the small voice of dissenters of climate change can be is explored in the upcoming documentary "**The Age Of Consequences**," and today we have the exclusive teaser trailer.

Directed by **Jared P. Scott** ("**Requiem for the American Dream**"), the film contextualizes the alarming consequences of societal inaction on climate change, that will include conflict, resource scarcity, mass migration and border tensions that will impact global stability and national security. With analysis from a variety of experts and Pentagon insiders, "The Age of Consequences" is a wake up call that the time to start addressing the issue in a real way is right now.

"The Age Of Consequences" will premiere at Hot Docs Film Festival on Sunday, May 1st. Watch below.



Hot Docs 2016 Announces Full Lineup, Including 'Tickled,' 'Operation Avalanche' and More

The annual documentary film festival will play home to 232 titles, including some of the year's buzziest new docs.



The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival has today announced its full film lineup for its upcoming 23rd edition, including such buzzy titles as "Tickled," "Operation Avalanche," "Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru" and many more. The festival previously announced a strong slate of titles already garnering acclaim on the festival circuit, including "Sonita," "Trapped," "De Palma" and "Gleason." From a reported 2,735 film submissions, the festival culled 232 titles from 51 countries to fill out their 12 screening programs. Hot Docs has also announced that work by female filmmakers will represent close to 40% of their 2016 program.

Of today's announcement, Hot Docs director of programming Shane Smith said, "With films from a Festival-high of 51 countries, this year's Hot Docs truly does span the globe, bringing Toronto audiences the best in documentaries from at home and abroad. With the expansion of our adventurous new program DocX into its own venue, an enhanced focus on short docs and the inclusion of long-form documentary work, Hot Docs continues to recognize and support masterful documentary storytelling in all of its forms. We can't wait to share this year's outspoken and outstanding program with Toronto audiences."



"Tickled"

Highlights from this year's festival include opening night film "League of Exotique Dancers," Jon Shenk and Bonni Cohen's cyberbullying-centric "Audrie & Daisy," Ezra Edelman's saga-spanning "O.J. Simpson: Made in America" and the Canadian premiere of Matt Johnson's wild "Operation Avalanche." The festival boasts a wide range of sections, including DocX (their interdisciplinary section), the Nightvision series and a number of slates dedicated to specific areas of the globe, including Australia and Canada.

Additionally, this year's Hot Docs will present two retrospective programs: Focus On Rosie Dransfeld, a mid-career retrospective of the filmmaker's work, and the Outstanding Achievement Award Retrospective, honoring the timeless work of documentary filmmaker Steve James.

You can check out the complete lineup, along with scheduling and ticketing information, on the festival's official website.

The 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival will run from April 28 - May 8 in Toronto

National Post – March 22, 2016 (1 of 2)

This year's eclectic Hot Docs festival takes us from burlesque dancers to O.J. Simpson

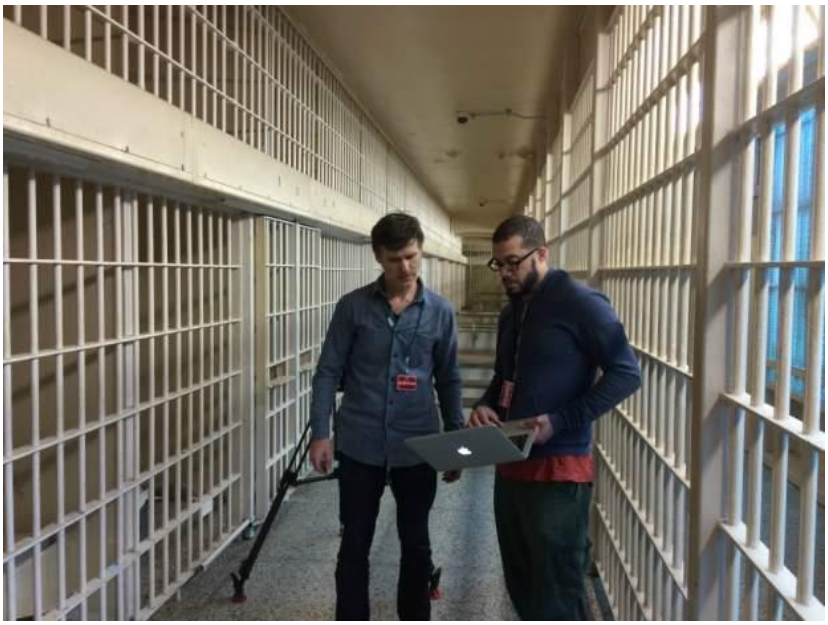


Storyline Entertainment/Hot DocsCamille 2000 gets her makeup done at the Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekend in League of Exotique Dancers.

The Hot Docs documentary festival has announced its 2016 lineup, with 232 titles from 51 countries. The 11-day festival kicks off April 28 with the world premiere of Rama Rau's League of Exotique Dancers, a Canadian production that looks back at the pioneers of burlesque.

Selections have been grouped into a dozen programs, including Made in Australia, Canadian Spectrum, Focus on Rosie Dransfeld (Who Cares, The Dogwalker, Broke., etc.), DocX (non-traditional storytelling, such as interactive installations and virtual reality), Redux (oldies, including Madonna: Truth or Dare from 1991 and Alanis Obomsawin's 1984 film Incident at Restigouche) and the return of the Scotiabank Big Ideas Series, which will feature filmmakers, experts and subjects discussing their films.

The six Big Idea films this year are O.J. Simpson: Made in America; The Apology, about Japan's enslavement of women during the Second World War; The Happy Film, following a quest for self-improvement; What Tomorrow Brings, about a girls' school in Afghanistan; Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four; and Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru.



Hot DocsEzra Edelman (right) with co-director of photography Ronan Killeen in O.J.: Made in America.

A smattering of other high-profile titles: Operation Avalanche, Matt Johnson's genre-bending fiction about moon-landing conspiracies, shot guerrilla-style at NASA; De Palma, a look at the life and work of the famed filmmaker, co-directed by Noah Baumbach and Jake Paltrow; Unlocking the Cage, about a lawyer seeking legal protection for chimpanzees, from legendary directors Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker; Hip-Hop Evolution, which follows Canadian rapper and CBC host Shad to New York in a discovery of hip-hop history; the world premiere of Bobby Sands: 66 Days, about the IRA hunger striker; and Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World, from Germany's Werner Herzog, which asks the question: "Does the Internet dream of itself?"

The festival will also celebrate the work of Steve James, this year's outstanding achievement award winner, with screenings of Hoop Dreams, Stevie, At the Death House Door, No Crossover: The Trial of Allan Iverson, The Interrupters, and Life Itself.

Toronto's 23rd annual Hot Docs festival runs from April 28 through May 8, and will feature 69 world premieres. Organizers note that almost 40 percent of this year's films are by female directors. More information at hotdocs.ca.

NOW Magazine – March 22, 2016 (1 of 3)

HOT DOCS: REALITY IS COMING

One of the biggest films at Hot Docs 2016 will be a dramatic feature by a Toronto director

BY **NORMAN WILNER**

MARCH 22, 2016



Toronto director **Matt Johnson**'s **Operation Avalanche** – a comedy about the faking of the July 1969 moon landing – will have its Canadian premiere in the newly expanded **Doc X** program, it was announced at the Hot Docs press launch this morning.

The film was shot clandestinely with actors in actual locations, which technically makes it a hybrid of fiction and documentary – and hybridization is a major aspect of the Doc X program, which will also feature live performances, interactive installations and virtual-reality exhibits at the new Hot Docs House (610 Markham Street) and select festival venues.

The festival's opening night gala, Rama Rau's **League Of Exotique Dancers**, examines the glory days of burlesque – and the culture that gave rise to it – through the eyes of the members of Las Vegas' Burlesque Hall Of Fame. And another burlesque legend gets her own showcase in **Tempest Storm**, Nimisha Mukerji's history of "America's oldest living sex icon."

Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami's **Sonita**, screening in the Special Presentations program, profiles a young Afghani woman's rebellious rapping career, while Christy Garland's **Cheer Up**, in the Canadian Spectrum program, profiles what's been described as "the worst cheerleading squad in Finland."

A pair of NFB productions follow political angles: Zaynê Akyol's Gulistan, Land Of Roses examines the female counter-ISIS movement in Kurdistan, while Tiffany Hsiung's **The Apology** looks at three women who were among the 200,000 "comfort women" used as sex slaves by the Japanese Army during the Second World War.

The Apology is one of six films selected for the **Scotiabank Big Ideas** treatment, in which the festival augments a given entry with a special post-screening conversation. The other titles include **O.J.: Made In America**, **The Happy Film**, **What Tomorrow Brings**, **Southwest Of Salem: The Story Of The San Antonio Four** and **Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru**, which will feature an on-stage conversation between Robbins and director Joe Berlinger.

The **Nightvision** program returns with a selection of fringe titles that includes **Fear Itself**, an examination of horror movies from director Charlie Lyne, and **Michael Shannon Michael Shannon John**, Chelsea McMullan's tale of four half-siblings – two named Michael, two named Shannon – investigating their father's secret history. (I feel like I should point out that the actor Michael Shannon is not part of this story.)

The festival introduces two themed programs: **Command + Control** examines geopolitics at a personal level; selections include Vitaly Mansky's **Under The Sun**, a clandestine project about North Korean propaganda, and Andreas Koefoed's look at child refugees in Denmark, **At Home In The World**. And **The Pursuit Of Happiness** examines its eponymous concept in treatments as varied as Jay Cheel's **How To Build A Time Machine**, about two men half-seriously working on ways to change their past, and Paul Refsdal's **Dugma: The Button**, about two would-be martyrs looking to blow themselves up for Al-Qaeda. (I'm most intrigued by Dean Fleischer-Camp's **Fraud**, a fictional history of a family constructed out of 100 hours of home-movie footage the filmmaker found on YouTube.)

This year's national spotlight, **Made In Australia**, gathers a wide range of programming from Down Under; at a glance, its centrepiece appears to be Eva Orner's **Chasing Asylum**, about the country's deplorable refugee policy, but keep an eye out for the short film **Let's Dance: Bowie Down Under**, a look at the Aboriginal township where the late rocker filmed the video for his 1983 hit. It's playing with **Another Country**, Molly Reynolds's look at the ravaged Yolngu community of Ramingining.

As previously announced, the subject of this year's Outstanding Achievement Retrospective is Steve James (**Hoop Dreams**, **The Interrupters** and the Roger Ebert study **Life Itself**), who's also selected a screening of the late Haskell Wexler's docu-fiction hybrid **Medium Cool** for the festival's **Redux** program.

And the Focus On honouree is Edmonton documentarian **Rosie Dransfield**, whose films **Beaverman** and **The Dog Walker** will be among those screened in a mid-career retrospective.

That's just a sliver of the programming to be screened at Hot Docs 2016; you can find the full schedule **here**. Single tickets are available for all screenings as of today, so get cracking.

The 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs April 28 to May 8.

Playback – March 22, 2016

PLAYBACK

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Rama Rau's League of Exotique Dancers to open Hot Docs '16

Other Canadian titles making their world bows include Matt Gallagher's *How to Prepare for Prison* and John Bolton's *Aim For The Roses*. (*Exotique Dancers* pictured.)

By Jordan Pinto

8 hours ago



Other Canadian titles making their world bows include Matt Gallagher's *How to Prepare for Prison* and John Bolton's *Aim For The Roses*. (*Exotique Dancers* pictured.)

POV Magazine – March 22, 2016 (1 of 2)

Hot Docs Completes 2016 Line-up; Announces 71 Canadian Docs


Gina Bon Bon performing at the Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekend in Las Vegas in *The League of Exotique Dancers*. Photo courtesy of Hot Docs.

Today's press conference for the 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival unleashes a massive wave of titles and announcements. #HotDocs16 offers a whopping 232 films from 51 countries. 118 of these docs are World or International Premieres and, building off the female-filmmaker-friendly success of last year's festival, an impressive 40% of the titles credit female directors.

Hot Docs adds an exciting headliner to the festival with the Opening Night selection of Rama Rau's *The League of Exotique Dancers*, which marks the first Canadian opener for the fest in several years. *Dancers* is bound to have audiences buzzing not only for the tease of the tassel its story brings to opening night, but also for the all-female crew that helps the festival kick off the year with a high note for inclusivity. *Dancers* has its World Premiere on April 28th.

Other notable news on the Canadian front is the addition of a unique cash prize for Canadian films. The Canadian Documentary Promotion Award comes courtesy of Telefilm Canada and it offers $25 000 to the Canadian film that ranks best in the audience poll. Audiences may vote with their tickets following each screening. This year's festival offers 71 Canadian films (including co-productions) in contention for the prize.

The newly-announced Canadian films screening at Hot Docs this year include Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's *Angry Inuk*, John Bolton's *Aim for the Roses*, Tiffany Hsiung's *The Apology*, Zaynê Akyol's *Gulîstan, Land of Roses*, Anjali Nayer's *Gun Runners*, Matt Gallagher's *How to Prepare for Prison*, Nettie Wild's *Koneline: Our Land Beautiful*, Min Sook Lee's *Migrant Dreams*, John Walker's *Quebec, Mon Pays*, and Ali Kazimi's *Random Acts of Legacy* among the 18 titles in the Canadian Spectrum.

POV – March 22, 2016 (2 of 2)

POV is excited to announce that two of the titles featured in the Class of '15 cover story from Issue #100 are among the Canadian selections. Chelsea McMullin's *Michael Shannon Michael Shannon John* appears in the edgy Nightvisions programme and Nimisha Mukerji's *Tempest Storm* screens in the Artscapes programme. The Canadian features joining *Tempest Storm* in the Artscapes programme, which spotlights films about arts and culture, are Morgan White's *The Slippers*, Matt Zimbel and Jean-François Gratton's *Zimbelism*, and Pete McCormack's *Spirit Unforgettable*.

Hot Docs offers two new programmes this year centered around thematic currents that run throughout the selections. One is Command and Control, which offers a mix of international films that engage with questions of power and authority, while The Pursuit of Happiness tackles the nature of fulfillment with a critical eye. Raymond Provencher's *Café Désirs* and Jay Cheel's *How to Build a Time Machine* represent the maple leaf on the festival's search for happiness.

This year's festival also acknowledges the ever-shifting definition of documentary in the age of new technology and consumption. Hot Docs offers long-form doc series with all 464 minutes of *OJ Simpson: Made in America*, while the DOC X programme features several interactive and shape-shifting docs such as Cyrus Sundar Singh's ambitious live performance *Brothers in the Kitchen* and the CFC Media Lab's *Ascent: Eagle Island*, while Matt Johnson's Sundance-buzzed *Operation Avalanche* marks one of several titles at Hot Docs that festivalgoers could label as outright fiction. There's a lot to take in—and talk about—so be sure to share your point of view with friends in the rush lines.

Previously announced Canadian titles include *Hip-Hop Evolution*, *I am the Blues*, and *Spaceship Earth*, as well as a retrospective on the works of Canadian filmmaker Rosie Dransfeld including 2012's *Who Cares?*. Hot Docs also pulls Alanis Obomsawin's 1984 film *Incident at Restigouche* out of the archive for a special slot in the Redux programme.

Overall, this year's load of Hot Docs offerings indicates that doc fans can expect an immersive 11-day tour around the world of documentary.

Hot Docs runs April 28 – May 8, 2016.
Please visit www.hotdocs.ca for the full list of selections.

(And stay tuned to *POV* for more Hot Docs coverage!)

The Hollywood Reporter – March 22, 2016 (1 of 2)

'League of Exotique Dancers' to Open Hot Docs Festival

8:36 AM PDT 3/22/2016 by Etan Vlessing



'League of Exotique Dancers'
Courtesy of Storyline Entertainment

North America's largest documentary festival also has booked the latest projects from U.S. directors Joe Berlinger, Ezra Edelman and Beth Murphy for buzzy premieres.

A film about American burlesque's Golden Age, *League of Exotique Dancers*, will open the 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, organizers said Tuesday.

Canadian writer-director Rama Rau's doc about ageing striptease artists like Gina Bon Bon and Kitten Natividad who were once Las Vegas legends will receive a world premiere in Toronto. Giving a homegrown doc about the masters of tease the plum opening-night slot strays from recent years where Hot Docs debuted with Sundance titles like *Tig* and *The Internet's Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz.*

Toronto also booked buzzy premieres for *O.J. Simpson: Made in America*, with director Ezra Edelman and former ESPN ombudsman Robert Lipsyte attending, and *Tony Robbins: I Am Not*

Your Guru, with director Joe Berlinger and motivational speaker Robbins in town to introduce the film and answer audience questions.

Also headed to Toronto for an international premiere is *Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four*, Deborah Esquenazi's true crime story about four women who were wrongly tried and convicted in 1994 of a heinous assault on two young girls that will have its world bow at Tribeca.

The San Antonio Four -— Elizabeth Ramirez, Anna Vasquez, Cassandra Rivera and Kristie Mayhugh -— will be at Hot Docs along with the film's producer and director. Toronto also will give a world bow to under-the-radar films like Beth Murphy's *What Tomorrow Brings*, about an all-girls' school in a small Afghanistan village, and *The Apology*, director Tiffany Hsiung's film about three elderly women who were 'comfort women' in Asia during the Second World War.

In all, Hot Docs will screen 232 documentaries from 51 countries during its April 28 to May 8 run. The festival will also show its diversity badge by booking around 40 percent of its films by female directors, organizers said. There's also bookings for Jessie Deeter's *The Revolution Won't Be Televised*; Mehrdad Oskouei's *Starless Dreams*, about seven women jailed in Iran; Maria Arlamovsky's *Future Baby*; Toby Oppenheimer and Dana Flor's *Check It*, about a gang of black LGBT youth; and Lou Pepe and Keith Fulton's *The Bad Kids*, a portrait of vulnerable youth in the U.S.

"League of Exotique Dancers" to open Hot Docs



Rama Rau's *League of Exotique Dancers* (pictured) is to open the 23rd edition of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

The Toronto-set fest revealed its complete film line-up at a press conference held this morning (March 22) at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. The 2016 program will see 232 titles from 51 countries screening across 12 programs, with work by female filmmakers representing close to 40% of the slate, according to organizers.

In addition, Hot Docs will this year see the expansion of its DocX program into a separate venue, as well as a greater focus on interdisciplinary films and an enhanced doc short slate, which has been upped by around 25% over last year. The shorts are housed within the festival's two thematic programs (Command and Control and the Pursuit of Happiness) and many will screen ahead of features.

"There are so many opportunities for short documentaries than there were even a couple of years ago and a lot of that is due to the online platforms," Shane Smith , the festival's new director of programming, tells *realscreen.* "We're recognizing the great work that's being made as a result and we want to make sure we're incorporating that work into the festival."

Rau's Canadian-produced *League of Exotique Dancers*, which examines the golden age of burlesque, will open the festival on April 28. Produced by Storyline Entertainment and made by an all-female crew, the film profiles some of the most colorful dancers of the period as they prepare to enter the Burlesque Hall of Fame.

Kinosmith is distributing the film in Canada, where it will also air on the Documentary Channel. Producers pre-sold it in Denmark, Sweden and Norway and will be looking for U.S. and UK deals while at Hot Docs.

During the press conference, Rama said the doc will give viewers "an alternative view of feminism in North America."

"Most of these stories have never been told before mostly because no one has ever asked," she said.

The program

The festival last week rounded out the docs screening in its Special Presentations line-up. Highlights include the world premieres of Jerry Rothwell and Reuben Atlas' *Sour Grapes* and Brendan Byrne's *Bobby Sands: 66 Days*.

The Canadian Spectrum program includes Nettie Wild's *Konelīne: Our Land Beautiful*, on the disputed land in northwestern British Columbia; John Bolton's *Aim For The Roses*, which weaves together three Canadian stories; Min Sook Lee's *Migrant Dreams*, on two women caught in Canada's migrant worker program; Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's *Angry Inuk*, billed as a "portrait of a misunderstood and unheard culture"; Matt Gallagher's *How To Prepare For Prison*, on the lives and families of those on trial; and Christy Garland's *Cheer Up*, on a group of teenage cheerleaders.

The International Spectrum program, meanwhile, includes Juan Mejia Botero and Jake Kheel's *Death By A Thousand Cuts*, which follows the cycle of ethnic civil conflict and violence between two countries; Mike Day's *The Islands and the Whales*, an examination of the effects of marine pollution on the Faroe Islands; Jonny von Wallström's *The Pearl of Africa*, tracking a transgender woman's fight for love; Catalina Mesa's *The Infinite Flight of Days*, following the lives of eight women in the Andes Mountains; and Alma Har'el's *LoveTrue*, a study of "love and heartache."



Alma Har'el's *LoveTrue*

The World Showcase program is to screen Jessie Deeter's *The Revolution Won't Be Televised*, on an uprising led by two hip-hop artists; Mehrdad Oskouei's *Starless Dreams*, on seven young women jailed near Tehran; Maria Arlamovsky's *Future Baby*, an examination of the increasing complexity of human reproduction; Toby Oppenheimer and Dana Flor's *Check It,* which follows a gang of black LGBT youth; Lou Pepe and Keith Fulton's *The Bad Kids*, a portrait of a group of American youth; and Yun Ye's *Look Love*, billed as a study of "circumstance and class."

Elsewhere, the fest's Made In Australia program includes Eva Orner's *Chasing Asylum*, on the treatment of asylum-seekers in Australia; Hollie Fifer's *The Opposition*, about the battle for land in Papua New Guinea; Nicole Ma's *Putuparri and the Rainmakers*, which finds a man torn between two identities; and Aaron Petersen's *Zach's Ceremony*, a cultural coming-of-age story.

Among the titles in the Artscapes program is Nimisha Mukerji's *Tempest Storm*, on an American sex icon, and Kirsten Johnson's *Cameraperson*, a cinematographer's memoir recently profiled by *realscreen*. The Nightvision program, meanwhile, includes Penny Lane's *Nuts!* and Charlie Lyne's *Fear Itself*, while the Command + Control program includes Vitaly Mansky's *Under the Sun*, Nanfu Wang's *Hooligan Sparrow*, and David Farrier and Dylan Reeve's *Tickled*.

Highlights in the Pursuit of Happiness program are Paul Refsdal's *Dugma: The Button*, Mattia Epifani's *The Successor*, Dean Fleischer-Camp's *The Fraud*, and Gabe Spitzer and David Terry Fine's *Hit It Hard*. Finally, as previously reported, the festival is to celebrate *Life Itself* director Steve James with its 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award, while filmmaker Rosie Dransfeld will be honored with this year's Focus On retrospective.

In addition to those programming threads, programming director Shane Smith says there are a handful of strong true-crime capers in this year's line-up, such as Rothwell and Atlas' *Sour Grapes*, as well as strong work from China and Iran.

"We're seeing really interesting work coming out China this year," he told *realscreen.* "Chinese filmmakers are really telling their own stories in ways that isn't necessarily going to make the authorities happy. But they're less afraid to tell their stories in their way. Iran is doing great work, too. There's been a resurgence there in quality and range."

Big Ideas and DocX

The Hot Docs Forum will also welcome more than 2,000 industry delegates for a number of industry events, including conferences sessions, Hot Docs Deal Maker and the Doc Shop. The Forum runs from May 2 to 6.

Elsewhere, the Scotiabank Big Ideas series – now in its fifth year – is slated to showcase six documentaries, each followed by discussions with notable subjects and experts on the issues featured in the films.

The 2016 roster includes screenings of *OJ: Made in America*, with director Ezra Edelman and sports journalist Robert Lipsyte in attendance; *The Apology*, featuring director Tiffany Hsiung, Meehyang Yoon, the director of Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Slavery, and the film's subject Gil Won-Ok; and *The Happy Film*, with co-director Ben Nabors, psychotherapist Sheenah Hankin and the film's subject Stefan Sagmeister.

Also featured in the series is *What Tomorrow Brings*, featuring director Beth Murphy and the film's subject Razia Jan; *Southwest of Salem: The Story Of The San Antonio Four*, with director Deborah S. Esquenazi and producer Sam Tabet, as well as the film's subjects; and *Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru*, with director Joe Berlinger and motivational speaker Tony Robbins.



O.J.: Made in America

In addition, the DocX program will return to this year's festival with a more expansive look at innovative documentary storytelling through new technologies living outside of the traditional format. The program will include screenings, performances, interactive installations, exhibitions, virtual reality (VR) and 360-degree video pieces.

Titles included in the interdisciplinary section of the festival include the world premiering *Brothers in the Kitchen* from Cyrus Sundar Singh, a doc-hybrid performed live and following Tamil Sri Lankans who fled civil war; Brent and Sam Green's *Brent Green and Sam Green: Live Cinema*, which combines performance, cinema and rock 'n' roll; and Matt Johnson's *Operation: Avalanche*, on the conspiracy theory about the 1969 Moon landing.

The DocX program will also feature such VR experiences as Canadian news outlet *The Globe and Mail's Surviving Solitary*, an inside look at the Canadian prison system; Brenda Longfellow, Glenn Richards and Helios Design Labs' *Offshore VR*, examining the potential ramifications of deep water oil extraction; Aaron Bradbury's *Lovr*, examining brain activity the moment you fall in love; and Gabo Arora, Ari Palitz, the United Nations and Vrse.works' *My Mother's Wing*, which explores the challenges of living in Gaza as a Palestinian family.

Smith's main focus for this year's interdisciplinary work will be VR and ensuring audiences have positive experiences with the still-developing technology.

In addition to having a dedicated space for audiences to view VR and 360-degree docs, teams equipped with VR headsets will pop-up in film line-ups and give audiences a chance to view VR docs that are thematically similar to the subject matter in the film they are waiting to see.

"VR is in a fascinating place right now in terms of awareness, but there are still so many people who haven't experienced it and are not necessarily inclined to seek it out," says Smith. "The great challenge with VR right now is solving the user experience issue. It's hard in a group setting to do a VR experience so we're trying to keep it as audience-friendly as possible."

Speaking to the inclusion of interdisciplinary work, Sarafina DiFelice – Hot Docs' newly installed associate director of programming – said that the success of previous interdisciplinary projects at Hot Docs made it a "natural decision to expand and formalize the section."

"We're excited to provide a platform for these artists and organizations that are pushing the boundaries of what documentary can do, and to continue to build an audience for immersive storytelling in Toronto," she continued.

By Manori Ravindran, Daniele Alcinii and Kevin Ritchie

Toronto's Hot Docs film festival will open with League of Exotique Dancers, an homage to the golden age of burlesque

Tony Robbins doc, O.J. Simpson series, Operation Avalanche also in festival lineup, April 28 to May 8.



Hot Docs

League of Exotique Dancers plays the Hot Docs Film film festival on April 28 and 29.

By: Linda Barnard Staff Reporter, Published on Tue Mar 22 2016

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival opens with Toronto filmmaker Rama Rau's *League of Exotique Dancers*, a revealing visit to Las Vegas and the golden age of burlesque, led by the women who were its stars.

The festival, which runs April 28 to May 8, announced an expanded lineup Tuesday morning at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, with a slate of 232 films from 51 countries. Director of programming Shane

Smith said documentaries from 100 female filmmakers will be shown, making up 40 per cent of the program.

Among the highlights:

Motivational speaker Tony Robbins (*Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru*) will get a chance to show his persuasive skills as part of the six-film Scotiabank Big Ideas Series, which blends onstage conversations with films.

The small screen also gets its moment with new five-episode ESPN documentary series *O.J. Simpson: Made in America*, with director Ezra Edelman and American sports journalist Robert Lipsyte in attendance. Or try a live, in-theatre group therapy session as graphic designer Stefan Sagmeister shares what he learned on his self-improvement quest — including hopping around New York in a pink bunny suit — in *The Happy Film*.

The expanded DocX program offers films that go beyond the screen via experiences including virtual reality and one-night-only live doc performances that let audiences participate in various ways. Offerings include Cyrus Sundar Singh's *Brother in the Kitchen* and the Canadian premiere of *Operation Avalanche*, Matt Johnson's narrative-style doc that ponders whether the American moon landing was a hoax.

Among films from female filmmakers at Hot Docs 2016:

The Apology: Toronto director Tiffany Hsiung shares the stories of three from among the 200,000 "comfort women," girls and young women forced into sexual slavery in military brothels in Japanese-occupied Asia during the Second World War. Meehyang Yoon, director of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery, and documentary subject Gil Won-Ok are expected to attend the Big Ideas Series screening.

AngryInuk: Think you know what Canada's seal hunt is about? Iqaluit filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril makes her feature debut with this look at how a young generation of Inuit are using social media — hashtag #sealfie — to change the conversation about how animal rights campaigns generated outside their communities are destroying the way of life for many thousands of Inuit who rely on hunting and selling seal skins for their livelihood.

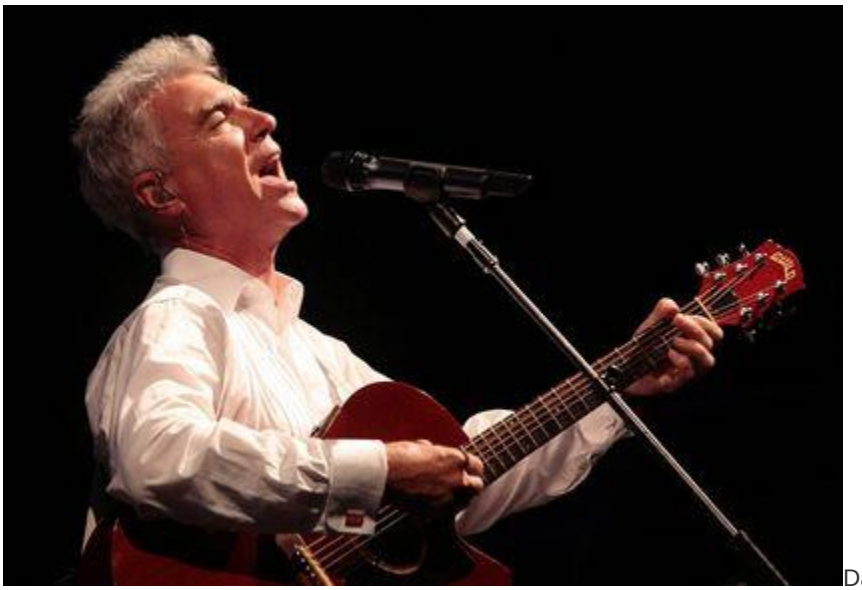
Cheer Up: Christy Garland (*The Bastard Sings the Sweetest Song*) travels to northern Finland to meet an unhappy team of teen cheerleaders who just can't seem to get a break. They try to step up but their game, but there's more going in their emotional lives than trying to nail complex routines.

Sonita: Writer-director Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami's doc profiles Sonita Alizadeh, an 18-year-old Afghan living in conservative Tehran. The budding rapper and artist isn't going to accept her traditional family's plan to "sell" her into marriage, making a tough-minded protest rap and music video: "Bride for Sale."

Go to hotdocs.ca for a complete list of films and ticket information.

Toronto Sun – March 22, 2016

Hot Docs adds films about Holocaust humour, US gun culture to lineup


David Byrne performs during the Bonnaroo Arts and Music Festival in Manchester, Tenn., Friday, June 12, 2009. THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP Photo/Dave Martin

TORONTO -- Films featuring activist Bobby Sands, musicians David Byrne, Nelly Furtado, Shad and Grandmaster Flash, and comics Mel Brooks and Sarah Silverman are heading to the Hot Docs festival.

Organizers said 14 documentary features have been added to the lineup, including "Under the Gun," in which Stephanie Soechtig and Katie Couric investigate U.S. gun culture.

Also added are the Ireland-U.K. film "Bobby Sands: 66 Days," based on the diary of the Irish Republican Army fighter who died during a hunger strike in 1981, and "Contemporary Color" with Byrne, Furtado and others performing alongside student pep rallies.

"The Squid and the Whale" director Noah Baumbach and filmmaker Jake Paltrow team up for "De Palma," a portrait of "Scarface" and "Carrie" director Brian de Palma. "The Last Laugh" features Brooks, Silverman, Carl Reiner and others debating how -- and whether -- to joke about the Holocaust.

In Canada's "Hip-Hop Evolution," homegrown rapper Shad travels to the Bronx and Harlem to talk to hip-hop originators including Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash, while the U.S.' "Gleason" profiles former NFLer Steve Gleason after he was diagnosed with ALS.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs April 28 to May 8. The complete program will be announced March 22.

Hot Docs Festival Unveils Full Lineup

Jennie Punter



AP Photo/Pool, Myung J. Chun
March 22, 2016 | 07:57AM PT

Burning topics, boundary-pushing formats, and films by and about women take center stage at the 2016 edition of Hot Docs, North America's premier doc-cinema festival and confab, which raised the curtain on its full 232-pic slate this morning in Toronto.

The 11-day event opens April 28 with the world premiere of Rama Rau's "League of Exotique Dancers," which exposes the golden era of North American burlesque through the real stories of legendary performers.

The marquee program Big Ideas presents the world premieres of U.S. director Beth Murphy's "What Tomorrow Brings," about the founder of an Afghan girls' school, and Tiffany Hsiung's "The Apology," a portrait of "comfort women" in Japanese-occupied Asia circa WWII. Other films include SXSW headliner "Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru," Tribeca-premiering "Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four" and "The Happy Film," and ESPN's "O.J. Simpson: Made in America," with film subjects, experts and directors set to engage in extended post-screening conversations.

Matt Johnson's Sundance-headturner "Operation Avalanche" (Lionsgate), a live, collaborative rock'n'roll documentary cinema performance by Oscar-nominated director Sam Green and artist Brent Green, interactive installations, and a slew of virtual-reality films are among the attractions of the festival's newly expanded Doc X sidebar.

The competitive international spectrum program includes the world premieres of U.S. directors Todd Wider and Jedd Wider's "God Knows Where I Am," Catalina Mesa's "The Infinite Flight of Days," Mike Day's "The Islands and the Whales," and Juan Mejia Botero and Jake Kheel's "Death by a Thousand Cuts."

World Showcase, the fest's global centerpiece, screens 38 features, among them the world premieres of U.S. director Jessie Deeter's "A Revolution in Four Seasons," about two young, opposing female leaders shaping Tunisia's emerging democracy; Alon and Shaul Schwarz's historical investigation "Aida's Secret"; Jonny von Wallstrom's "The Pearl of Africa"; Antony Butts' look at pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine, "DIY Country"; Maria Arlamovsky's exploration of the in-vitro fertilization debate, "Future Baby"; Katja Gauriloff's "Kaisa's Enchanted Forest"; and Susan Gluth's "Urmila: My Memory Is My Power."

The tech-savvy generation of "sealfie"-snapping Inuit activitists (Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's "Angry Inuk"), a real-life pinball wizard (Nathan Drillot and Jeff Petry's"Wizard Mode"), a highly skilled all-female Kurdish liberation brigade (Zayne Akyol's "Gulistan, Land of Roses"), and a daredevil stunt driver who inspired a bizarre concept album (John Bolton's "Aim for the Roses") are among the subjects explored in films receiving their world premieres in the competitive Canadian spectrum program.

In addition to "League," special presentations screens 30 high-profile premieres, hits from the fest circuit and master works. World-premiering titles include Jared P. Scott's "The Age of Consequences" (climate change), Brendan Byrne's "Bobby Sands: 66 Days," Darby Wheeler's "Hip-Hop Evolution," Jerry Rothwell's "Sour Grapes" (vintage wine fraud) and Kevin McMahon's "Spaceship Earth."

This year's Made In sidebar turns the spotlight on new documentaries from Australia.

As previously announced, Steve James ("Hoop Dreams," "Life Itself") will be the recipient of the Hot Docs outstanding achievement award, with the celebration including a showcase of his work.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festivals runs April 28 to May 8 in Toronto.

These Dancers Are Shaking Up Society's Ideas About Aging

March 22, 2016 by: Regan Reid

Meet the *League of Exotique Dancers*, burlesque dancers who are 60-plus and still feeling themselves onstage. These boss ladies face stigmas about stripping as seniors with a hair flip and high kick that would make Beyoncé proud



(PHOTO: STORYLINE ENTERTAINMENT)

Lovey Goldmine struts across the stage in a white sequined bra and corset, a G-string and feather boa draped from her arms. She runs her hands over her body and through her hair, moving to the beat of Right Said Fred's '90s staple "I'm Too Sexy"—the perfect anthem for her burlesque performance. That is, until she declares "I'm too sexy for this song" and slows the whole show down. She sits on the chair at centre stage, stretches a leg into the air and makes a show of removing her stockings. The audience is rapt. And then she flips her hair back, grinds on the seat and folds herself over the chair in a manner that would make Beyoncé proud. She's feeling herself. She's also 68 years old.

Goldmine's performance at the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas was her first time onstage in more than 30 years, captured by director Rama Rau for her new doc, *League of Exotique Dancers*. The film follows legends of burlesque, some of whom are now in their 70s and 80s, as they reflect on their careers and prepare to take the stage once again.

While the film provides a history of burlesque over the years as told by the fantastic women who lived it, Rau's work also confronts society's deep-rooted ideas about beauty, sexuality and aging.

"You have no idea how many times single, straight men have told me, 'Oh my god, you're making a film about older women stripping? I can't bear to watch,'" Rau said over the phone from India, where she's filming her next project.

Reactions like this, while openly ageist, aren't uncommon considering we're rarely presented with images of older, sexual women that aren't meant to be comedic relief. But as you watch Marinka, Kitten Natividad, Toni Elling and other legends of burlesque sashay around their living rooms in barely-there costumes and hear them speak about how sexy and powerful they feel, their confidence in their own bodies is infectious.



(PHOTO: STORYLINE ENTERTAINMENT)

today's world, when Hollywood thinks 28, 30 is old, and all commercials, all the ads, all the posters you see are Photoshopped, it's absolutely important for us to see women in their natural beauty," said Rau. "When I say natural, I don't mean without makeup. It's whatever you want to be. Confidence is sexy and I think mainstream television doesn't tell you that because a lot of products are sold on insecurity.

"The more you tell women that they are fat or saggy, the more products you sell. But you need this kind of counterculture where older women are celebrated. There's no real standard except your own, and beauty is just something you decide upon."

League of Exotique Dancers *is the opening night film of the 2016 Hot Docs Festival and screens on April 28 and 29, followed by a theatrical run in Toronto beginning May 20.*

Bell Media – eTalk – March 23, 2016

Bell Media

Creative Review

English | Français

HOT DOCS

Posted by: Greg Austen
Date Posted: Mar 24, 2016 at 08:28
Available Until: May 23, 2016

Media Items



HOT DOCS



HOT DOCS

Posted by: Greg Austen
Date Posted: Mar 24, 2016 at 10:22

| Download File

CBC News – March 23, 2016

Tiffany Hsiung on her doc The Apology

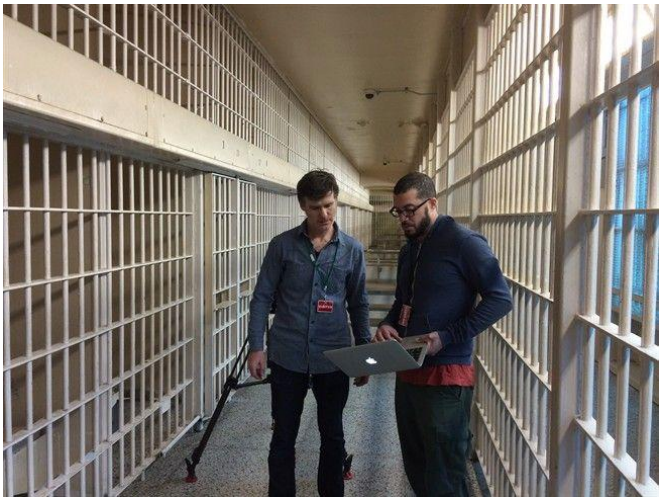
Posted: Mar 23, 2016 2:30 PM ET



Tiffany Hsiung on her doc The Apology 2:18

The filmmaker discusses her Hot Docs selection and shares why telling the story of so-called Second World War 'comfort women' became so personal for her.

O.J. Simpson, Tony Robbins docs among films slated for Toronto's Hot Docs fest



Director Ezra Edelman, right, with co-Director of Photography Ronan Killeen, are shown in this undated handout photo. "O.J. Simpson: Made in America" director Ezra Edelman is expected to be at the Toronto Hot Docs festival along with New York Times sports columnist Robert Lipsyte and a "special guest." The title is sure to be a buzzy one, as it comes on the heels of the hit FX drama "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story." THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO - Hot DocsMore

TORONTO - A five-episode look at the O.J. Simpson trial and a profile of motivational speaker Tony Robbins are among the projects screening at this year's Hot Docs festival, which will open with Toronto director Rama Rau's profile of aging burlesque dancers in Las Vegas.

"O.J. Simpson: Made in America" director Ezra Edelman is expected to be at the Toronto fest along with New York Times sports columnist Robert Lipsyte and a "special guest." The title is sure to be a buzzy one, as it comes on the heels of the hit FX drama "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story."

"What drew us to the series was just how damn good it is, what a great story it is, and this perspective 20-plus years later on a case that anyone that was around knew about, was engaged by, was dipping into," said Shane Smith, Hot Docs director of programming.

"It's beautifully constructed, it's really smart, it delves into racial issues at the time, the creation of celebrity, the myth of celebrity."

Robbins is also expected to attend the fest, along with director Joe Berlinger, for "Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru."

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival kicks off April 28 with Rau's "League of Exotique Dancers," about Burlesque Hall of Fame members who still perform onstage.

"It has entertainment, sex, issues, comedy, humour — it's got everything that a film could possibly have," said Rau.

"And the women are absolutely amazing. They are the ones who really make this film, so I think it's really great that Hot Docs has chosen this for opening night.

"It will set the tone for the festival."

Indeed, the empowerment of women is felt in several films at the fest, which has 232 titles from a festival-high 51 countries.

Other examples include director Tiffany Hsiung's "The Apology," about former "comfort women," a euphemism given to over 200,000 young girls and women who were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during the Second World War.

"It's a story that really touches on the contemporary fight for justice and the fight against their own silence and shame," said Hsiung.

In Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami's "Sonita," a young Afghan refugee in Iran makes the rebellious leap into a rap career in a culture in which women are forbidden to sing.

"Tempest Storm" by Nimisha Mukerji features Annie Banks, "the world's greatest exotic dancer."

And "Migrant Dreams" by Min Sook Lee gives voice to low-wage migrant women workers in Canada.

"The women are fighting back and speaking out," said Lee. "Participating in the documentary is a form of resistance for the migrant women in the program.

"Right now we're not releasing the images of the women workers because we're working to ensure their status is secure before the film's world premiere."

Other titles in the 11-day lineup include "De Palma," about director-screenwriter Brian de Palma, by Noah Baumbach and Jake Paltrow (yes, Gwyneth's brother).

"Spirit Unforgettable" by Pete McCormack follows Spirit of the West frontman John Mann as he deals with the early onset of Alzheimer's at 52.

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's "Angry Inuk" looks at how Inuit have been affected by animal-rights campaigns that focus on seal hunting in Canada.

Oscar-nominated director Werner Herzog examines our relationship with the Internet in "Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World."

And Matt Johnson's "Operation Avalanche" is a "fake documentary" that's set in the 1960s and follows two CIA agents who discover that NASA can't make it to the moon and decide to fake the lunar landing to get a promotion.

The fest runs through May 8.

NOW Magazine – March 23, 2016 (1 of 2)

CANADIAN-PRODUCED HIP-HOP SERIES TO PREMIERE AT HOT DOCS

Film follows Shad to the Bronx and Harlem to meet legends Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash and more

MARCH 23, 2016



Afrika Bambaataa

A Canadian documentary series about the early days of hip-hop will world-premiere at this year's **Hot Docs Film Festival**, happening April 28 to May 8.

Directed by Darby Wheeler and co-produced by Banger Films' Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn (**Metal: A Headbanger's Journey**), Hip-Hop Evolution is part of the fest's Special Presentations program.

The four-part series follows rapper and CBC Radio Q host Shad Kabango to the Bronx and Harlem, where he meets with Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, Chuck D, Ice-T, Rakim, LL Cool J, Ice Cube and others to trace the genre's origin story.

The first two episodes screen at Hot Docs, and all four parts air on HBO Canada in early summer.

“The scope of the project was massive, and it was vital to us that hip-hop’s story was told by the people who were there,” Wheeler tells NOW. “So we’re really proud that we were able to land so many of the pioneers and innovators who created hip-hop. The process also uncovered some stories that have never received major attention.”

Hot Docs will also host the international premiere of Contemporary Color, Bill and Turner Ross’s documentary about David Byrne’s musical pep rally show of the same name that debuted at last year’s Luminato Festival. The film was shot during the show’s Brooklyn run and features Ad-Rock, St. Vincent, Nelly Furtado and Blood Orange performing alongside 10 colour guard teams.

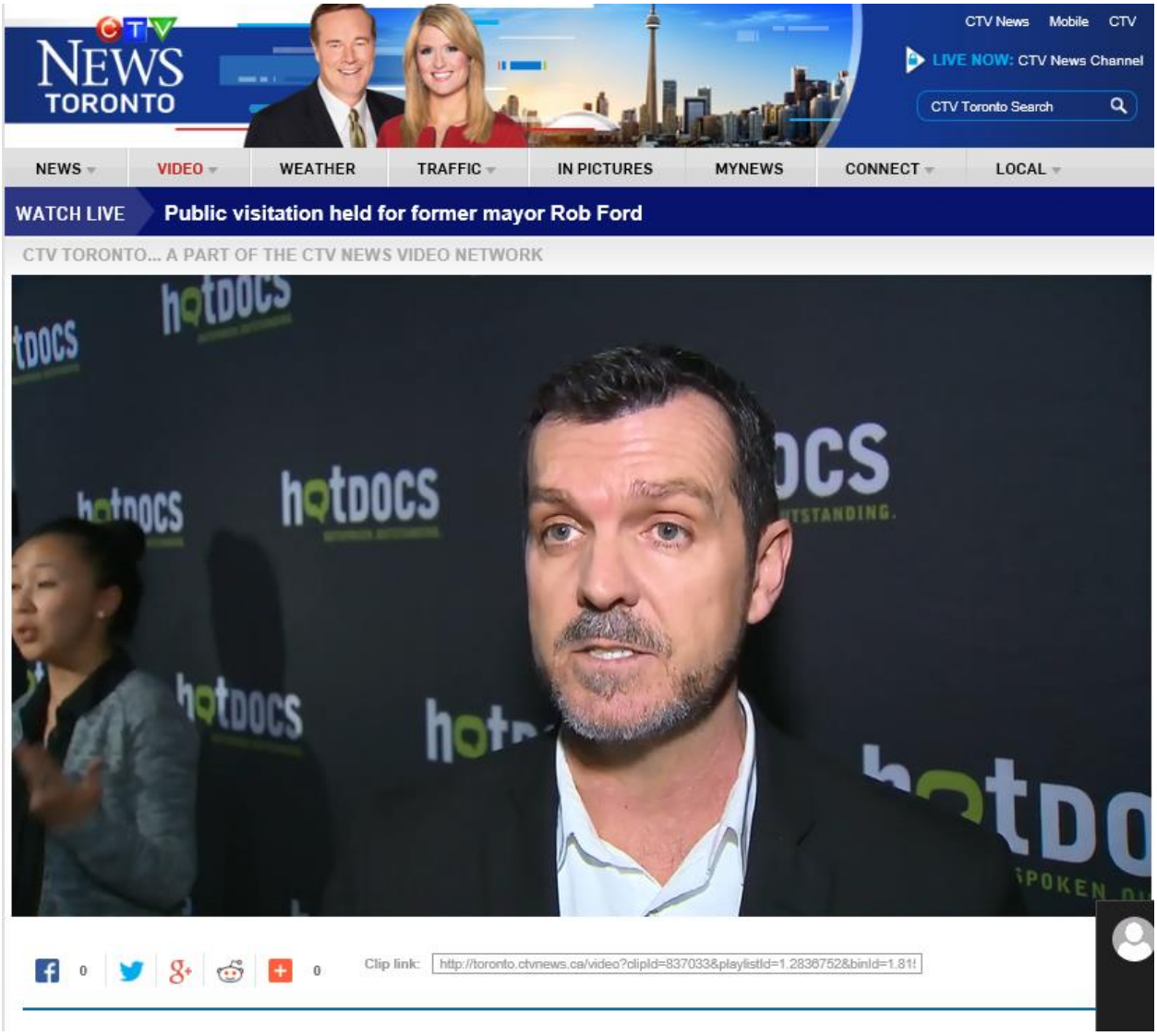
Other music-related Special Presentations screenings include Gary Numan: Android In La La Land, about the electro-pop pioneer; I Am The Blues, a musical travelogue about the last of the American South’s original blues legends; Strike A Pose, about the backup dancers from Madonna’s concert doc Truth Or Dare; and Raving Iran, about Iran's illegal techno scene, among others.

Hot Docs has also once again partnered with **Canadian Music Week** to present free live music during the film fest's opening weekend. Soon-to-be-announced Toronto and Montreal bands will perform at Mill Street Hub (behind Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles) on April 30 and May 1 from 9-11 pm.

Additionally, fans of Toronto experimental music collective **Yamantaka // Sonic Titan** will be excited to know that drummer/band leader Alaska B scored the music for Michael Shannon Michael Shannon John, the new feature-length film by Toronto's Chelsea McMullan (My Prairie Home). Debuting at Hot Docs, MSMSJ examines the lives of two sets of doppelganger siblings – who live on opposite sides of the world and didn't know of each other's existence – left behind after the death of their father, Hamilton police officer Michael Shannon.

*More on this year's lineup **here** and at **hotdocs.ca**.*

CTV News – March 27, 2016



Screen Africa – March 29, 2016

South African film 'The Silent Form' set to premiere at Hot Docs



Director Simon Wood's latest film *The Silent Form* will have its world premiere at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival 2016, North America's largest documentary film festival. This is the second year running that Wood has had a film selected for the festival following his 2015 film *Orbis'* which is still featuring on the international festival circuit.

The Silent Form is a collaboration between Wood and one of South African sculptor Dylan Lewis. After decades of sculpting alone in his studio, Wood was the first filmmaker to be allowed to document Lewis working. In accepting Lewis' need for a private work environment, Wood stepped out of his own comfort zone and decided to shoot the film entirely himself. The sculptor and the filmmaker collaborated together for two years.

"After many months of shooting Dylan in his studio, I noticed his reluctance to offer an explanation for his work" says Wood. "We would often film for several hours without exchanging a single word. This made me wonder about the limitation of language to describe art. I felt he was basically forcing me to interpret his work." This sent Wood to deserted diamond mining towns, the vast Namibian desert and South Africa's treacherous western shoreline littered with colonial shipwrecks. "The film kind of feels like a tussle between Dylan the sculptor and myself, the filmmaker, with our competing visual grammars."

Wood worked with editor Khalid Shamis in post-production who has cut all of his previous projects. "Khalid and I finally agreed a picture lock on the 27th cut so it was a fairly drawn out process. The two of us decided to bring in a dedicated sound designer whilst we were still cutting and we were fortunate to get João Orechia who created some extraordinary soundscapes which pushed the edit forward creatively. I finished the film at Tint in Johannesburg where Yoav Dagan did a brilliant job with the colour grade and Guy Steer created an excellent final mix."

Wood stated, "I am delighted to be returning to Toronto with a new film, Hot Docs is North America's coolest documentary festival and is an incredible place for a world premiere. I am immensely honoured to have been selected for competition there two years in a row".

The Silent Form is a SaltPeter Production.

Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival 2016 will take place from 28 April to 8 May in Toronto, Canada.

Indiewire – March 30, 2016

Watch: 'Cheer Up' With This Surprising Docu-Drama Trailer About Failed Cheerleader

March 30, 2016 by: Kristen Santer

Will Gluck's cult film "Fired Up!" used humor to explore bad cheerleading, but this documentary takes a look at the emotional realism of failure.



A Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival addition, the Finnish import "Cheer Up" weirdly blurs the lines between funny and tragic, as viewers are subjected to hilarious cheerleader fails and broken noses and tears. Director Christy Garland ("The Bastard Sings the Sweetest Song") is known for creating films that are part observational documentary and fictional narrative techniques.

The documentary follows Finland's worst cheerleading team as they struggle with teenage angst and constant failure. "Cheer Up" focuses on two of the cheerleaders, Patu and Aino, and their head coach Miia. The three women are each dealing with their own personal, as well as cheerleading, struggles. Patu is grieving over her deceased mother while her father is expecting a new baby with his girlfriend. Aino is trying to decide whether or not discovering her identity coincides with being part of a team. Miia attempts to learn more from the best cheerleaders in Texas, but her personal life becomes complicated and the lessons from Texas do not quite translate.

"Much of reality TV has depicted relationships among young people (women in particular) in a competitive context, with mean and petty conflicts, stereotypical characterizations, jealousies and humiliating judgments and rejections," Garland says. "I've long thought of making a film that shows young people as complex, wise and compassionate as they are, in a film that doesn't appeal to base prejudices. We hear a lot about what it takes to win, to be the best, and why we should all work hard to achieve our dreams. Of course that message is important and inspiring. But life doesn't always deliver the ending of a Hollywood movie. Not everyone wins the trophy. So I made this film for the rest of us, who find other ways of defining a successful and happy life."

"Cheer Up" will receive its world premiere at the 2016 Hot Docs Film Festival.

The Globe and Mail – March 31, 2016 (1 of 2)

How much truth should viewers expect from a documentary?

March 31, 2015 by Johanna Shneller

It's been a wild few weeks for documentary films. (How often do we get to say that?) On March 17, SeaWorld announced it would end its orca breeding programs and live shows, in part because of the outcry raised by the 2013 documentary *Blackfish.*

Then last Monday, New York's Tribeca Film Festival (TFF) kicked a hornet's nest by announcing it would show the documentary *Vaxxed: From Cover-Up to Catastrophe*, directed by Andrew Wakefield, a former gastroenterologist who published a 1998 study linking measles-mumps-rubella vaccines to autism.

The Internet erupted in protest. Not only has Wakefield's study been widely discredited and disproved, he was stripped of his medical licence and is reviled by the medical community: They hold him responsible for the drop in vaccinations, which has led to the re-emergence of nearly eradicated diseases, such as whooping cough and measles.

Last Friday, TFF founder Robert De Niro issued a statement saying that he personally put *Vaxxed* on the schedule to spark debate, because he and his wife, Grace Hightower, have a child with autism. The next day, however, he issued a reversal: "After reviewing it over the past few days with the Tribeca Film Festival team and others from the scientific community … we have concerns with certain things in this film … We have decided to remove it from our schedule."
It didn't end there, though. On Tuesday, Variety reported that Cinema Libre Studio, whose website bills it as "a leader in the production and distribution of … social-issue non-fiction films," announced that it will distribute *Vaxxed*, beginning this Friday at the Angelika Film Center in New York – mere blocks from the TFF events.

With Toronto's Hot Docs festival a month away, all this has me wondering: How much truth should we expect from a documentary? Is a doc always, ipso facto, "non-fiction?" Who's responsible for vetting docs – the filmmakers, the festivals that program them, the entities that distribute them, or the audiences who consume them?

Of course, documentaries always have been constructed. One of the first,*Nanook of the North* (1922), featured recreated scenes and an igloo built with a hole in it so the camera could get inside. Interviews are edited; choreographed events are seen as "real;" select facts are presented as "truths" – all to create narratives.

In recent decades, however, we've seen a tremendous rise in documentaries that not only admit, but flaunt, that they're constructions. First-person, point-of-view docs have skyrocketed, such as *Super Size Me* and Michael Moore's films, where we're invited to share in (and believe) a packaged, subjective version of the filmmaker's experience, which is as much about expression and emotion as it is reporting.

We've seen an equally dramatic rise in so-called impact docs, whose goal is to advocate passionately enough for a cause that the audience is whipped into action. (*Blackfish*, *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Vaxxed* belong to this category.) We're going to see a lot more of them: Recognizing how rapidly issues spread in our social-media age, designated funding bodies and unique promotional opportunities have sprung up for impact docs – all you need is a camera and a cause.
To make matters murkier, the newest trend in docs is "creative non-fiction" – documentaries that incorporate elements of fiction, in order to get at larger truths. Hot Docs will be showing several.

In *All These Sleepless Nights* (which also played at this year's Sundance Film Festival), art students roam Warsaw, experiencing events that the filmmakers set up to see how they respond to them. Like an art-house version of reality TV, it manipulates its subjects in order to explore big questions (who am I, what is love, what do I want from life?).

Where Is Rocky II? is constructed like a hard-boiled Hollywood noir, as its two screenwriters, playing themselves, search for an enigmatic artwork. And in *Love True*, director Alma Har'el uses younger and older actors to portray past and future versions of her subjects, to examine the notion of lasting love. "A new wave of emerging filmmakers is interested in expanding the vocabulary and conversation about what documentary is," says Shane Smith, Hot Docs's director of programming. "They want to push the form, experiment with its parameters and boundaries."

Again, fictional elements are not new to documentaries: Errol Morris used recreations in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), and Sarah Polley had actors portray her family in *Stories We Tell* (2012). But they're being deployed more and more assertively to draw attention to the idea that documentary is a mediated experience. In that way, modern filmmakers argue, they're actually more honest about how they pursue their truths.

"*The Thin Blue Line* is one of my favourite documentaries," Smith says. "Its re-creations were the subject of much debate when it came out. Yet, it had tremendous real-world impact: getting a man freed from prison. Just because there were fictional elements didn't mean the evidence couldn't be considered."

Here's the thing, though: As the release of *Vaxxed* proves, we live in a time where anyone can find a platform for any quackery they want to put forth. People already pick and choose which facts they want to believe in news stories – how am I supposed to trust a doc?
For his part, Smith and his programmers look for "interesting stories, well told, that are sound, that stand up to critical review, and that don't propagate erroneous perspectives," he says. Before making programming decisions, they frequently Google subjects and filmmakers to find out more detail about submitted work; they'll also interview filmmakers about their methods and intentions.

"We never set out to fool the audience," Smith says. Hot Docs mentions fictional elements in its program notes, or has the filmmakers raise them live in post-screening discussions.

Are we asking a lot of audiences to navigate such nuanced questions (unreal versus untrue) – or are moviegoers now sophisticated and media-literate enough that it's not an issue? "I don't want to spoon-feed an audience," Smith replies. "Hot Docs is part of the conversation on what documentary is and where it's heading."

A few years ago, the festival screened a film that claimed to have discovered Bigfoot. Most viewers understood that it was really a look at the people who believe in the myth. But some Bigfoot conspiracists did show up, wanting to know where the footage came from.

This year, the documentary *Fraud* is similarly head-swirling. A real family uploaded to the Internet hundreds of hours of their home movies. A filmmaker found it, got their permission to use it, and then reconstructed it into a new narrative, which examines the pursuit of happiness via rampant consumerism. So the footage is real, and their lives are real, but the documentary is … fake? A construction? A larger truth gleaned from a lie? You tell me.

Indiewire – April 4, 2016

Trailer Watch: Animal Rights Evolve in Chris Hegedus and D A Pennebaker's 'Unlocking the Cage'

April 4, 2016 by: Laura Berger



A trailer has arrived for "Unlocking the Cage," Chris Hegedus and D A Pennebaker's eye-opening Sundance animal rights doc. "When you imprison a chimpanzee, the chimpanzee understands that tomorrow he's going to be in prison," animal rights lawyer Steven Wise explains. "And as far as he knows, it's not going to end."

The doc sees Wise fighting to acquire rights for non-human animals. To do so, he must transform the perception of cognitively complex animals such as chimps, whales and dolphins from "things" to "persons" with legal protections.

Oscar-nominee Hegedus told Women and Hollywood, "During the years that I have been following Steve, there has been a monumental shift in our culture as the media and public show increasing receptiveness to Steve's arguments about why we should expand our legal system to include a nonhuman animal, such as a chimpanzee." She continued, "The scientific research from primatologists, such as Jane Goodall, is convincing and extensive. Some of the most compelling moments for me in the film are of Kanzi, Koko and Tatu, great apes who have been taught to communicate with us using sign language or symbols." Hegedus ultimately hopes that "the film will inspire people to think differently about animals and why they deserve protection."

"Unlocking the Cage" made its world premiere at Sundance. It will make its Canadian debut May 2 at Hot Docs.

The feature hits theaters May 25 in NYC and nationally in June.

Hot Doc Announces 14 Special Presentations to Screen During 2016 Festival

April 5, 2016 by: Sydney Levine



2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs April 28 - May 8

Hot Docs has announced 14 documentary features that will screen in this year¹s Special Presentations program, joining 15 selections previously announced. Special Presentations features a high-profile collection of world and international premieres, award winners from the recent international festival circuit and works by master filmmakers or featuring some star subjects.

Notable subjects featured as part of the Special Presentations program include activist Bobby Sands ("Bobby Sands: 66 Days"), musicians David Byrne, Nelly Furtado and St. Vincent ("Contemporary Color"), filmmaker Brian de Palma ("De Palma"), former NFL defensive back Steve Gleason ("Gleason"), Canadian rapper Shad and hip-hop stars Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash ("Hip-Hop Evolution"), Afghan rapper and activist Sonita Alizadeh ("Sonita"), artist Frida Kahlo ("The Legacy Of Frida Kahlo"), and comedians Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman and Carl Reiner ("The Last Laugh").



Award winners from the recent international festival circuit include "Life, Animated" (Directing Award: U.S. Documentary, Sundance 2016), "Trapped" (U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Social Impact Filmmaking, Sundance 2016), and "Sonita" (World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Documentary and Audience Award: World Cinema Documentary, Sundance 2016).

Special Presentations will screen as part of the 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, running April 28 to May 8. Ticket packages and passes as well as single tickets are now on sale online and at the CraveTV Box Office at Hot Docs House, located at 610 Markham Street.

Special Presentation titles are below:

"The Age of Consequences"

D: Jared P. Scott | USA | 2016 | 78 min | World Premiere

Sounding an alarm over the critical and disturbing effects of societal inaction, this revealing film highlights the irreversible impacts of climate change‹resource scarcity, mass migration and conflict‹through the lens of global stability and national security.

"American Movie"

D: Chris Smith | USA | 1999 | 107 min | Cinema Eye Legacy Screening

In this beloved cult classic, an aspiring filmmaker struggles to complete a hilariously lo-fi horror film, only to be derailed by personal demons and the staggering ineptitude of his production team.

"Bobby Sands: 66 Days"

D: Brendan Byrne | Ireland, UK | 2016 | 105 min | World Premiere

This riveting account of a turning point in the Troubles in Northern Ireland is taken straight from the diary of Bobby Sands, who led protests of imprisoned Irish Republicans and a hunger strike with momentous consequences.



"Contemporary Color"

D: Bill Ross IV, Turner Ross | USA | 2016 | 96 min | International Premiere

An extraordinary lineup of top music stars including event mastermind David Byrne of The Talking Heads, Nelly Furtado, St. Vincent and more perform live with 10 ³colour guard² teams‹perfectly synchronized students in pep-rally choreography‹in this one-of-a-kind, kaleidoscopic event.

"De Palma"

D: Noah Baumbach, Jake Paltrow | USA | 2015 | 107 min | Canadian Premiere

From *Carrie* to *Mission: Impossible* to *Scarface* and beyond, Brian de Palma has created some of cinema¹s most iconic work. In this career-spanning, funny and candid conversation, he reveals his unique perspective on life, work and the past 50 years in film.

"Gleason"

D: Clay Tweel | USA | 2016 | 110 min | International Premiere

At age 34, former NFL defensive back and New Orleans hero Steve Gleason was diagnosed with ALS. With limited time left to live, he purposefully records his spirited and inspiring life‹a heartfelt time capsule for his newborn son.



"Hip-Hop Evolution"

D: Darby Wheeler | Co-D: Scot McFadyen, Sam Dunn | Canada | 2016 | 90 min | World Premiere

Acclaimed Canadian rapper Shad travels to the Bronx and Harlem to talk with hip-hop¹s originators and biggest stars‹Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash among others‹tracing its evolution from underground to global phenomenon.

"The Last Laugh"

D: Ferne Pearlstein | USA | 2016 | 85 min | International Premiere

Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman, Carl Reiner, a 90-year-old Auschwitz survivor and others uproariously debate and test the limits of comedy¹s ultimate taboo: how to joke about the Holocaust, or if it¹s even ethical to try.

"The Legacy of Frida Kahlo"
D: Tadasuke Kotani | Japan | 2015 | 89 min | Canadian Premier

A renowned Japanese photographer inventories iconic Mexican artist Frida Kahlo¹s wardrobe and personal belongings, recently discovered 58 years after her death, lending deserved importance to fashion and ³women¹s work,² while resurrecting the dead through clothing and talismans.

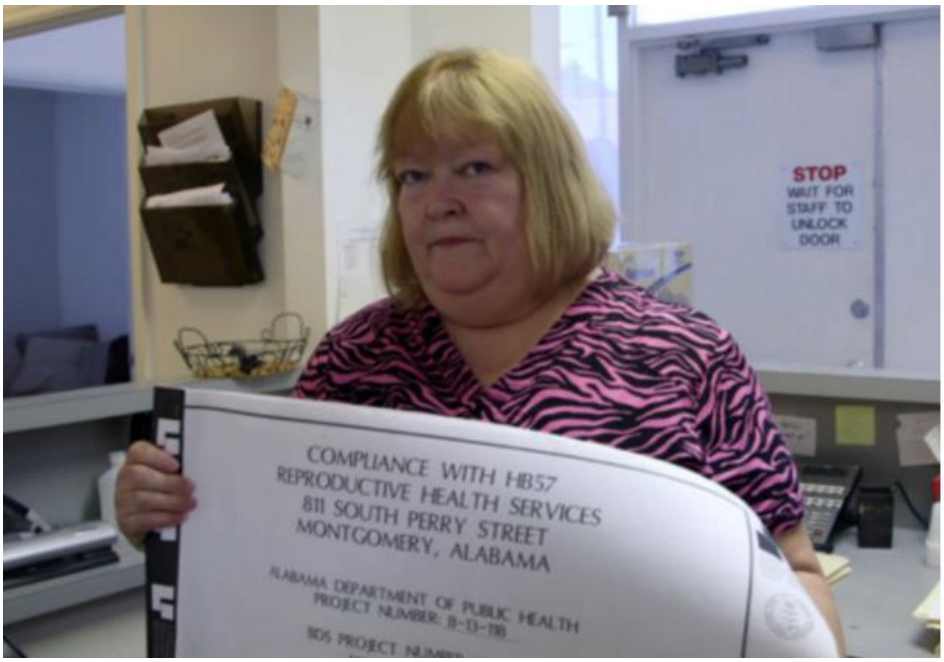


Sonita"
D: Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami | Iran, Germany, Switzerland | 2015 | 90 min | Canadian Premiere

After her family attempts to sell her into marriage, a young Afghan refugee in Iran channels her frustrations and seizes her destiny through music. Grabbing the mic, she spits fiery rhymes in the face of oppressive traditions.

"Sour Grapes"
D: Jerry Rothwell | USA, France | 2016 | 96 min | World Premiere

Controversy erupts when an unassuming young man floods the American market with fake vintages valued in the millions, bamboozling wine snobs and the super-wealthy alike, in this suspenseful tale of excess on the eve of the 2008 crash.



"Trapped"

D: Dawn Porter | USA | 2016 | 80 min | International Premiere

American women¹s right to abortion is no longer clear, as 288 dubious laws slyly crafted by the right have decimated access. While a watershed Supreme Court battle looms, witness the human stakes of the right to choose.

Indiewire – April 5, 2016 (7 of 7)

"Under the Gun"

D: Stephanie Soechtig | USA | 2016 | 110 min | International Premiere

With razor-sharp arguments and insight, Stephanie Soechtig and Katie Couric (the team behind *Fed Up*) craft a gripping indictment of American gun culture, meeting communities shattered by shootings and exposing the politics that allow the epidemic of violence to persist.

Huffington Post – April 11, 2016

A Unique Insight Into The Release of a International Documentary

April 11 2016 by: Jonny von Wallström

Making your first feature documentary is hard, and it's a process that you rarely get a close look at. This is why I decided to start documenting my own struggle as a filmmaker.

About three years ago I started working on my debut feature doc called *The Pearl Of Africa*. Making it seems to be impossible, which I why I decided to create a vlog about my struggle to make the film.

The Pearl Of Africa is a story about love, hate and being transgender, in one of the worlds most transphobic places, Uganda.

The film has been selected to Hot Docs, one of the world's largest documentary festivals. The film is far from finished at this moment. In this episode, I get a call from the festival's programmer. He's trying to explain why it could be too late if we decide to wait with the release of the film.



Spirit of the West playing final shows this weekend

April 15, 2016 by Del F. Cowie



Vancouver folk band Spirit of the West began its last set of shows last night at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver.

Formed in 1984, the band is ending its run because lead singer John Mann, 53, has been beset by health problems. Mann was diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2009. In 2013, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, which has taken a serious toll on his ability to perform.

Spirit of the West take a bow after the first concert of their three night stand at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver on April 14. The group will play their final show at the venue on April 16. (Marsha Lederman/Twitter)



CBC Radio – April 15, 2016 (2 of 2)

The memory loss associated with Alzheimer's means Mann has had to resort to reading lyrics from an iPad and receiving musical cues from his band. In a recent interview with the Globe and Mail, Mann's wife, Jill Daum, said it takes "every brain cell" for Mann to perform. "I just have to be so focused because I have Alzheimer's," Mann said in the interview.

A documentary about Mann and the band, *Spirit Unforgettable*, will receive its world premiere at Hot Docs in Toronto at the end of April.



The band, known for its hit songs "Political," "Save This House" "And If Venice is Sinking," announced its final shows in December.

Spirit of the West will play the Commodore Ballroom again tonight and the band's final show, also at the Commodore Ballroom, will take place on April 16. Both remaining shows are sold out.

Watch Spirit of the West's signature song, "Home For a Rest," below.

Toronto Star – April 15, 2016 (1 of 2)

Three trans stories that go beyond Caitlyn Jenner

April 15, 2015 by Ryan Porter





Caitlyn Jenner, arguably the most famous transwoman on the planet, inspired new conversations last year with her empowering coming-out story. But as a trans figurehead, the very rich, very famous, very Republican (gasp!) Jenner has proven herself a Kardashian-style role-model: the hair is beautiful, the head is empty. These documentaries shine a spotlight on transwomen whose stories might not be telegenic but are grippingly real.

Toronto Star – April 15, 2016 (2 of 2)

Transfixed

Martine Stonehouse is one of an estimated 20% of transpeople who are also on the autism spectrum, according to Aaron Devor, Chair in Transgender Studies at the University of Victoria (in the general population, the prevalence is around 1%).*Transfixed* follows the Toronto activist, who successfully advocated for gender-confirmation surgery to be returned to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan, as she builds toward her own transition and her wedding to her partner John, who shares a diagnosis on the autism spectrum.

Multiple doctors tell her she will have to lose weight before the surgery, something Stonehouse struggles with. “I didn’t understand in the beginning her inability to lose weight,” director Alon Kol says. “I thought, ‘Maybe she doesn’t want (the surgery).’ For her, it’s easier to change things around her then to change herself.”

- Transfixedopens at the Carlton Cinemas April 15.

Check It

The Check It are as notorious on the streets of Washington, D.C., for their flamboyance as for their ferocity. The LGBTI gang, whose members include trans sex workers and female-presenting gay men, was first started by three Grade 9 students to defend against bullies; they now have over 200 members and splinter groups the Dom Check It (a female gang) and Baby Check It (for young teens).

Though members might wear wigs and weaves, lace tank tops and bikini tops, their violence can be terrifying (a radio host asks a member about forcing someone to drink bleach).

“I think they would have been gentle souls if they didn’t have the abuse that they grew up with: parental abuse, bullying in the schools, people in the streets,” says Dana Flor, who co-directed the film with Toby Oppenheimer. “There are so many people who have let them down on every level. It really was formed out of sheer and utter necessity.”

- Check Itscreens April 30 to May 6 at the Hot Docs festival.

The Pearl of Africa

In Uganda, where “aggravated homosexuality” is punishable by life imprisonment,Cleopatra Kambugu has had to improvise when it comes to her transition. “She had to teach her doctor about being trans,” says Swedish director Jonny von Wallstrom, who met Kambugu through friends and documented her exile from Uganda following her photograph being published on the cover of the popular Red Paper tabloid.

Wallstrom accompanied Kambugu and her partner Nelson to Thailand, where she underwent gender-confirmation and breast-augmentation surgery. “I felt that they were really, really naive about the whole thing,” von Wallstrom says. At one point, Kambugu asks Nelson if an A cup is the largest or smallest bra size.

“Everything that we shot before leading up to the surgery in Thailand, there was this feeling of them trying to joke about it, but they don’t really know what to expect,” von Wallstrom says. The aftermath of the surgery is excruciating to watch. “It really hits them that this is such a serious thing.”

- *The Pearl of Africa* screens April 30 to May 8 at the Hot Docs festival.

Toronto Star – April 15, 2016 (1 of 2)

Expat Toronto tailor becomes trans community's suiting star

April 15, 2016 by Ryan Porter





Five years ago, if you'd told Toronto expat Daniel Friedman he would be running an LGBTQ clothier profiled in a Lena Dunham-produced documentary, he says he'd find it easier to believe he would win a billion dollars or become an astronaut.

"It was not even a fetus in my brain," says the bespoke tailor behind Brooklyn's Bindle & Keep, subject of the Hot Docs feature *Suited*.

Yet the proprietor of the bespoke clothier has specialized in suiting for gender nonconformists since 2012. The heterosexual, cisgender 37-year-old took up tailoring after his "brain broke": a lead-poisoning accident in grad school left him unable to read, ending his hope of becoming an architect.

He opened Bindle & Keep in 2011, but it wasn't until he made a suit for Rae Tutera that the business took on its unique focus. Tutera found the experience so empowering, they asked Friedman to apprentice them (Tutera uses the pronoun "they" rather than "he" or "she").

Word-of-mouth built until Bindle & Keep found itself a beacon for trans fashion. “When you have a suit company and people say, ‘Can you put an androgynous suit on my relatively curvaceous, anatomically female body?’ and ‘I want a completely gender-blind suit,’ when you’re in a start-up the only answer is yes,” he says. “You just say yes, yes, yes because you can’t afford to say no.”

Following a profile in the New York Times, Friedman says he received 300 emails thanking him for his work. The article also inspired director Jason Benjamin, a boom operator on *Girls*.

Though he had no previous ties to the trans community, Benjamin found the idea of a client seeing themselves in a new way for the first time inherently dramatic. “It felt like a great way into a description of gender identity,” he says.

He forwarded the article to Dunham and her producing partner Jenni Konner, who put up their own money for Benjamin to film 10 minutes of footage. Konner and Dunham took that to HBO, who scooped it up as a feature, with an original score by Toronto’s Owen Pallett.

Subjects include a female-to-male groom-to-be; a male-to-female lawyer prepping for a career-defining trial; and a 12-year-old transboy getting ready for his bar mitzvah. “It’s not like we got lucky and these were the six people who had these great stories,” Friedman says. “This happens every single day.”

Bindle & Keep now gets requests from as far as Australia and Japan, as well as over 100 clients from Canada. Swagger and Strut, a Toronto-based organization that supports gender non-conformist designers, even sent Bindle & Keep a bottle of maple syrup and a handwritten card with pleas for Friedman to “come to Toronto” after the atelier mentored the group.

Friedman says the audience is frequently moved to tears by the subjects as they look in the mirror in their custom suits and see a reflection that matches their true selves.

“There’s something universal about not liking the way you look,” Benjamin says. “I think that there aren’t too many people who get up, look hard at themselves in the mirror, and say, ‘Yeah, I look great today,’ without reconsidering in some way the things that they don’t like about themselves. I think that is a component in the film that everyone can relate to.”

The Globe and Mail – April 15, 2016 (1 of 2)

Spirit of the West gets a proper send-off with hometown finale

April 15, 2016 by Manori Ravindran



There was no way it wasn't going to be sensational. Spirit of the West, winding down 32 years as a band, began its final three-night stint at the Commodore Ballroom Thursday night. It was the 43rd time the legendary Celtic-inspired folk/pop/rock group has played the storied venue – and it did not disappoint.

The hometown crowd delivered on their end-of-the-party bargain, with a proper send-off, shouting themselves hoarse and getting the dance floor bouncing – literally.

The packed, sweaty house also gave a loud, rousing and moving tribute to John Mann, whose early-onset Alzheimer's disease is behind the band's decision to stop performing. Spirit of the West will play its final show Saturday at the Commodore.

Mann, 53, was in fabulous form Thursday night – from his knees-up marching entrance onto the stage with the rest of the band (to *Uptown Funk*!) right through to his final thank-you at the end of an extended show that wrapped up just before midnight.

(Follow Spirit of the West's career with an audio guide to the band's long journey.)

It's pretty gobsmacking to think about the courage it must take for Mann to get onstage and approach the microphone every night. He performs with an iPad that feeds him cues and lyrics, but there's so much going on; it must take a lot of will, strength and focus to pull that off. Spontaneous stage chatter – something he was once so gifted at – is a whole other matter.

Mann's writing partner Geoffrey Kelly now does the talking on stage – and while he is a magnificent storyteller who can captivate even a beery audience with a long yarn, it took only one simple sentence for him to bring down the house: "This is John Fraser Mann from East Vancouver." The place went nuts – fans stomped on the dance floor, whooped and hollered, raised their arms in the air in a prolonged, emotional ovation.

And then Kelly's quip, perfectly timed: "He has a lot of relatives here tonight."

Mann did interact with Kelly a few times, but didn't say much, of course. But when it was time to sing – and dance – he was much more at home. He belted out a gorgeous *July* (a song about Vancouver); and during the breakup anthem *Political*, jumped around the stage, kicking at ghosts.

There were so many extraordinary moments, but *And If Venice Is Sinking* in particular showcased the entwined lives of this band: Tobin Frank's 11-year-old son Ellis started the tune off on his ukulele with his proud dad behind him on the accordion; Ellis was introduced by Kelly who co-wrote the song with Mann – about Mann's honeymoon. We got the message: This is way more than a band; this is a family.

There was more family time during the first encore as Ellis returned to the stage for the sing-along favourite *The Crawl*, along with other members of the next Spirit of the West generation who danced up a storm and Kelly's son Ben Kelly on the drums (earlier, Kelly had told the story about Ben's premature birth – three months early, Ben weighed only two pounds, four ounces at birth). Two other local music legends, also part of the band's unofficial extended family, joined as well: Paul Hyde, best known from The Payolas, and Craig Northey, who led a terrific opening set with The Odds.

The only thing missing – and it was a major absence – was Spirit's drummer Vince Ditrich. In need of a kidney transplant, Ditrich – who is also the band's manager – was too ill to be there Thursday; he's hoping to be well enough in time for Saturday night's gig. It would be a gigantic shame if that didn't happen – which has nothing to do with his replacement; Kris MacFarlane from Great Big Sea did a tremendous job sitting in. And Kendel Carson on fiddle was a dynamo, especially during jams like the great long one during *Is This Where I Come In*?

But of course the tune the crowd was waiting for was *Home For A Rest*. What to say? It was everything both band and fans could have hoped for – transcendent and jubilant. The crowd sung along to every word and pogoed like it was the 90s and they (we) were 25 years younger. Kelly twirled his flute like a baton and did a proper rock star jump off the drum riser to bring it all home. It didn't even feel sad, which was amazing.

This, however, kind of did: "Thank you guys," Mann said after the sea of applause. "I love you."

In the documentary *Spirit Unforgettable*, which will have its world premiere at Hot Docs later this month, Ditrich says: "We want to go out with a bang, not a whimper."

Man, are they ever.

Spirit of the West plays two more shows at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver Friday and Saturday nights. Then it's home for a rest.

CTV News – April 18, 2016

Hot Docs menu has Canadian-made doc for everyone's palate

April 18, 2016 by Leanne Elnicki,



Diamond driller and sunrise seen over Northwest B.C. A scene from KONELINE: our land beautiful. (Canada Wild Productions)

There's a Canadian-made documentary to suit everyone's interests at this year's Hot Docs Festival taking place in Toronto. From Inuk people finding their voice in opposition to the anti-sealing movement, to a B.C. pinball prodigy who also happens to have autism, to homeless dog owners who credit the animals with saving their lives.

If you're inclined to think that a Canadian documentary is somehow boring, Senior Canadian Programmer at Hot Docs Lynne Fernie has news for you.

"Some people still feel documentary is the type of film they forced you to watch in school," Fernie said. "But the storytelling now is so vibrant. It takes you into other worlds."

Of the 232 films being screened this year at Hot Docs, 71 are Canadian productions and co-productions, while there are 50 new films directed by Canadians. But not all Canadian-made films are shot here.

Take for example the festival's opening night selection "League of Exotique Dancers" about the lives of the women who ruled the burlesque stage during the Golden age of the art form. Much of the film, written and directed by Rama Rau, takes place in the U.S., even though it's a presentation of Telefilm Canada. "Cheer Up," a documentary from Canadian director Christy Garland, about what could quite possibly be one of the world's worst cheerleading squads, is shot almost exclusively near the Arctic Circle in Finland.

Fernie dubs it "trans-national documentary cinema" and said it's more common than one might think, especially with the diverse backgrounds of the filmmakers.

The festival is divided into different programs, but Canadian Spectrum is not the only place one will find Canadian-made films. Fernie stresses that there are many gems in the Shorts program – the category that comedian Louis C.K. had a bit of fun with at this year's Academy Awards. Shorts are typically less than 40 minutes in length, but several of the shorts in the Hot Docs program clock in at less than 15 minutes.

One of Fernie's favourite feature length films appearing at Hot Docs is by two-time Genie-winning director Nettie Wild. "KONELINE: our land beautiful" is set in Tahltan First Nations Territory in northwestern B.C.

"It's got the magnificence of manufactured landscapes with all the diverse people who live on that land," Fernie said. "It's stunning and moving. I think it's a masterpiece."

Hot Docs runs from April 28 to May 8. Tickets are on sale now.

The Globe and Mail – April 18, 2016 (1 of 2)

Spirit of the West: An audio guide to their long, concluding journey

April 18, 2016 by: MARSHA LEDERMAN



John Mann is shown singing at The Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver in a scene from the documentary Spirit Unforgettable.

After more than 30 years, Spirit of the West plays its final show on Saturday night at Vancouver's Commodore Ballroom. The band – now consisting of John Mann, Geoff Kelly, Vince Ditrich, Hugh McMillan, Tobin Frank and Matthew Harder – is taking its final bows less than two years after Mann, 53, revealed that he has early-onset Alzheimer's disease. It's time to return home, for a rest. To help send them off, The Globe and Mail put together a brief history of the band, with some video highlights

J. Knutson and Geoffrey Kelly begin playing music together in Vancouver in 1983. Kelly's wife, Alison Kelly, is a theatre student who tells them she has a classmate who "can really sing." They get a gig in Whistler and invite that theatre student, John Mann, to perform with them. They start playing together as Evesdropper – which was constantly misspelled and mispronounced. In 1984, the trio releases its first album, Spirit of the West – which they take on as the band's new name. The band's early days are documented in the new film,Spirit Unforgettable, which will have its world premiere at Hot Docs in Toronto on April 30.



The Globe and Mail – April 18, 2016 (2 of 2)

In 1990, the band – now Kelly, Mann, Hugh McMillan and Linda McCrae – has its first major label release, Save This House. The title track is released as a single.

The album's biggest song is the anthem that will become Spirit of the West's signature, Home for a Rest.

In 1991 the band – now joined by drummer Vince Ditrich – releases the albumGo Figure with what would become another fan favourite, Political.

The 1993 release Faithlift includes the radio hit And If Venice is Sinking, inspired by John Mann's honeymoon with actor/playwright Jill Daum.

From its next album Two Headed, the band releases a theatrical, avant-garde, single-shot video for Tell Me What I Think, directed by Morris Panych. As revealed in Spirit Unforgettable, it is not a hit with programmers at MuchMusic, who find it "creepy."

In 1995 the band records a live album with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Open Heart Symphony, including the track Williamson's Garage.

In 2009, John Mann is diagnosed with cancer. In 2014, he released a solo album, The Waiting Room, about that experience.

Later in 2014, John Mann reveals that he has been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's Disease. He wrote this song about the experience, and performed it for The Globe and Mail at his home.

With Mann's Alzheimer's, the band makes the decision to cease performing. It wraps up its 32-year career with three nights at The Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver and a final performance on Saturday night.

Ahead of their final shows, Geoffrey Kelly tells The Globe and Mail the band might still play the odd time; perhaps a 15-minute set at a special event. "Maybe we'll do something like that as long as Johnny's still well," he says. "And maybe I'm just being a little too optimistic, wanting the door to be open a tiny crack for some possibility in the future. It's just really hard to say that it's over. Even though it's been an amazing 32 years, I'm just greedy. I want a little more."

Here they are on Thursday night, the first of three final shows.



The Globe and Mail – April 21, 2016 (1 of 2)

Hot Docs festival revisits trial of the century with O.J.: Made in America

April 21, 2016 by: **JULIA COOPER**



'As a kid growing up in the ghetto, one of the things I wanted most was not money, it was *fame*. I wanted to be known, I wanted the people to say, 'Hey, there goes O.J.'" So goes the familiar, rolling baritone voice of O.J. Simpson in part one of director Ezra Edelman's five-part, seven-and-a-half-hour documentary, *O.J.: Made in America.*
Just after the one-time football icon delivers his origin story, though, the film cuts to the inside of the Lovelock Correctional Facility, where a greying Simpson recites this narrative at his parole hearing.

It is easy to forget that Simpson has been in jail for the past seven years, convicted for the armed robbery of two memorabilia dealers in Nevada. That might be because after the memories of a white Bronco speeding down an L.A. interstate began to recede, after a black glove was found and tried on in court, and after a jury delivered a not-guilty verdict in the double homicide of Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman back in 1994, Simpson was simply forgotten.

That's not to say he was forgotten by the Brown family, nor by by the Goldmans. And not even by the Kardashians, who owe their reality-television empire to him (it is from Robert Kardashian's residence that Simpson fled in that Bronco so many years ago). But by the millions of people who watched the televised court case unfold night after night, Simpson had indeed receded from memory and become a cultural footnote – if not a punchline.

Twenty-two years after the Trial of the Century, though, Edelman has painstakingly recreated a story that wasn't broadcast nightly into America's living rooms, with the 464-minute result screening next week as part of Hot Docs. This is a first for the Toronto film fest – never before has it featured a doc as long as this, with *Made in America* running in its entirety in consecutive screenings over a single day.
Asked if this was Hot Docs' attempt to adapt to the ways in which audiences now regularly binge watch their films and TV shows on streaming services such as Netflix, festival programmer Sarafina DiFelice says the fest simply "knew we were watching an outstanding documentary, and we [wanted] to bring our audiences examples of outstanding documentary work in all of its forms."

That may be true, but it doesn't hurt that viewers are now accustomed to marathon-viewing habits – and growing increasingly attached to true crime as a genre. From HBO's *The Jinx* to Netflix's *Making a Murderer* – not to mention, of course, FX's recently wrapped miniseries on the very same subject, *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story* – our thirst for reliving and obsessively dissecting the most lurid moments of American tabloid news is undeniable.
As with most stories in the true-crime genre, though, the victims fall away from this retelling. Brown and Goldman are discussed less and less as the doc evolves, which mimics this same erasure of their lives and deaths during the court trial itself.

But that's the thing about this case: there is hardly much speculation about whodunnit (save for *another* show in the works, bluntly titled *Hard Evidence: O.J. is Innocent*). And there is just as little

mystery as to what happened during the trial: this is a story that viewers already know well, and yet here we are wanting to know more, or to know *again*.
What to make, then, of our culture's appetite for detail? Is there an ethical murkiness to wading back into a case that the judicial system declared closed?

"We live in the shadow of this particular case all the time, in the 24-hour news cycle it helped create and the questions of justice it raised, and indeed, in the recent trend of true-crime stories," says Jesse Wente, director of film programmes at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, who will be hosting *Made in America*'s screening April 29.

Yet – twist! – according to Edelman, *Made in America* is "not true crime" at all. "The film is about O.J. and the film is about Los Angeles," the director says over the phone. "I was much more interested in the greater narrative and why people responded to the question of his guilt or innocence the way they did, more interested in O.J.'s character and the irony of someone's existence who, as a black man, lives his life trying not to be defined by his race – but then becomes such a symbolic character during the trial."
"The goal was to try to have the viewer emotionally respond to the series of injustices that black individuals, and in turn the black community, face at the hands of the police. To help you understand how they viewed the police and the distrust that they had in them," adds Edelman, whose doc will air on ESPN in June. "I think you really have to understand that this was something that was felt deeply in the bones of many people. And it really needs to be explained because of the way the trial was so divisive."

And that's the strength of *Made in America:* not its adherence to the true-crime canon, or its revelling in any of the legal manoeuvring celebrated in*American Crime Story,* but its attention to what happens to a community when a hero falls.

"I'm not black, I'm O.J.," Simpson said in 1967, becoming the epitome of a "colour-blind" America while the civil-rights movement raged around him. Edelman's series is as much about police brutality in L.A. and racial tensions in the U.S. as it is about a kid from the ghetto who became a Brentwood millionaire. On the heels of the Watts rebellion and the Rodney King beatings, black America, the film suggests, wanted justice for a black man –*any* black man – in 1994.

"A lot of people fundamentally did not understand why African-Americans were so distrustful of police," says Edelman, "and in turn didn't understand why they were so invested in O.J., and in turn didn't understand why they might have been celebrating so enthusiastically the verdict."

Edelman, though, is reticent to declare any opinion on Simpson's eventual fate, but what he did offer is telling enough. "It is curious that a man who went into a hotel room, however misguided it was, to steal back the memorabilia from people that he knew and was friends with and had worked with before … I can't for the life of me get my head around how that resulted in a 33-year sentence."

O.J.: Made in America *screens as part of Hot Docs on April 29 (Part 1 only) and April 30 (*hotdocs.ca*).*

Hot Docs: 10 films digging for justice

April 21, 2016 by: Olivia Ward

The hottest of the new batch of Hot Doc movies explore the disturbing fragility of justice around the world.



In a still from the movie The Engineer, Israel Ticas and Sargent Jonny are at a grave in Tonacatepeque with the body they just exhumed.

Somewhere in the mists of time the first wronged man or woman shook their fist at the sky and received no response.

The human quest for justice is as old as Babylonia's ancient Code of Hammurabi and beyond. And through the centuries forms of justice have evolved, codified and sparked furious debate.

In this year's Hot Docs — Toronto's acclaimed international documentary festival — the pursuit of justice and the disturbing fragility of justice systems is explored in gripping stories from more than a dozen countries.

Few today dispute that genocide is the greatest crime in human history, recalling the First World War killings of Armenians in Turkey, Hitler's campaign to exterminate the Jews and the savage murder of more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus inRwanda.

Much less known is the lonely struggle of Holocaust survivor Raphael Lemkin to find a word for those unspeakable deeds and turn it into international law.

In her film, *Watchers of the Sky*, Edet Belzberg follows the path of the term genocide from recognition to accountability, and the faltering current attempts to stop new genocides. But before

Lemkin campaigned for a UN convention against genocide, mass killing of groups of citizens by their own governments was not defined as an international crime.

"Without Lemkin, who knows where we would be today?" says Belzberg. "He wasn't just trying to save his people. He wanted this never to happen again — to anybody."

Lemkin died before the international courts levelled charges of genocide for mass murder. And in spite of his success in promoting the passage of the UN convention in 1948, Washington initially refused to ratify it for political reasons. "It was a blow he could never recover from," says Belzberg. "He absolutely succeeded in doing what he set out to do, but he died feeling like a failure."

A different kind of universal justice figures in Bahman Tavoosi's film *A Dress Rehearsal for an Execution*, chronicling the painstaking re-creation of a photo that is burned into the consciousness of Iranians.

It was taken in 1979 by Jahangir Razmi, who stumbled on a horrifying scene of 11 political prisoners lined up and executed by firing squad after Iran's clerical regime took power. In the bloodbath that followed, more than 20,000 of its suspected enemies died.

Razmi's photo, transmitted worldwide, became an instant classic and won the Pulitzer Prize — although the photographer remained anonymous for 27 years for fear of reprisal.

"I could only make this film when I left the country," said Tavoosi, who has lived in Canada since 2006. "But I wanted to make my own interpretation, to universalize it."

Iran's political prisoners — who continue to be executed at an alarming rate — have never received justice in their country. But, Tavoosi knew, neither had millions of others around the world. The actors he chose to represent them came from strife-torn countries with their own unhealed wounds.

"It was important to me to ask what can be the role of art in bringing justice to people who have experienced such trauma," he says.

Nor is the absence of justice limited to "rogue" countries like Iran. It is palpable in two North American films: director James Spione's *Silenced* and Amar Wala's *The Secret Trial 5*.

In *Silenced*, Spione follows the lives of three government whistleblowers, exemplary American citizens who believed in their country's moral authority until they spoke truth to power.

All three, former Justice Department ethics adviser Jesselyn Radack, former CIA analyst John Kiriakou and former National Security Agency executive Thomas Drake, began with good intentions and ended up on the road to a hell of persecution and emotional and financial ruin. Two were charged as enemies of the state under the Espionage Act.

"We're at a pivotal moment," says Spione. "What is America's identity going to be? Just a country in which a state of permanent war is central? We're so profoundly attached to the world as battlefield

that everything else has been subsumed. Whistleblowers are ordinary people who stood up against it."

In Canada, the permanent War on Terror has also left its mark. In *The Secret Trial 5,*Muslim men who arrived from Arab countries found themselves in a legal black hole of suspicion, surveillance and incarceration without any right to defend themselves.

Under Ottawa's system of "security certificates" Mohammad Mahjoub, Mahmoud Jaballah, Adil Charkaoui, Mohamed Harkat and Hassan Almrei were declared terrorism suspects, detained and denied the right to due process. Even out of jail they and their families lived under paranoia-inducing surveillance, and those who were eventually set free after widespread protest cannot clear their names or become Canadian citizens.

"The government went to astonishing lengths to accuse these people of engaging in horrendous acts," says Wala. "Even now its position is that 'they are not innocent and we believe they are a threat.' If that is so, they should be allowed to go to trial."

Social justice is the focus of Arash and Arman Riahi's film *EverydayRebellion*, an upbeat survey of the non-violent, "creative" protests that have blossomed throughout the world in this decade.

The brothers, Iranian political refugees in Austria, were spurred by Iran's crushed 2009 protest movement to follow the progress of other fast-moving "horizontal rebellions" that reject a single leader or political strategy. They encompass pro-democracy, anti-capitalist, feminist, environmental and other global grassroots movements.

"There was the Arab Spring, then the *indignatos* in Spain, the FEMEN women's protest, the U.S., Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria and other countries," says Arash. "The pattern was no clear leader, and the object was overthrowing the system."

Beginning with the Occupy movement in New York's Zuccotti Park, and continuing worldwide, the directors created a platform for protest: a multimedia encyclopedia of non-violent struggle for change. "It's more than a film," says Arash. "It's a life project."

At the other end of the scale is Syrian filmmaker Talal Derki's *Return to Homs*, a *cri de coeur* to the world — and chronicle of a country and a people destroyed by a regime whose violence turned peaceful demonstrations into bloodbaths and eventually a spiralling civil war.

With no hope of justice or resolution, the town's soccer star, Abdul Baset Saroot, abandons marches and leads a band of willing "martyrs" to death-defying missions to hold their town as it, and they, are increasingly decimated by the Assad regime's overwhelming force. Deserted by all but its desperate defenders, Homs is what the end of the world looks like.

Revered Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's quest for historic justice began in childhood, when his family's village of Birwe in the Galilee was occupied and destroyed by the Israeli army and he went into exile with his family. He returned as an illegal "infiltrator" who attended school covertly and as a teenager was arrested after reading a poem declaring himself a refugee — the first of several arrests before leaving for permanent exile in 1970.

Ibtisam Mara'ana Menuhin's biographical film *Write Down, I Am an Arab*, follows Darwish's struggle for justice through the widely acclaimed work that made him a national voice for Palestinians. But his doomed youthful love for a Jewish woman also shows his struggle for a common humanity, one that is its own form of justice.

TEN TO WATCH

A Dress Rehearsal for an Execution
Director: Bahman Tavoosi
Country focus: Iran, international

One picture tells the story. But the film uses a wider lens to recreate the chilling moment in Iran's history when an execution opened the floodgates to slaughter, captured by an Iranian photographer whose identity was kept secret for 27 years. The multicultural actors in this docudrama were chosen for their own traumatic pasts, making it a universal expression of shared suffering and human transcendence.

The Engineer
Director: Juan Passarelli, Mathew Charles
Country focus: El Salvador

Nothing from a Hollywood horror movie could equal one hour in the life of Israel Ticas, former cop turned criminologist, and the only man in the blood-spattered country who is literally digging up evidence of the murderous gang wars that spare no man, woman or child. He is driven not by vengeance but the agony of families whose relatives have vanished without a trace.

Everyday Rebellion
Director: Arash Riahi, Arman Riahi
Country focus: International

Ordinary people from the U.S. to Ukraine, Spain, Syria and beyond are mad as hell and not going to take it any more. But instead of violence they're turning to creative non-violent protest, from nude body painting to pranks, hugs and occupying public space. The film has become a centrepiece for multimedia input from like-minded global protesters connecting and spinning off their experiences through cyberspace.

Nelson Mandela: the Myth and Me
Director: Khalo Matabane
Country focus: South Africa

Madiba is an international hero and an almost mythical figure in his own time. After his death, a South African filmmaker struggles to come to terms with the contrast between what Mandela did for his country and what is left undone. And the painful relationship between justice and reconciliation. A new generation is still growing up with little hope, in a society that is one of the most unequal in the world.

The Notorious Mr. Bout
Director: Tony Gerber, Maxim Pozdorovkin
Country focus: International

Arms dealing knows no boundaries. Neither did Soviet-born Victor Bout, labelled the infamous "Merchant of Death," who flew deadly weapons into some of the world's worst war zones. But when now-jailed Bout put his extensive video archive at the directors' disposal, a different pattern emerged. The film explores the banality of evil, and the fine line that can be drawn between innocence and guilt.

Return to Homs
Director: Talal Derki
Country focus: Syria

Abdul Baset Saroot had everything — a Syrian star footballer with movie-star looks and charisma to burn. But when he chose the path of protest in Syria, his life turned to ashes. The film is a breathtaking, street-level look at Syria's unfolding tragedy through Baset's evolution as a resistance leader, while the rebel town of Homs, and those who dare to defend it, are systematically destroyed.

The Secret Trial 5
Director: Amar Wala
Country focus: Canada

Five men from Muslim countries have made headlines as terrorism suspects, held under surveillance and in detention for nearly 30 years combined under Ottawa's Kafkaesque security certificate system. The film looks at their everyday lives under the scrutiny and suspicion of a government that never allows them to clear their names, learn the evidence against them or lift the constant fear of deportation.

Silenced
Director: James Spione
Country focus: U.S.

Jesselyn Radack is a human rights attorney, Thomas Drake a former NSA official and John Kiriakou an ex-CIA analyst. All three exposed inconvenient truths about American government wrongdoing, from massive waste of public funds to illegal surveillance of citizens to torture and ill treatment of prisoners under national security laws. The devastating reprisals they have suffered have made them question basic American values.

Watchers of the Sky
Director: Edet Belzberg
Country focus: International

Raphael Lemkin died alone feeling that he was a failure. But the Holocaust survivor gave a name to the world's most unspeakable crime: genocide. The film follows the progress of the term from a concept to international law and indictment of suspects. Meanwhile, mass murder is still committed by dictators and militants, and debate rages over the responsibility to protect those facing slaughter.

Write Down, I Am an Arab
Director: Ibtisam Mara'ana Menuhin
Country focus: Palestine

The poetry of Mahmoud Darwish has inspired Palestinians and fired their national identity for decades. But the poet's secret relationship with Rita, from a Jewish communist family, exposes the deep fissure between public and private identity in a society where lines of religion and ethnicity cannot be crossed. The lyrical and complex biographical film explores how, for those who try, the personal is irrevocably political.

Correction - April 21, 2014: *This article was edited from a previous version that misstated the number of Tutsis and moderate Hutus murdered during the Rwandan genocide.*

Toronto Star – April 23, 2016 (1 of 2)

Operation Avalanche just one Hot Docs film that dares to challenge the official story

April 23, 2016 by: **Peter Howell**

Who's that strange man standing outside of the spacesuit? It's a scene from Apollo 11 hoax thriller Operation Avalanche, one of many Hot Docs films that challenge the official story about famous events and people.



A film by Toronto's Matt Johnson speculates about the rumoured faking of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

In one of the most historic photos of the 20th century, an American astronaut walks on the moon during the Apollo 11 lunar mission.

But wait — who's the guy in the dark suit in the foreground?

It's Toronto filmmaker and actor Matt Johnson (*The Dirties*), who combines fact, fiction and the most wild-eyed of speculation for *Operation Avalanche*, a genre-defying work coming to the 2016 edition of Hot Docs, which runs April 28 — May 8. (The Sundance hit has its Canadian premiere April 29, prior to a theatrical run later this year.)

Set in the late 1960s during the Cold War/space race between the U.S. and Russia,*Operation Avalanche* is built like a documentary within a documentary, but it plays like a vintage spy thriller or 1970s paranoia classic like *The Parallax View*.

It asks the most Earth-shaking of questions: What if Apollo 11 was a hoax, cooked up by a desperate NASA, a sneaky CIA and a complicit Stanley Kubrick, who made a moon landing look real in *2001: A Space Odyssey*?

Many other films at Hot Docs will similarly challenge and/or enlarge the official story behind famous events and people.

Other anticipated fest highlights include Ezra Edelman's *O.J. Simpson: Made In America*, which digs for the truth behind the "Trial of the Century"; Brendan Byrne's*Bobby Sands: 66 Days*, which uses the diary of the 1980s Irish hunger striker for a unique first-person perspective; John Walker's *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*, a post-Quiet Revolution study on under-reported social tumult in Quebec; and Pierre Bismuth's *Where is Rocky II?*, the bizarro hunt for an artistically placed fake rock reportedly hidden among real ones in the California desert.

Details on these and many other films are available at www.hotdocs.ca .

CP24 – April 24, 2016





DIRECTOR MORGAN WHITE DISCUSSES 'THE SLIPPERS'

Director Morgan White discusses his documentary 'The Slippers,' which is screening at Hot Docs next weekend.

Sunday, Apr. 24, 2016

Toronto Life – April 25, 2016

A Carly Rae Jepsen gig, a Noma-inspired dinner and nine other things to do this week

April 25, 2016 by: ANNA FITZPATRICK AND REBECCA FLEMING



Dinner and a doc
Eatable Films teams up with Hot Docs and one of the city's best restaurants for a special dinner-and-a-movie event. After the Canadian premiere of *Ants on a Shrimp*—a behind-the-scenes look into chef Rene Redzepi's Toyko pop-up—guests will enjoy a five-course meal of locally grown and foraged ingredients from Actinolite chef Justin Cournoyer at historic Burwash Hall. Bonus: director Maurice Dekkers will also be in attendance. (See the rest of our Hot Docs picks here.) $190. Sunday, May 1. *Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St. W., hotdocs.ca.*

Maclean's – April 25, 2016 (1 of 2)

Katie Couric takes on America's gun problem at Hot Docs

April 25, 2016 by: Jake Howell

Katie Couric's 'Under the Gun' looks at what has changed in the gun-regulation since the Sandy Hook school shooting. A lot, it turns out, but for the worse.



A still from Under the Gun/Hot Docs

Isla Vista, Calif.; Newtown, Conn; Aurora, Colorado; San Bernadino, Calif.: They're just a few communities forever etched in North America's collective consciousness as the locales of violent tragedies, and they cast a long shadow in their wake.

As the story continues to repeat itself, artists—especially American filmmakers—are grappling with it in their work. This year we've seen films like *Newtown,* a documentary about the years after the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, and the experimental drama *Dark Night*, which fictionalizes a shooting inspired by events in Aurora.

At Hot Docs this year, the film most directly challenging the matter is *Under the Gun,*a documentary by TV journalist Katie Couric and filmmaker Stephanie Soechtig. Their second collaboration after *Fed Up*, their 2014 wake-up call on the rise of childhood obesity, *Under the Gun* seeks to disarm gun lobby propaganda while re-framing the violence as what it really is: an epidemic.

"We need to start treating this as a public health issue," Soechtig said in an interview after the film's Sundance premiere. "Thirty-three thousand people are dying every year from this. If it was a disease, we would certainly be devoting more resources to it."

Under the Gun opens with an alarming statistic: that by the time the end credits roll, 22 Americans will have been shot—and six of them will die. After the rise in mass shootings since 2011—a disturbing trend the film tracks with saddening clarity—Couric and Soechtig wanted in some way to disrupt the cycle that occurs every time a mass shooting happens. "Breaking news," an anchor will read, about to report on the latest tragedy. Then: shots of a grieving public. Prayers and thoughts go out.

Weeks later the cycle repeats and little has changed for the better—even after Sandy Hook (or "12/14," as in Dec. 14), which is often referred to as a watershed moment for gun violence in America.
Here the film pauses for a moment, because it's not entirely true that nothing changed since Sandy Hook. A lot of things changed. In fact, *Under the Gun* reports, approximately two-thirds of all legislation passed after Newtown actually *expanded*gun owner rights and eased restrictions on obtaining a gun, a backwards irony that speaks to the importance of the conversations Couric and Soechtig want to have. Conversations like an interview with the inspirational former Arizona representative Gabrielle Giffords; a visit with the parents of Jessica Ghawi, an ambitious young woman who survived a shooting at Toronto's Eaton Centre a month before losing her life in a Colorado movie theatre; and a hopeful discussion with black mothers in Chicago who witness tragic loss almost daily. "What can we do? Why is this happening?" Couric asks, her trademark optimism informing her concern. "Can we all get together and do something about it?"

Chicago is part of *Under the Gun*'s most important reminder: It's easy to compartmentalize the problem of gun violence as unpredictable mass shootings, but the reality is that 12 people were shot in the Windy City on January 6th, 2016, the day President Obama unveiled his executive actions to curb gun violence. Four died. Feeding the crisis are "bad apple" gun stores—of which Chicago has plenty—that look the other way when dealing to shady individuals like gun traffickers.
That's why the documentary is more than a bitter indictment of the Second Amendment: it's an examination of the gun industry at large. It debunks the fear tactics and misinformation trumpeted by the National Rifle Association, a once-respectable entity that now exists as a den of demagoguery.

"How on earth would we ever confiscate 350,000,000 guns in this country?" Soechtig says, referring to the NRA's claim that legislation would take guns away from legitimate owners.

America is a country with more gun stores than McDonald's and Starbucks combined, a context that's important for Soechtig and Couric, who went out of their way to include more voices from gun owners. "If in fact 74 per cent of NRA members do favour universal background checks," Couric says, "I want to hear from those people."

And there's the film's silver bullet: gun violence should be seen as a bi-partisan issue, as 90 per cent of Americans are in favour of universal background checks on gun purchases (the film underlines the key words "well regulated" in the Second Amendment's definition of a "well regulated militia."). Regulated gun ownership shouldn't be fraught with political debate, because only a fringe minority do not wish there were "things in place that keep guns from winding up in the hands of criminals," Couric explains.

"When I go to a movie that's really crowded or I go to a Broadway show or I'm at a sporting event, I think about: Gosh, could somebody come in here?" Couric admits. "What kind of carnage could they cause?"

"Welcome to America," Soechtig sighs.

Huffington Post – April 25, 2016

Animating a Film When You Can't Draw

April 25, 2016 by: **Jonny von Wallström**

Making your first feature documentary is hard, and it's a process that you rarely get a close look at. This is why I decided to start documenting my own struggle as a filmmaker.

About three years ago I started working on my debut feature doc called *The Pearl Of Africa*. Making it seems to be impossible, which I why I decided to create a vlog about my struggle to make the film. *The Pearl Of Africa* is a story about love, hate and being transgender, in one of the worlds most transphobic places, Uganda.

The film has been selected to Hot Docs, one of the world's largest documentary festivals. We will now have to animate parts of it, scenes that are meant to illustrate how Cleo was beaten by her farther, but also how she was portrayed in the Ugandan media. I have decided to do this by myself, but I have no idea of how you animate a scene like this. Take a look...



Film Review: 'Check It'

April 25, 2016 by: Dennis Harvey



APRIL 25, 2016 | 08:01AM PT PHOTO COURTESY OF TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

"Check It" portrays Washington D.C. African-American gay and transgender youths who started their own gang for self-protection as a handful of fed-up 9th graders a decade ago.

Though an opening text informs that Washington D.C. has one of the highest rates of anti-gay violence in the nation, bullies and predators would be advised to steer clear of "**Check It**'s" protagonists. They're local African-American gay and transgender youths who started their own gang for self-protection as a handful of fed-up 9th graders a decade ago. Now they number over 200 — many armed and dangerous as well as fierce and fabulous. Dana Flor and Toby Oppenheimer's engrossing, well-crafted doc could parlay its attention-grabbing subject beyond the fest circuit into niche theatrical and broadcast exposure.

The streets depicted here are just a stone's throw from the corridors of power in the nation's capitol, but they might as well be light-years away. Poverty, violence, broken homes and arrest records are standard formative experiences for these boys, whose often conspicuously "different," feminine ways from an early age tended to attract even greater abuse than typical among their peers. Figuring that the safety-in-numbers principle might protect them from frequent beatings and sometimes worse, several middle-schoolers started "the Check-It" in 2005.

Banding together helped lessen their chances of various kinds of harm (from not only schoolmates and gangbangers but family members and prostitution johns), in large part because a fearsome reputation rapidly arose around their willingness to fight. These “sissies” might look and act girlishly flamboyant, but they were packing brass knuckles, knives and trigger-tempers. While the film doesn’t dwell on the rap sheets they’ve accumulated (presumably to avoid dogging their futures), we see several instances in which personalities accustomed to going postal over any perceived threat or disrespect come very close to the brink — and one street melee which hurtles right over it.

Such behavior has evolved as a defense mechanism after years of various psychological and physical abuses, and it serves its purpose (particularly given that many of the subjects hustle their bodies for cash on a particular stretch of K Street, which requires a whole other dimension of self-protective measures). But when the goal is more than mere survival, being “fierce” can become a liability — as our principal figures here discover, now that they’re entering adulthood and trying to turn some dreams into reality.

Facilitating their evolution is Jarmal Harris, a similarly backgrounded child of the D.C. projects who runs a summer “fashion camp” for underprivileged kids who aspire toward the fashion industry. It’s a great opportunity, but having to follow instructions, tone down their volume and play well with others is more than some Check It members can easily manage.

The film also spotlights other mentoring adults trying to give them a path out of the many dead ends they’ve witnessed in their community: Ex-con Ron “Mo” Moten counsels local gay youth, while a pro boxer turned trainer called Duke recognizes the natural athlete beneath rail-thin but sinewy Skittles’ flighty veneer. He encourages the young man to get in the ring, though other fighters are dubious about this prospective competitor — and Skittles isn’t the most dedicated or reliable trainee.

These subjects may often be drama queens, but they’ve been shaped by the kind of less-than-entertaining drama that can suddenly yank them right out of the filmmakers’ access — which could explain the limited backstory provided, and the fact we can’t always follow what’s happened when their circumstances seem to have changed between sections. (One shocking exception is a scene where a Check It member calls a rape crisis line in post-traumatic distress, and they prove dismayingly unhelpful when it comes to assault by an anonymous prostitution client.)

Still, a one-year-later epilogue suggests things are generally on the upswing for our protags, thanks to their own developing talents but also Moten and Harris’ dogged advocacy efforts. Despite occasional narrative gaps, “Check It” is consistently compelling, with a brisk pace and vivid personalities making up for the occasional unanswered question. Assembly is aptly not over-slick but energetically well-turned.

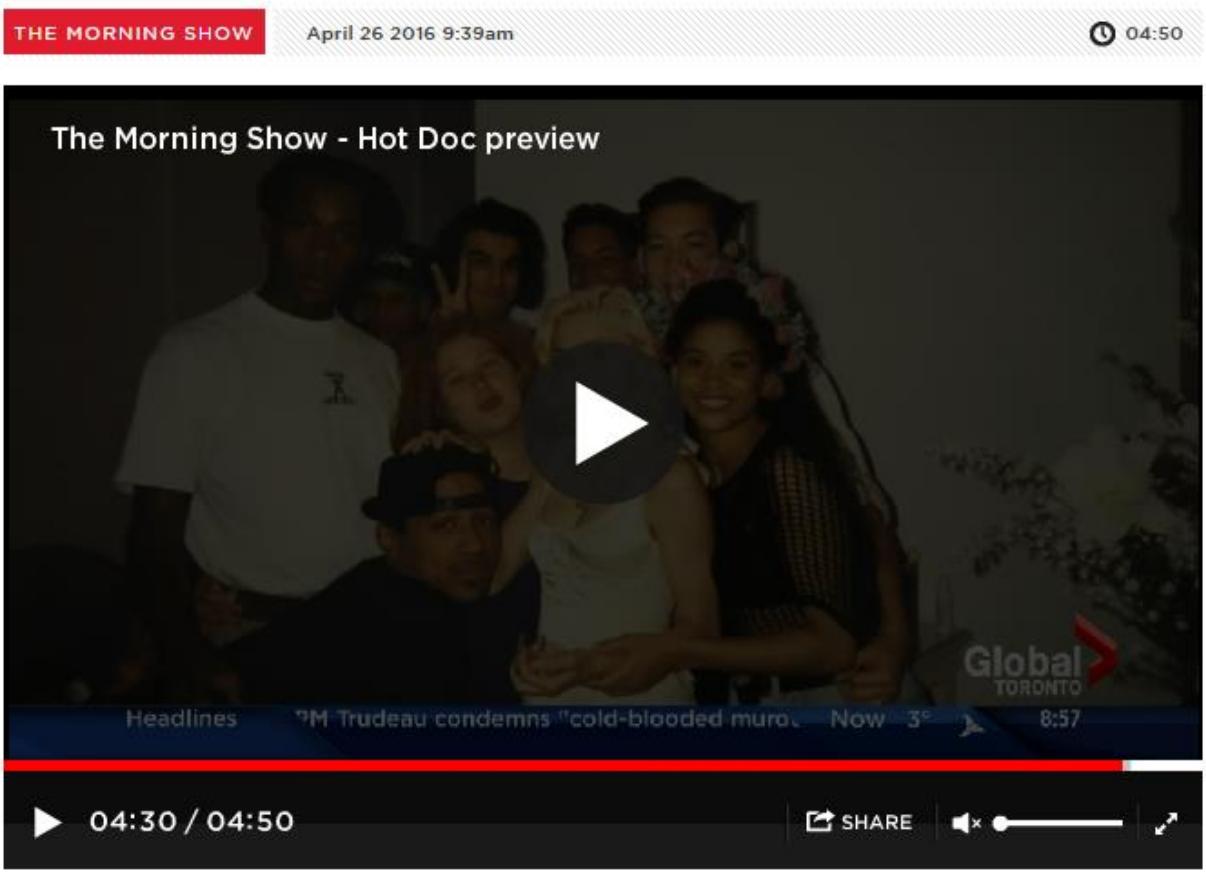
Film Review: 'Check It'

Reviewed at Alamo Drafthouse, San Francisco, April 5, 2016. (In Tribeca, San Francisco International, Hot Docs film festivals.) Running time: **91 MIN**.

Global News – April 26, 2016

Hot Doc preview; Brett Hendrie is in studio to give us a preview of this year's Hot Docs.

April 26, 2016 by: **Host Liza Fromer**



Hot Doc preview

Tue, Apr 26: Brent Hendrie is in studio to give us a preview of this year's Hot Docs.

Hanging Out With the World's Pinball Wizard, Who Just Wants to Level Up in Life

April 26, 2016 by: Sarah Berman



Watching world champion Robert Gagno play *South Park* pinball is like zoning out to a really intricate fireworks display, only with fart noises. He guides multiple balls to the far corners, occasionally nudging the machine to float them back to his flipper for an impossibly soft landing. This makes Terrance and Phillip dance and defecate on a flashing dot matrix screen.

I meet Gagno at a Vancouver skate shop that has some of his favourite games in the city: *Metallica*, *NBA Fastbreak*, and *Terminator 3*. They're also some of the games he played to secure his first-ever world championship title in Pittsburgh earlier this month. "It felt amazing to finally take it home," he says, "it's a really big trophy, like 35 pounds."

Gagno tells me pinball is making "a comeback of the ages"—a theory gamers have compared to the resurgence of vinyl in music. (**I.e. stranger things have happened**.)

VICE – April 26, 2016 (2 of 5)



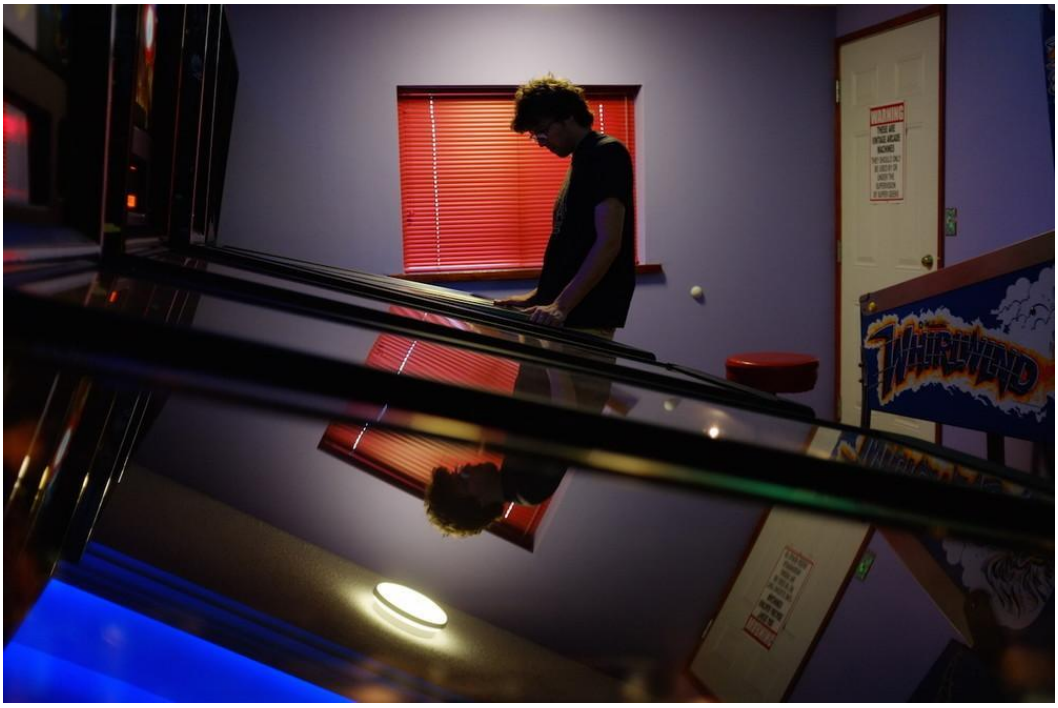
For Gagno, it's been a long road to the top—six years competing in world competitions, and a decade more practicing on his own collection of machines at his home in Burnaby, BC. For the last two years, he's had the extra challenge of sharing every step of the way with filmmakers Nathan Drillot and Jeff Petry.

In the resulting documentary *Wizard Mode*, which premieres at Hot Docs in Toronto May 2 and hits DOXA festival the following week in Vancouver, Gagno doesn't just open up about the ups and downs of competitive pinball, but also his personal quest for independence as a 27-year-old with autism. More than anything, though, the film is about this innately human hunger to improve, succeed and win—evoking a sense of excitement that is really, really contagious.

Gagno's style of play immediately earns friends and spectators. When he's playing well, he flips his jacket halfway down his arms and goes silent, even as arcade regulars lean over to cheer him on and ask questions.

"I try to think: Can I really play for multi-ball? Or do I try to find I another way I can keep the ball in play?" **he says of his completion strategy. He also wears signature headphones to ward off distraction.**

"Whichever shots I'm making comfortably, I see how I can maximize and get that to work."



I fire up a game beside Gagno, but inevitably waste all three balls before he's finished with his first. My attempt at a nudge—to keep the ball in play by lightly rocking the machine—manages to get the thing stuck behind an *Addams Family* armchair. I'm still a long way from clearing what Drillot and Petry call the "survival mode" stage of pinball play, something I need to work on to properly appreciate Gagno's big-picture, methodical approach to the game.

"When we first started doing the movie, I hadn't played more than a few games in my life," Drillot says. "You start to realize the games have really complex rules and goals, and there's an order to how you should do things... Once you start to figure that stuff out, even if it's just the very beginning it starts to become very rewarding."

In the film you can see some of the same strategy and problem-solving skills in action, at times applied to getting a job, making friends, or striking out into the unknown in a new city. In these moments you can't help but feel the rush of a level-up or bonus multiplier every time Gagno unlocks a new achievement.

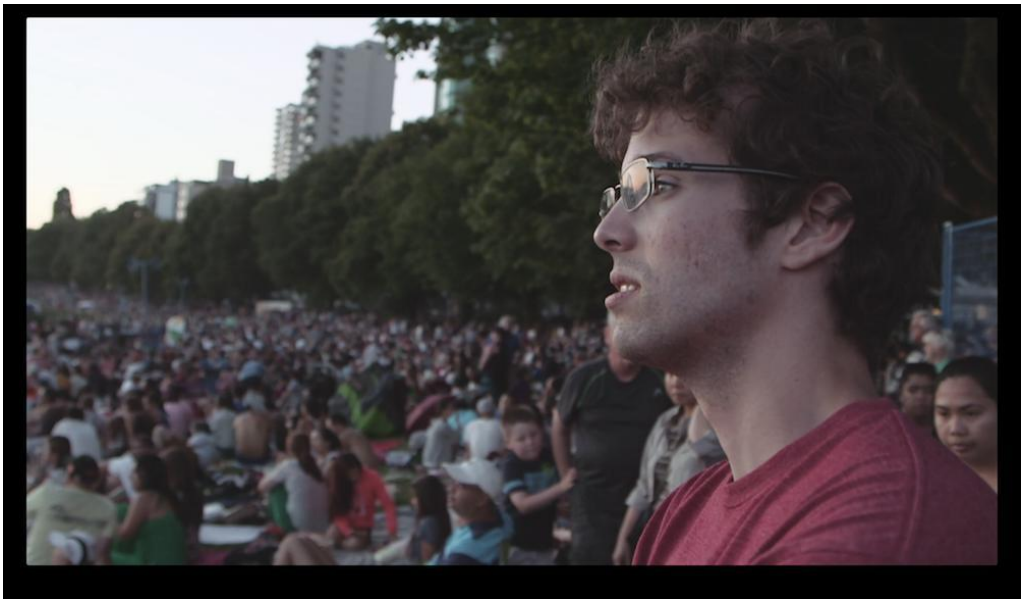


I especially relate to one of Gagno's small but important gains: laying out his own rules for when to hug, how to hug, and when to shake hands. This is something that can still mysteriously confound me, and when I relate this to Petry and Drillot, they share their own stories of missed social cues. "I've always related Robert's grappling with the complexity of hugs to my first time living in Europe and trying to figure out when to kiss people twice, or once, on the mouth, hug, or just shake hands," recalls Petry. "There were more than a few awkward moments."

Filmmakers Drillot and Petry say it's those kinds of shared experiences that helped to clear the air and get beyond the label autism and the weird misconceptions and stigma that come with it. "It wasn't like we had a ton of experience when it came to the subject of autism," says Drillot. "The more time we spent with Robert, the more we realized we didn't have to worry about that. What Robert really cares about is people interacting with him and meeting him as an individual first."

It took the filmmakers a long time to gain that kind of perspective, but Petry says one of the aims of the film is to share that experience more widely. "What we hope for the film is the audience will be taken through the same trajectory we did, which was encounter this person as a label, then slowly sift through that and realize there's a person on the other end of it," he says. "And a friend, because he's super charming."

VICE – April 26, 2016 (5 of 5)



Petry and Drillot will have their own level-up moment, premiering a feature-length film at a festival for the first time. But it's this friendship, says Petry, that's the real takeaway. "We realized as soon as we started the project we weren't just going to shoot this and walk away from it and not know Robert. We were going to develop a relationship both creatively and very personally with him," he says. "That's been a really rewarding aspect of it."

Now that the pinball world champion title is under his belt, Gagno can focus on clearing levels in other aspects of his life. "I want to live in my own place one day, maybe have a roommate too," he tells me. "And also cooking my own things, doing the laundry by myself."

Toronto Star – April 27, 2016

CTV will air O.J.: Made in America

April 27, 2016 by: Debra Yeo

Documentary series about O.J. Simpson also has its international premiere at Hot Docs festival.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

In an unforgettable moment during his 1995 murder trial, O.J. Simpson struggles to put on a glove the prosecution said he wore the night Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were slain

CTV has snapped up the docuseries *O.J.: Made in America* for its summer schedule.

The five-part miniseries covers the life of O.J. Simpson as well as his acquittal for the murder of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and subsequent arrest in a Las Vegas robbery case.

It has its international premiere Friday at the Hot Docs festival.

On June 11, it will premiere on CTV, the same night it airs on ABC in the U.S., and then roll out over the next seven days on the network. It will also encore on TSN beginning June 12 and start streaming on CraveTV on July 29.

Another O.J. miniseries, *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story*, was a recent hit for the FX network. This latest series is described as “must-see TV” by Mike Cosentino, CTV’s senior vice-president of programming.

Hot Docs 2016: What documentaries should you see at this year's fest?

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With more than 200 documentaries to choose from at Hot Docs 2016, which ones will you see? Below, you can find The Globe and Mail's guide to what to see at the fest, which runs through May 8. You can sort reviews by title, rating, reader rating or date added. Check back here throughout the festival for updates and The Globe's take on the buzziest documentaries.

The following mini-reviews of select films at Hot Docs 2016 are rated on a system of 0 to 4 stars. For detailed screening information see hotdocs.ca.

Where Is Rocky II?

- Pierre Bismuth
- World premiere
- **Country:**France/Germany/Belgium/Italy
- **Length:**93 minutes

This year's Hot Docs seems to be trapped in a hall of mirrors. How else to explain the festival selections of Operation Avalanche, Fraud and Where Is Rocky II? – all films that twist the definition of what art is really supposed to be. Of the three, Where Is Rocky II? is perhaps the most bizarre selection – an exploration to find a fake rock hidden somewhere in the Mojave Desert, as part of a conceptual-art stunt in the late seventies. The result is occasionally bemusing, surreal and a fair bit maddening. Give Pierre Bismuth's film, this, though: It's unique. And, however you define it, pure art. (May 3, 12 p.m., Lightbox; May 8, 6:30 p.m., Lightbox.) – Barry Hertz

Cheer Up

- Christy Garland
- World premiere
- **Country:**Finland/Canada
- **Length:**72 minutes

When a Finnish cheerleading coach goes to Texas looking for inspiration to pump up her losing team, she comes home with lots of self-affirming platitudes about refusing to fail, and no pain, no gain. This doc quietly disproves them as both the coach's unplanned pregnancy and the cheerleaders' young lives – a breakup with a boyfriend; lingering grief over the death of a mother – contradict those admonitions to smile, smile, smile. There's not much excitement in this bit of observational cinema, but a great deal of courage in the film's refusal of pat stories about underdog victories. (May 1, 7 p.m. Scotiabank; May 5, 7 p.m. Lightbox; May 7, 6:30 p.m. Lightbox.) – Kate Taylor

In the Shadow of the Hill

- Dan Jackson
- World premiere
- **Country:**Australia
- **Length:**97 minutes

The spine of this movie is the story of Amarildo, a 43-year-old bricklayer in Brazil's largest favela who disappeared at the hands of police in 2013, and the efforts of his family to find him and seek justice in his murder. The family's fight, and the larger story of Rio's rocky efforts to bring community policing to the favelas, is a compelling subject for first-time director Dan Jackson. But his movie is a muddled mess, devoid of any context to help the viewer make sense of what's happening. It's cluttered with references to every other social issue in Brazil, and there are two parallel stories that the film inexplicably cuts back and forth between until the viewer is near insensate. Jackson knows how to torque tension out of a moment – there is a chilling scene where the police colonel eventually sentenced for Amarildo's murder is recruited by the community to go look for a body in the forest. But those moments are lost in the overall chaos of the film. Many of the interviews with favela residents feel rehearsed, and there is an irritating trick of putting a boxy old television strategically beside a garbage dump or sewer to show historical footage. The movie is rich in exoticization of favela life and drenched in gratuitous violence – Jackson shows the horrifying footage of a woman in another favela whose body was dragged behind a police car for miles, and the desperate, intimate sadness of her family, but she never shows up again as a character, and her story is irrelevant. He plays fast and loose with translation from Portuguese in spots, upping the drama, and doesn't source the facts he sprinkles in – some, like the staggering figure that 38,000 people disappeared in the city between 2007 and 2013, are out of context, with the film leaving the impression they were all murdered by police. Most critically, Jackson never takes the fundamental step of going to the source: We never hear from the police themselves, particularly the investigators who brought in their colleagues for Amarildo's murder. That's a jarring absence, and so is any critical analysis of how we got here: How did traffickers get hold of this community of 250,000? What was life like under their reign of terror? Why did the state decide to take it back? And what went wrong? In the end, it's a sadly missed opportunity, because Brazil's own media do a poor job of reporting on favelas and police violence. There's a chilling moment in the doc where Jackson shows the growth of a movement demanding to know "Where is Amarildo?" He does answer the question, but by the time we get there, it's hard to care any more. (May 1, 4:30 p.m., Lightbox; May 2, 8:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 6, 9:15 p.m., Scotiabank.) – Stephanie Nolen

I Am the Blues

- Daniel Cross
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**106 minutes

The song I Am the Blues, recorded by Muddy Waters, concerns hard times and their heavy musical articulation. It is about the wounds and the mistreatments and the burden of the players who express the suffering – the last ones to hide, the first ones to find. The film I Am the Blues finds the rough-cut music and the rougher-cut life, in Mississippi and in Louisiana, where an appreciation for the dying art of gutbucket blues hangs on. Montreal filmmaker Daniel Cross is unobtrusive, letting the cameras roll as obscure players such as Jimmy (Duck) Holmes and more known figures such as Bobby Rush talk candidly about the blood of the music and the stomping grounds of the form. Perhaps inspired by an art-house indie drama like Beasts of the Southern Wild as much as the traditional blues-highway doc The Road to Memphis, Cross's light-

handed (but too long) film doesn't romanticize or overcomprehend, choosing instead to concentrate on life's non-choices. "You find out what it isn't," an old interviewee says, "not what it is." (May 2, 4 p.m., Lightbox; May 4, 10:45 a.m., Lightbox; May 7, 3:45 p.m., Lightbox.) – Brad Wheeler

Chasing Asylum

- Eva Orner
- World premiere
- **Country:**Australia
- **Length:**96 minutes

In a classic piece of crusading journalism, filmmaker Eva Orner investigates Australia's response to the boat people arriving in its waters and exposes both shamefully cynical government policy and appalling conditions at overseas detention centres. The centres, filmed with hidden cameras, are located in impoverished island states well away from Australia and are intended to discourage more arrivals. They succeed – only insofar as they force migrants to other shores – by violating the refugee rights of the detainees. Former staffers, some of them speaking anonymously since Australia passed anti-whistleblower legislation on the file, report how utterly unprepared they were to deal with the deteriorating mental and physical health of hopeless people indefinitely detained. Clearly, the current global refugee crisis needs a solution that is both international and humane, and this is not it. (April 28, 6:30 p.m., Lightbox; April 29, 3:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 8, 9:45 p.m., Scotiabank.) – Kate Taylor

Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You

- Heidi Ewing, Rachel Grady
- International premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**91 minutes

In a praising, compelling salute that covers the significant career of seventies sitcom supremo Norman Lear, we naturally hear the wistful theme-song longings of his satirically groundbreaking comedy All in the Family – "those were the days." Directors Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady probably took that rose-coloured sentimentality too much to heart when it came to their hyperbolic look at Lear, a no-nonsense nonagenarian who probably would have been fine with less applause from younger pals George Clooney and Amy Poehler and more back-and-forth commentary on the controversy of his series Good Times, a black story told whitely. Still, the film is poetically structured and Lear is a spry, emotionally involved participant in a lively bio-doc that succeeds eulogistically and contextually. (April 30, 6:15 p.m., Lightbox; May 1, 10:30 a.m., Bloor Hot Docs; May 6, 6:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 7, 3:15 p.m., Revue.) – Brad Wheeler

League of Exotique Dancers

- Rama Rau
- World premiere
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**90 minutes

In an amusing and informative investigation of their lives, former strippers insist on the artistry of burlesque, an entertainment eclipsed in the 1980s by lap dancing and porn, but they also discuss it honestly as a branch of the sex trade. The women, now in their 60s and 70s, speak of their work as a kind of sexual liberation, a way to use their bodies to hold power in a man's world, but that empowerment clearly came at a price, since most had serious problems with drugs and alcohol. If they were sexual objects in their heyday, their exuberant reappearance at the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas is a gleeful retort to the cult of the young, female body as they reveal the sexiness of broad hips and sagging flesh. (April 28, 9:45 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs; April 29, 1:30 p.m., Lightbox.) – Kate Taylor

The Apology

- Tiffany Hsiung
- World premiere
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**105 minutes

It is estimated that during the Second World War more than 200,000 women and girls from Korea, China, the Philippines and Indonesia were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army as so-called comfort women. This deeply moving film tells some of their shocking stories, but mainly it is about the present, as a dwindling number of survivors continue to petition the Japanese government for an apology and recompense. Led by the 86-year-old Korean "Grandma Gil," who was taken from her hometown at the age of 13 and held captive for several years, the women display a resilience and a persistence that is inspiring. (April 30, 6:30 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs; May 1, 10:30 a.m., Lightbox; May 8, 12:45 p.m., Isabel Bader; May 8, 6:30 p.m., Hart House.) – Kate Taylor

Unlocking the Cage

- Chris Hegedus, D.A. Pennebaker
- Canadian premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**92 minutes

Can you appreciate a documentary even if you wildly disagree with its central subject? That's the question Unlocking the Cage poses, at least for this reviewer. Focusing on the crusade of Steve Wise to convince the legal system that animals qualify for human rights under habeas corpus, the film constantly asks you to side with the lawyer and the PETA-esque Nonhuman Rights Project, even as it shows the advocates constantly stumbling and occasionally grasping for straws. Normally, this would be an easy way to undercut a documentary, but the powerful filmmaking duo of Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker somehow turn Wise's

quest into a compelling and noble tale, no matter what your thoughts are on the views presented. (May 2, 3:30 p.m., Lightbox; May 3, 9:30 p.m., Lightbox; May 8, 10 a.m., Lightbox.) – Barry Hertz

Strike a Pose

- Ester Gould, Reijer Zwaan
- **Country:**Netherlands/Belgium
- **Length:**83 minutes

Akin to 2013's Twenty Feet from Stardom and a sequel of sorts to 1991's Truth or Dare concert doc, Strike a Pose revisits the men who answered the audition ad for "fierce male dancers" and wound up performing on Madonna's massive Blond Ambition tour and engaging in camera-caught pillow-talk moments with the cone-bra superstar. Of the highlighted seven dancers – momentarily gay icons in their own right – six have survived, some with HIV/AIDS. All tumbled from the spotlight once the tour bubble burst. A posttour lawsuit levied against "motherly" Madonna by two dancers is barely dealt with; the Express Yourself singer herself isn't interviewed. As a result, the affecting film is absent of the truth or dare it had the potential for. (April 29, 7 p.m., Hart House; April 30, 1:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 7, 6:30 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs.) – Brad Wheeler

Zimbelism

- Matt Zimbel, Jean-François Gratton
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**90 minutes

"Sometimes I have to come out of the darkroom," says George Zimbel, "and tend to business and ethical issues." In a kindly, likeable portrait co-directed by his filmmaker-musician son, the Canadian-American photographer takes on the New York Times in a battle over ownership of a photograph of President John F. Kennedy – a running copyright issue that is threaded into the story of the great urban photographer. The soundtrack is energetically jazzy; the photos shown are human, humorous and upbeat, from a street-photo specialist who believed reality was more interesting than creating. Zimbel, thoughtful and articulate, does most of the talking. Alas, some of the generational issues he raises are dealt with skimpily, overwhelmed by an appealing enough biography instead. (April 29, 9 p.m., Lightbox; April 30, 1 p.m., Isabel Bader; May 6, 4 p.m., Revue.) – Brad Wheeler

Off the Rails

- Adam Irving
- International premiere
- **Country:**Canada/USA
- **Length:**87 minutes

Next stop, Rikers Island Express. The New York tabloids exclaimed him as a "train in the neck" and a "transit kook," but a sympathetic documentary from Torontonian Adam Irving portrays Darius McCollum as a troubled, affable subway savant who has spent a good part of his life behind bars as a result of his compulsion to steal public buses and impersonate transit employees. His story here is well-woven, with the

kind-hearted voices of psychiatrists, playwrights, family members, lawyers and the gregarious McCollum himself failing to come up with a solution on how to handle an autistic, obsessive and irresponsible rail rider. (May 4, 9:15 p.m., Scotiabank; May 6, 1 p.m., Lightbox; May 7, 9 p.m., Scotiabank; May 8, 7:15 p.m., Innis.) – Brad Wheeler

Aim for the Roses

- John Bolton
- World premiere
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**102 minutes

Daredevil is as daredevil does. In the late 1970s, Canada's Ken Carter plotted to jump a rocket car across the St. Lawrence River, into a giant bed of roses. Even Evel Knievel thought the stunt was crazed. Many years later the peculiar Vancouver double-bassist Mark Haney recorded a concept album in celebration of Carter's strange story, the recording itself a curious undertaking of obsession and Haney's affinity with the stuntman. Now director John Bolton doubles down on the weird, crafting an offbeat docudrama that tells the tales of Carter's leap and Haney's art with interviews, recreations, archival footage and musical moments. The message is to follow one's muse and to own one's folly. And while the odd film is entirely watchable, it is marred a bit by repetition and interview segments that seem rehearsed. (May 1, 7:15 p.m., Scotiabank; May 2, 1:15 p.m., Lightbox; May 6, 1 p.m., Scotiabank.) – Brad Wheeler

Future Baby

- Maria Arlamovsky
- World premiere
- **Country:**Austria
- **Length:**91 minutes

In-vitro fertilization, genetic testing, surrogacy, designer babies … the potential of reproductive medicine, and the ethical dilemmas it raises, come thick and fast. Director Maria Arlamovsky covers many of them and manages to strike a balance in this informative international flyover between hopeful parents and their confident doctors on the one hand and sceptical ethicists on the other. Wisely, she is very judicious in her use of cute babies but the doc does include a lot of filler footage around the talking heads – and not quite enough information about the success rates of IVF procedures. (April 30, 6:45 p.m., Scotiabank; May 2, 1 p.m., Lightbox; May 8, 10:15 a.m., Isabel Bader.) – Kate Taylor

Living with Giants

- Sébastien Rist, Aude Leroux-Lévesque
- World premiere
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**78 minutes

Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque's film about an Inuk teenager named Paulusie living in a remote community in northern Quebec is filled with landscape shots that initially strike you as beautiful, then make you bored, then fill you with dread. The filmmakers hold these shots long enough for the complexity to sink in. Paulusie is a similar mix of conflict. He dreams of becoming a good father, he says early in the film, but his jealousy destroys the sweet relationship he has with his girlfriend. He's a gifted hunter who wants to provide for his community, but the village eventually becomes a weight he needs to escape. There are no easy answers, here or anywhere else. But there are moments of poetry and sweetness and anger and burdens of all kinds in this too-rare portrait of life in the Arctic. (May 1, 7 p.m. Lightbox; May 2, 4:30 p.m., Lightbox; May 7, 3:15 p.m., Lightbox.) – Dave McGinn

How to Let Go of the World (and Love All the Things Climate Can't Change)

- Josh Fox
- International premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**125 minutes

Don't interpret the title as defeatism. In this follow up to Gasland, his Oscar-nominated documentary about fracking and its environmental fallout, director Josh Fox certainly chronicles the many, many reasons why global warming can produce despair. Political inaction, the damage we have already done and continuing massive-scale pollution can make change seem hopeless. But with an impressively global scale that seeks out climate-change "warriors" from the Amazon basin to China, Fox argues that human connection, tenacity and fighting for a better future can win out. A small community in Ecuador that successfully fought off the local oil and gas industry and a protest in Australia to blockade a freighter shipping coal are just two of many examples Fox looks to for how to bring about change. But ultimately the film isn't out to prescribe any particular solutions so much as it wants to be a rallying cry – however immense the problem is, we can solve it. (May 2, 9:15 p.m., Lightbox; May 4, 12:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 7, 9:15 p.m., Lightbox.) – Dave McGinn

Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four

- Deborah S. Esquenazi
- International premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**89 minutes

In the early 1990s, in a deeply conservative Texas city, four women, all of them lesbians, are accused of gang raping two little girls. Despite very questionable, scant evidence that will be challenged years later following advancements in forensics, and what looks like the clear manipulations of the girls' father, the four women are sentenced to between 15 and nearly 40 years in prison. This powerful, devastating film catches up with the women nearly 20 years later, all of them still incarcerated and still proclaiming their innocence. Exploring the homophobia of the justice system and the influence of the satanic-ritual abuse panic that was still pervasive throughout the courts, often unfairly punishing LGBTQ individuals, this case emerges as "the modern version of the witchcraft trials," as one television news show calls it. (May 4, 6:30 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs; May 5, 10 a.m., Lightbox; May 8, 12:45 p.m., Lightbox.) – Dave McGinn

De Palma

- Noam Baumbach, Jake Paltrow
- Canadian premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**107 minutes

"My movies tend to upset people a lot." As far as understatements go, that's a whopper from Brian De Palma, one of the most divisive filmmakers of his generation. As the director behind both instant hits (Carrie, Mission: Impossible) and flops that took decades to crawl out from under bad reputations (Scarface, Phantom of the Paradise), De Palma is a true visionary, even if you might not quite appreciate what that vision is. Either way, a trip through his wild and hugely influential filmography is mandatory for any film fan, and that's just what directors Noah Baumbach and Jake Paltrow offer in their new doc. The setup is deceptively simple: De Palma is the lone interview subject, and ends up walking the audience through nearly his entire life's work, with clips and behind-the-scenes stills acting as a powerful reminder of the man's oft-underrated brilliance. In between, he slips in acidic Hollywood gossip, bits of family history and inadvertently reveals his delightfully G-rated catchphrase: "Holy mackerel!" Holy mackerel, indeed. (May 2, 6:15 p.m., Lightbox; May 3, 10 a.m., Isabel Bader; May 6, 9:30 p.m., Lightbox.) – Barry Hertz

Gary Numan: Android in La La Land

- Steve Read, Rob Alexander
- **Country:**U.K.
- **Length:**85 minutes

Sophomore directors Steve Read and Rob Alexander begin with a subject interesting enough to hold your attention. Gary Numan, the 1980s synth rocker famous for the song Cars is recording a new album that will

be either his return to fame or his ruin. But there is also Numan the doting father, playing with his three young daughters. There is also Numan the shy husband with his adoring wife and extroverted buffer against the world, Gemma. And there is Numan's struggles with Asperger's and stage fright, as well as his battles with his parents during the years when his fame was fading. The result is a lack of focus. By the time the film makes a hurried return to its original premise, it's too late to regain that initial interest. (May 1, 9:15 p.m. Isabel Bader; May 3, 12:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 8, 8:30 p.m., Royal.) – Dave McGinn

Tickled

- David Farrier, Dylan Reeve
- Canadian premiere
- **Country:**New Zealand
- **Length:**92 minutes

What starts off as a light-hearted portrait of "competitive tickling" turns into a deadly serious investigation about the destructive powers of the Internet. But while the doc is often disturbing and occasionally startling, its no-spoilers-allowed marketing would have you believe filmmakers David Farrier and Dylan Reeve have cracked open a worldwide conspiracy on the level of the Panama Papers. Most audiences, though, will be able to easily guess what happens when you cross desperate young men, easy money and beyond-vanilla fetishes. (April 30, 9:45 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs; May 2, 10:30 a.m., Lightbox.) – Barry Hertz

O.J.: Made in America

- Ezra Edelman
- International premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**464 minutes

Director Ezra Edelman's five-part documentary O.J.: Made in America uses sweeping aerial shots of Los Angeles and the USC stadium where O.J. Simpson became a football legend in the sixties to emphasize the contentious divide between California's white elite and the city's predominantly black housing projects. Then there's Simpson poised for fame right in the middle. Before, that is, he was charged with double homicide in 1994. Surprising in its historical scope and intensely personal in its use of archival photographs and home video, Edelman's epic and sweeping film elicits empathy in the unlikeliest of places. (April 29, 6:30 p.m. , Bloor Hot Docs [Part 1 only]; April 30, 12:30 p.m., Lightbox [all five parts].) – Julia Cooper

Weiner

- Josh Kriegman, Elyse Steinberg
- International premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**100 minutes

"Headline writers and editorial writers," Anthony Weiner observes ruefully, "don't do nuance." Lucky for us, then, that Elyse Steinberg and Josh Kriegman were rolling their cameras as Weiner, the bulldog Brooklyn politician who had resigned from Congress in 2011 amid a sexting scandal, took a shot at redemption in the spring of 2013 with a bid to be the Democratic nominee for mayor of New York. Begun as a chronicle of a quixotic comeback – halfway through the campaign, Weiner is in fact topping the polls – the fly-on-the-wall doc takes an excruciating second-act turn when a gossip website publishes explicit photos and texts that Weiner (alias "Carlos Danger") had exchanged with a female fame magnet named Sydney Leathers. If you think you know the rest – the media horde does its bullying best, prompting voters and aides to run from Danger – the doc's unfettered access to Weiner and his pitiable wife, Huma, may make you feel something unfamiliar: sympathy for a man who turned his very name into an unfunny joke. (April 29, 3:30 p.m., Isabel Bader; April 30, 1 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs; May 6, 6:30 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs.) – Simon Houpt

The Last Laugh

- Ferne Pearlstein
- International premiere
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**85 minutes

Is there comedy to be found in unimaginable tragedy? That's the question director Ferne Pearlstein asks in The Last Laugh, a spry, thoughtful film on humour and, yes, the Holocaust. With interview subjects that include the provocative Jewish riots that are Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman and Gilbert Gottfried, the sensitive subject of Holocaust-based humour is not danced around (except for a Springtime for Hitler clip from Brooks's film The Producers). The consensus seems to be that Nazis are lampoonable but that Auschwitz is not, and that when comically dealing with anything that might be considered taboo territory, the comedian had better make damn sure it's funny, first and foremost. (May 1, 1:15 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs; May 2, 9 p.m., Isabel Bader; May 7, 10:30 a.m., Isabel Bader.) – Brad Wheeler

Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World

- Werner Herzog
- **Country:**USA
- **Length:**98 minutes

In this fascinating but alarmist film, the incomparable Werner Herzog investigates the past, present and future of the Internet, talking to the researchers who pioneered connected computers and the ones who are now working on artificial intelligence, as well as video-game addicts, victims of cyber-aggression and people

who are apparently allergic to electromagnetic waves. As Herzog spirals from the current achievements and dangers of the Net to topics such as communication with space colonies or the likelihood that solar flares will reduce the world to flood and famine if they knock out all connectivity, it is hard to know how much of this futuristic stuff to believe. (April 28, 9:45 p.m., Lightbox; April 29, 1 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs.) – Kate Taylor

Spirit Unforgettable

- Pete McCormack
- World premiere
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**86 minutes

In June, 2015, the Canadian Celtic-folk-pop band Spirit of the West played Massey Hall for the first time in its 30-plus-year history. It was thrilling – but also terrifying: Lead singer John Mann has early-onset Alzheimer's disease and gigs have become increasingly challenging for the gifted performer. Spirit Unforgettable uses the group's first – and last – Massey Hall gig as a framing device to tell the story of its rise, the immense challenge presented by Mann's Alzheimer's, and how his bandmates – and especially his wife – have created a support system allowing Mann, 53, to continue performing as long as possible. You don't need to be a Spirit fan to be moved by what happens at Massey Hall – and in Mann's life. Like the band's music, the film is smart and sensitive – without being sappy. (April 30, 9 p.m., Isabel Bader; May 2, 3 p.m., Hart House; May 8, 12:30 p.m., Royal.) – Marsha Lederman

Brothers

- Aslaug Holm
- North American premiere
- **Country:**Norway
- **Length:**102 minutes

The Norwegian filmmaker Aslaug Holm followed her two sons with a camera for eight years, covering the period of their school days and recording such moments as a leap off a dock, a difficult soccer practice or a first piercing. Don't mistake Brothers, however, for some mini version of the famed Seven Up series. Holm's film is an often beautiful rumination on family, memory and especially the passage of time rather than an attempt to probe psychology or society. She is motivated by every parent's pained realization – I'm losing them; they are growing up and way before my eyes – and as her boys age they do indeed become less patient with her camera and less accessible to the viewer. Brothers is a poignant project that seems to foreshadow its own limitations. (April 29, 6:45 p.m., Lightbox; April 30, 1 p.m., Scotiabank; May 6, 4 p.m., Scotiabank.) – Kate Taylor

Gulistan: Land of Roses

- Zayne Akyol
- World Premiere
- **Country:**Canada
- **Length:**84 minutes

Considering the geopolitical milieu that surrounds them, it is interesting to discover that the embattled Kurds are apparently such an egalitarian people that their liberation army includes all-female battalions. Director Zayne Akyol goes behind the scenes with young recruits at a training camp and then follows them to the front where they seem mainly to stare out at nearby Islamic State fighters through binoculars. Perhaps thankfully, not much happens, but neither is there much explanation of who these women are or how they and their male counterparts feel about their roles. (May 3, 9:30 p.m., Scotiabank; May 4, 3:45 p.m., Lightbox; May 8, 10 p.m., Scotiabank.) – Kate Taylor

Operation Avalanche

- Matt Johnson
- Canadian premiere
- **Country:**USA/Canada
- **Length:**94 minutes

Back in January, The Globe ran an interview with Canadian filmmaker Matt Johnson in which he lamented the state of the homegrown industry. The solution for a culture seemingly obsessed with dull films about sad loners? "A lot of people just need to die of old age for the system to change." That's a bit radical, as Johnson's new film, Operation Avalanche, proves that no one needs to perish from this Earth – they simply need to up their game to reach the director's delirious new heights. Johnson's second film is, on the surface, a mockumentary about two brash CIA agents (Johnson and Owen Williams) who infiltrate NASA to flush out a Soviet mole. But then things take a delightful turn, twisting the film into a mockumentary about a mockumentary, with a liberal dose of historical revisionism and the best single-take car chase since Children of Men. Oh, and Stanley Kubrick, or at least a version of Kubrick, makes a cameo. It's wild, exciting filmmaking that heralds a bold new talent. The best part of all: No one had to die. I think. (April 29, 9:45 p.m., Bloor Hot Docs.) – Barry Hertz

Toronto Sun – April 27, 2016 (1 of 2)

10 to watch at Hot Docs festival

April 27, 2016 by: JIM SLOTEK



League of Exotique Dancers (Supplied photo)

TORONTO - Step away from the reality-TV!
Real reality is on offer starting Thursday at Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival.

Often a barometer of films that will end up on Oscar's list (2015's What Happened, Miss Simone? and the short Claude Lanzmann: Spectres of the Shoah were nominees at this year's Academy Awards), Hot Docs gets underway with Rama Rau's League Of Exotique Dancers as its opening night gala.

The funny and touching film is set at the Burlesque Hall Of Fame weekend in Las Vegas, and profiles the veterans of Burlesque from the '50s-'70s — with names like Lovey Goldmine, Holiday O'Hara and Kitten Natividad (of Russ Meyer film fame). There's even one, Toni Elling, who broke the industry's race barrier.

And yes, they're all still willing to peel, wrinkles and gravity be damned.

Here are 10 more Hot Docs films we saw and recommend:

MIGRANT DREAMS: You may recall French's saved tomato farming jobs in Leamington, Ont., on the back of a boycott of Heinz ketchup. But it turns out the "jobs" are those of migrant workers who are defrauded, extorted and exploited. Kind of makes me feel a little less saintly for joining the boycott. A classic of the I-can't-believe-this-kind-of-crap-is-going-on-in-my-backyard genre.

SPIRIT UNFORGETTABLE: Heartbreakingly, in his '50s, John Mann of the great Canadian Celtic-rock band Spirit Of The West, was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. This intensely personal, alternately sad and joyous doc follows SOTW's final tour, leading up to a fingers-crossed finale at Toronto's Massey Hall. Lots of archival footage of one of the most fun and energizing bands this country has ever produced.

UNLOCKING THE CAGE: D.A. Pennebaker and his wife and partner Chris Hegedus (The War Room) go for the long haul, following the prolonged fight of lawyer Steven Wise and his Non-Human Rights project. The object is to have chimps (and then, maybe, elephants and cetaceans) declared "persons" under law. And they are farther along legally than you think. Fascinating film about a passion-raising topic.

LO AND BEHOLD: I will listen to Werner Herzog wax existential any time. And his “reveries of the connected world” are a goldmine of such daydreams (including “Does the Internet dream of itself?”) supported or humoured by experts. Subjects include artificial intelligence and the possibility of a post-human world, and essays on the curse and blessing of connectedness on our consciousness.

CHEER UP: “It’s not the destination, it’s the journey” has seldom been more true than in this story of a perennially-last place Arctic Circle Finnish cheerleading squad (is there a country where cheerleading would seem more out of place?). The coach even travels to Texas for tips on how to rouse team spirit. But it’s a tough sell to a bunch of cynical young women who are simply learning how to cope with their grim surroundings. So personally shot, it’s almost a movie.

HOTEL COOLGARDIE: And more Finns. This one follows the trying times of Finnish backpackers Lina and Steph, bereft of cash and lured into a job slinging pints at a pub in a mining town deep in the Australian Outback. The customers are rough, chauvinist, sometimes menacing, sometimes touching, and every bit a product of their environment. This is a seldom-seen Australia, with wry moments of humour.

AIM FOR THE ROSES: One of the weirdest, artsiest and most oddly uplifting films at Hot Docs. The tale of three dreams/fool’s errands that piggyback each other, it starts with the story of the late Canadian daredevil Ken Carter’s rocket-car stunt over the St. Lawrence and segues into a bizarre performance album by avant garde B.C. classical musician Mark Haney. Ultimately, the film itself becomes a third-party with its audacious presentation of Carter’s story.

TICKLED: Almost too weird to believe, it’s the story of how a New Zealand filmmaker stumbled on a U.S.-based “competitive tickling” circuit on the Internet, and saw the lighthearted story turn sinister, with themes of sexual harassment, extortion and fraud. It turns into an extensive piece of investigative reporting, into fetishism that crosses the line into big-time criminality.

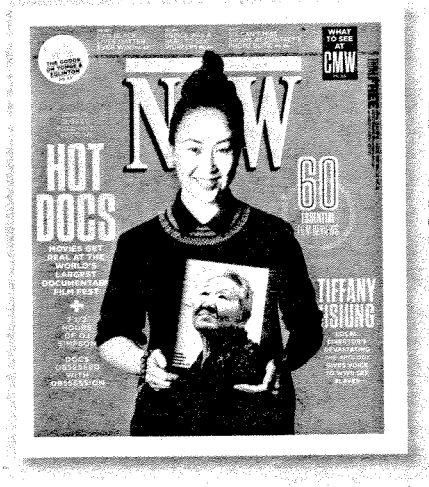
WIZARD MODE: The redemptive story of Vancouver’s Robert Gagno, a world-ranked pinball champ who has prevailed over and continues to deal with autism so severe that he was once deemed incapable of speech. It’s a portrait of an engaging young man with worldwide attention, overcoming fears daily with the help of a tireless family. And there’s pinball!

OFF THE RAILS: In an ideal world, this would be a feel-good story. Darius McCollum was a New York kid with undiagnosed Asperger’s syndrome, who fixated on the New York transit system and became a “mascot” of the drivers (who even let him drive the subway trains). Unfortunately, this was illegal, and McCollum was driven to drive trains and buses again and again, always safely and with attention to stops and schedules. As a result, the repeat offender has spent more than 20 years in prison. A frustrating story about a unique and touching character.

NOW Magazine – April 28 - May 4

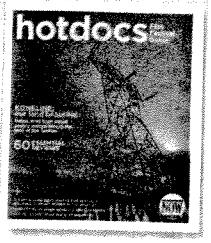


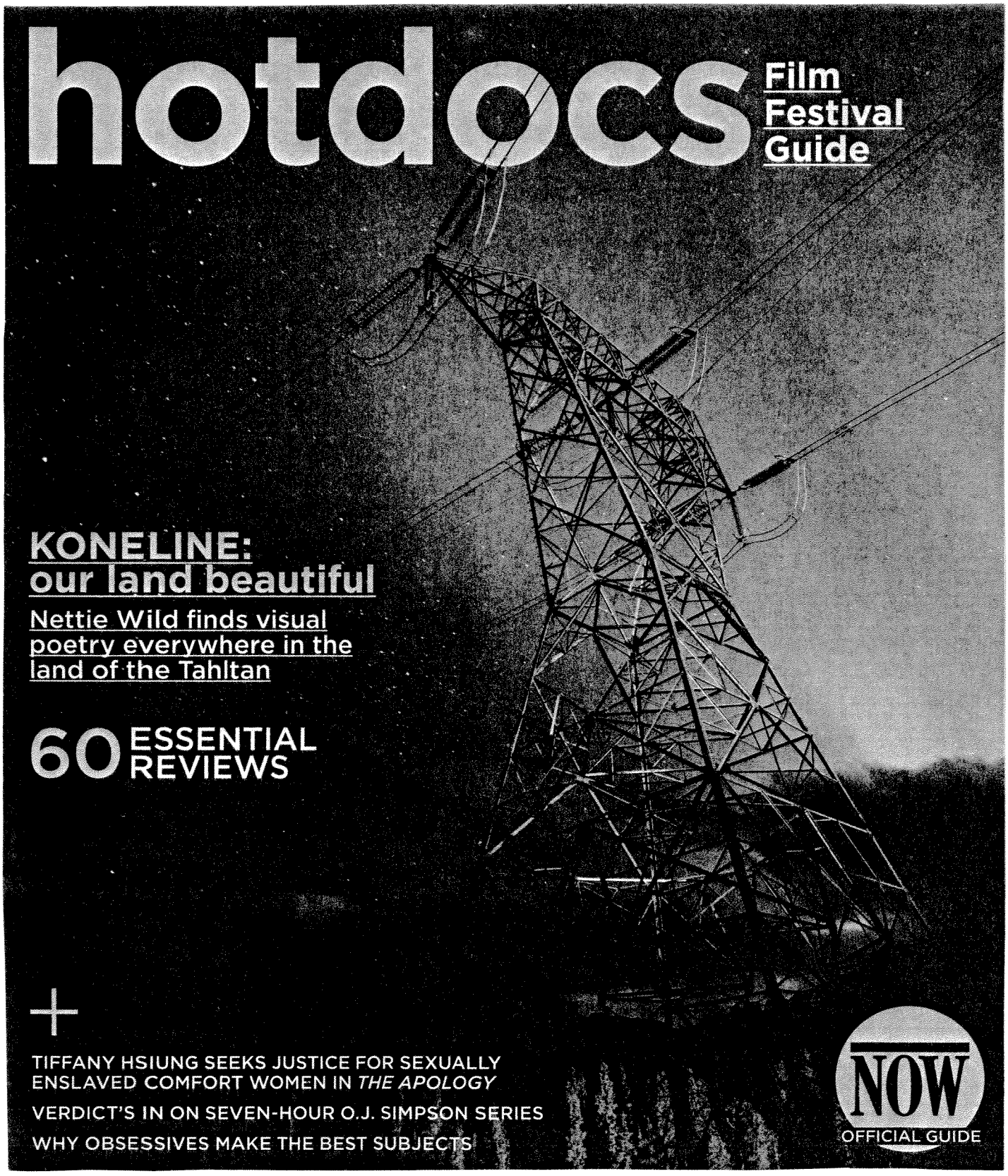
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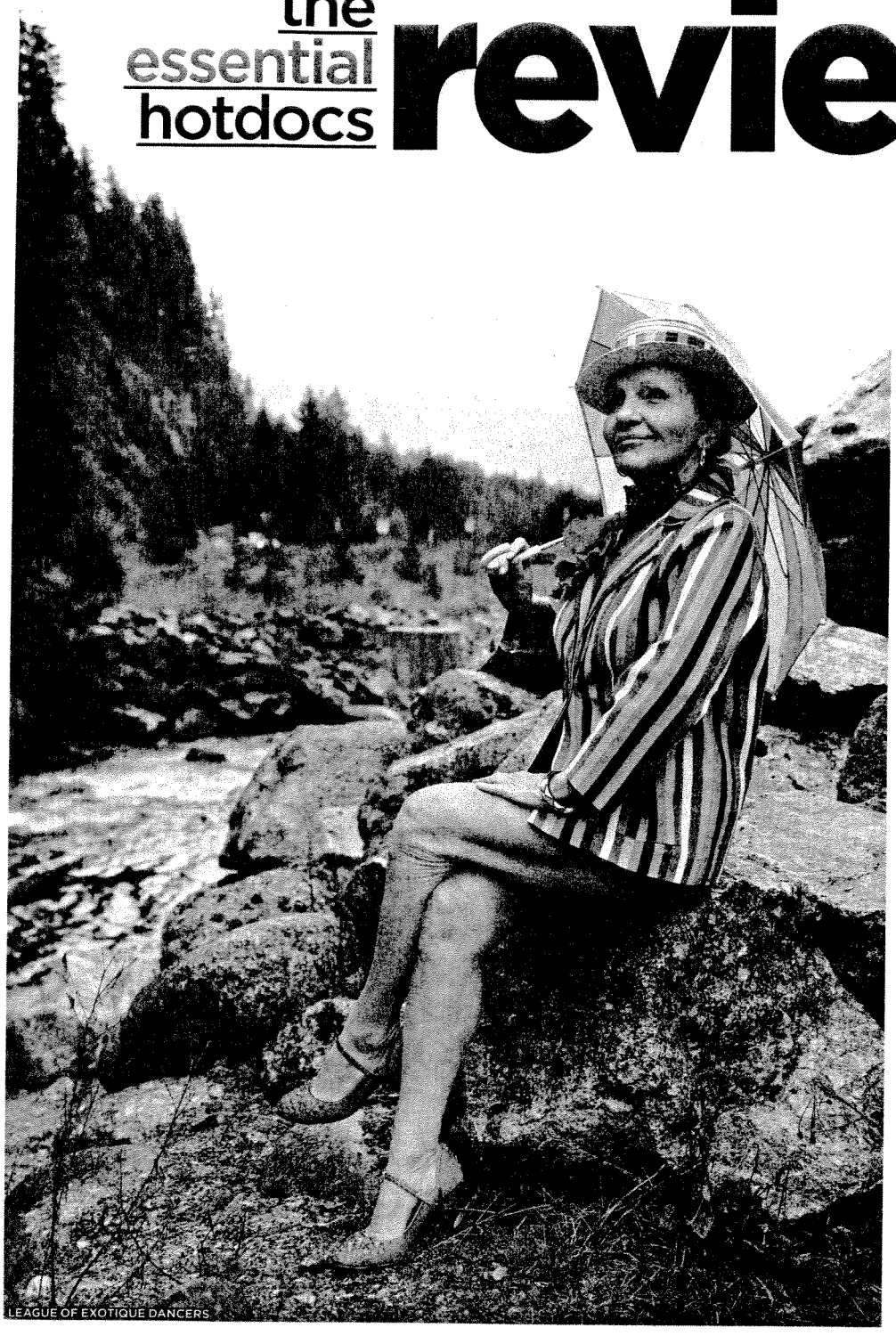
HOT DOCS PREVIEW

Glossy supplement Tiffany Hsiung's The Apology speaks out for WWII sex slaves, plus O.J. all day, docs obsessed with obsession




hotdocs
Film Festival Guide
KONELINE: our land beautiful
Nettie Wild finds visual poetry everywhere in the land of the Tahltan
60 ESSENTIAL REVIEWS
+
TIFFANY HSIUNG SEEKS JUSTICE FOR SEXUALLY ENSLAVED COMFORT WOMEN IN *THE APOLOGY*
VERDICT'S IN ON SEVEN-HOUR O.J. SIMPSON SERIES
WHY OBSESSIVES MAKE THE BEST SUBJECTS
NOW
OFFICIAL GUIDE

the essential hotdocs reviews



LEAGUE OF EXOTIQUE DANCERS

Keeping it real

Over the next 11 days, Canada's biggest documentary fest rolls out dozens of premieres and one-of-a-kind events and talks. Here are 60-plus reviews of the movies that are generating buzz – or will be soon. See more at nowtoronto.com/hotdocs.

By NORMAN WILNER, SUSAN G. COLE, GLENN SUMI, RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI and JAKE HOWELL

Thursday, April 28



HIT IT HARD

(Gabe Spitzer, David Terry Fine, U.S.). 51 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

ESPN's 30 For 30 brand profiles its first golfer. That's nothing to snooze at since the athlete in question is **John Daly**. He's the mullet-haired rock star who brought fan culture to the sport after winning the 1991 PGA Championship with his unorthodox "grip it and rip it" swing. He's also been fighting a long and hard battle with alcoholism and gambling, one of the reasons he's filmed peddling merchandise in a Hooters parking lot.

Plenty of talking heads – some expert, some intimate – thoughtfully look back at the hysteria surrounding Daly, but the film's charm comes from the man himself. He's refreshingly candid and humble, refusing to tone down talk about his addictions or blame anyone else for his mistakes. **RS**

Apr 28, 6:15 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 29, 3:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 5, 10 pm, Scotiabank 13



HOOLIGAN SPARROW

CHASING ASYLUM

***(Eva Orner, Australia). 96 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

Shot covertly with hidden cameras, Chasing Asylum aims to blow the whistle on Australia's shameful strategy for dealing with refugees: if you approach the continent by boat, you'll be intercepted and sent to one of two detention centres in the island nation of Nauru or Manus Island in Papua New Guinea – where people have been living in despair for months or even years.

Most of **Eva Orner**'s harrowing film simply details what's been going on in these sweltering, filthy camps, where people who've fled war zones in Syria and Afghanistan wind up so demoralized and brutalized that they scrawl "Kill Us" and "Guantanamo" on the walls. (It's not a performance; they don't know Orner's filming them.)

The ending's a bit jumbled, with Orner crosscutting between several points in time and introducing some Australian history that might have been more easily digested earlier in the narrative. But that doesn't dull her point, or the importance of her film. **NW**

Apr 28, 6:30 pm, TIFF 2; Apr 29, 3:45 pm, TIFF 3; May 8, 9:45 pm, Scotiabank 14

CITY 40

***(Samira Goetschel, U.S.). 73 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

Kept secret for decades, the 1957 Kyshtym explosion in the closed city of Ozyorsk, Russia, ranks just behind Fukushima and Chernobyl in terms of nuclear severity. Today, the region remains one of the most contaminated places on Earth, and activist **Nadezhda Kutepova** fights for the rights of those who still live there.

With blurred talking heads and ominous title cards, it's not as engaging as other forbidden city travelogues like the Vice Guide To North Korea. But smuggled footage and nuclear espionage keep the surreality of this situation front and centre. **JH**

Apr 28, 8:45 pm, TIFF 3; Apr 29, 3:45 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 6, 6:30 pm, Innis; May 8, 6:15 pm, Isabel Bader

HOOLIGAN SPARROW

***(Nanfu Wang, U.S., UK, China). 84 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

This raw and startling doc isn't about young rape victims in China and the institutions that enable the culprits. Instead, it's about the methods used to silence activists who draw attention to those problems.

Ye Haiyan, dubbed Hooligan Sparrow, organizes protests to publicize the plight of vulnerable girls. If Ye barely gets a chance to speak to the corruption involved, it's because thugs and police are constantly chasing and intimidating her and the filmmaker.

The film takes the shape of a fugitive thriller as we get glimpses on the run of the networked law enforcement and their button pushers trying to keep things quiet, often resorting to assault and unlawful arrests. The surviving footage is a victory for activism. **RS**

Apr 28, 9:30 pm, TIFF 2; Apr 29, 4:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 6, 10 am, TIFF 1

LEAGUE OF EXOTIQUE DANCERS

***(Rama Rau, Canada). 90 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

There were some brazen women lighting up burlesque stages all over the U.S. more than 50 years ago, and **Rama Rau** tells their stories as they get ready to enter the Legends of Burlesque Hall of Fame in Vegas.

These unique individuals – all proud, creative and fiercely independent – worked at a time when all-out nudity was not legal and stripping was powered by the pasty. That makes their work very different from that of the lap and pole dancers who came after.

True, they performed for entitled men, but they make clear that burlesque gave them independence and freedom at a time when those were at a premium for women.

Very entertaining. **SGC**

Apr 28, 9:45 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; Apr 29, 1:30 pm, TIFF 1

LO AND BEHOLD: REVERIES OF THE CONNECTED WORLD

***(Werner Herzog, U.S.). 98 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

Given his frequently expressed hostility to nature, it comes as a surprise that **Werner Herzog** is just as mistrustful of the information technology that's supposed to lift us out of the natural world.

But that's what we learn in this film, in which the Bavarian filmmaker explores the effect of the internet on human communication and quickly concludes we're all doomed.

Grimly warning us of hackers, AI and state-sponsored cybercrime, Herzog turns into everyone's grumpy uncle on Facebook, fretting about how, thanks to our reliance on centralized shipping, America's food supply is only ever two brownouts away from total collapse. (The film was produced by NetScout Systems, an "application and network performance management" company, which might explain that angle.)

Entertaining, but not exactly illuminating. **NW**

Apr 28, 9:45 pm, TIFF 1; Apr 29, 1 pm, Bloor Hot Docs

A STRANGE LOVE AFFAIR WITH EGO

***(Ester Gould, Netherlands). 91 minutes. Rating:* NN**

Pitched somewhere between documentary and essay film, this is **Ester Gould**'s attempt to understand her spirited, outgoing older sister **Rowan** through an investigation of confidence and narcissism.

Gould intercuts an elliptical memoir of her childhood with interviews with a behavioural psychologist and a Los Angeles entrepreneur, but there's precious little insight on offer. It just feels like a therapy exercise that's escaped into the public arena. **NW**

Apr 28, 9:45 pm, TIFF 4; Apr 29, 3:15 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 7, 4:30 pm, Scotiabank 7

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

HOW TO HOT DOC

HOT DOCS CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL
Thursday (April 28) to May 8
416-637-5150, hotdocs.ca

VENUES

Bloor Hot Docs Cinema (506 Bloor West)
CSI Annex (720 Bathurst)
Fox Theatre (2236 Queen East)
Hart House Theatre (7 Hart House)
Hot Docs House and CraveTV Box Office (610 Markham St)
Innis Town Hall (2 Sussex)
Isabel Bader Theatre (93 Charles West)
Regent Theatre (551 Mount Pleasant)
Revue Cinema (400 Roncesvalles)
Royal Cinema (608 College)
Scotiabank Theatre (259 Richmond West)
TIFF Bell Lightbox (Reitman Square, 350 King West)

TICKETS AND PASS PRICES

Individual tickets: $17
Special events $22. Buy tickets online, by phone or in person; pick them up at the CraveTV Box Office or at the screening venue's box office on the day of the screening.

Festival 6-Pack: $93
6 tickets to festival screenings

Festival 10-Pack: $149
10 tickets to festival screenings

Festival 20-Pack: $248
20 tickets to festival screenings

Premium Pass: $343
One ticket to every festival screening

Bloor Hot Docs Cinema All-Access Pass: $150
Access to all festival screenings at Bloor Hot Docs, plus two large popcorns

Free Daytime Screenings

Seniors (60+) and students with valid ID can take advantage of free daytime screenings (starting before 5 pm). Pick up your same-day tickets at the screening venue's box office on the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Same-Day and Rush Tickets

On the day of the screening, tickets are available at the venue's box office starting one hour before the first screening of the day. For screenings that have sold out in advance, a limited number of rush tickets may be available at the screening venue's box office 10 minutes before showtime. Screening venue box offices accept cash only.


WEINER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Friday, April 29

WEINER
(Josh Kriegman, Elyse Steinberg, U.S.). 100 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

When he was, er, exposed as an inveterate sexter in 2011, married New York Congressional representative **Anthony Weiner** was forced to resign. Then he surprised everyone by deciding to run for New York City mayor in 2013, and allowed **Josh Kriegman** and **Elyse Steinberg** to film the campaign in his office and his private residence. Turns out he continued to sext and was exposed yet again.

This is a terrific portrait of a man driven by ego – precisely the reason he'd take the risk of being the subject of a documentary. But even more fascinating is his wife, Hilary Clinton adviser **Huma Abedin**, who à la Clinton – and TV's The Good Wife – stands by her man.

The real coup here is that, despite the fact that Weiner is plainly addicted to power, the doc occasionally makes him sympathetic, especially when one of his sextees tries to exploit the situation. **SGC**

Apr 29, 3:30 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 30, 1 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 6, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs



WHO CARES
(Rosvita Dransfeld, Canada). 80 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

Hot Docs's spotlight this year is on **Rosie Dransfield**, whose cinema vérité strategies take audiences deep inside unusual worlds – in this case, those of street sex workers in Edmonton.

Letting her camera do the talking, Dransfield tracks Courtney, who's trying to leave the life, meth addict **Shelly**, perpetually bruised **Nancy**, as well as the police task force Project Cares, whose mandate is to keep the women safe.

In one key moment, an officer attempting to give out condoms brings a sex worker to tears – his presence has driven away one of her clients.

Exquisitely non-judgmental. **SGC**

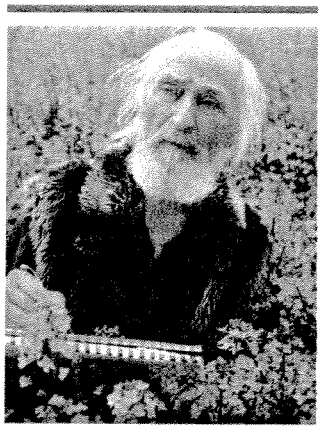
Apr 29, 4 pm, TIFF 4

O.J. SIMPSON: MADE IN AMERICA
(Ezra Edelman, U.S.). 464 minutes. Rating: **NNNNN**

See review, page 6.

KONELINE: OUR LAND BEAUTIFUL
(Nettie Wild, Canada). 96 minutes. Rating: **NNNNN**

See review and story, page 20.



BROTHERS
(Aslaug Holm, Norway). 102 minutes. Rating: **NN**

When her two sons were small, Norwegian filmmaker **Aslaug Holm** decided she would film them as much as possible – accompanying them when they went out to play, when their father coached them at football, when they started school. She shot for eight years.

The resulting Brothers is being marketed as a real-life version of Boyhood, but that just demonstrates how much work Richard Linklater did to make sure his film had a shape and a story.

If Holm had a larger purpose in mind when she started filming, there's no sense of it in the finished project. Brothers has undeniable impact when it momentarily juxtaposes the younger **Markus** and **Lukas** against their older selves – a true-life special effect Linklater never attempted – but most of it just feels shapeless and self-indulgent, as though we're trapped in the theatre with someone's home movies. **NW**

Apr 29, 6:45 pm, TIFF 4; Apr 30, 1 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 6, 4 pm, Scotiabank 13

A CENTRE-SUD TALE
(Danic Champoux, Canada). 52 minutes. Rating: **NN**

Danic Champoux grew up poor in the dilapidated Montreal neighbourhood of Centre-Sud. Now that he can afford to move out, he's chosen to stay and raise his family there. A Centre-Sud Tale is his snapshot of their world, following a handful of people (including his mother) as they make do with limited incomes and busy themselves over a long summer.

But after a compelling half-hour spent in dollar stores and soup kitchens, Champoux runs out of story, and his movie just circles its point. There's also a creeping sense that he's unconsciously exploiting one of his subjects, a young woman spiralling into drug addiction and homelessness right in front of his camera. **NW**

Apr 29, 6:45 pm, Scotiabank 7; Apr 30, 4:30 pm, Innis; May 6, 4:15 pm, Scotiabank 7



STRIKE A POSE
(Ester Gould, Reijer Zwann, Netherlands/Belgium). 83 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

A quarter-century after dancing on Madonna's Vogue video and controversial Blond Ambition tour, then starring in the subsequent Truth Or Dare doc, **Luis Camacho**, **José Gutierez**, **Salim Gauwloos**, **Kevin Stea** and others reveal all about their estrangement from Madge (some filed lawsuits against her), how they dealt with fame and what they've been doing since.

Directors **Ester Gould** and **Reijer Zwann** set up the film beautifully, capturing a particular moment in pop culture. The subjects, still so photogenic, are candid, although some revelations of secrets they've lived with for decades don't hit as hard as they might.

The filmmakers wisely withhold a group reunion until the end, allowing the doc to become a moving meditation on mortality, survival and forgiveness. **GS**

Apr 29, 7 pm, Hart House; Apr 30, 1:45 pm, TIFF 2; May 7, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs

THANK YOU DEL: THE STORY OF THE DEL CLOSE MARATHON
(Todd Bieber, U.S.). 84 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

Every June, the founders of the Upright Citizens Brigade hold a weekend event in New York City in honour of Del Close, the Chicago comedy guru who died in 1999 but remains a legend among improv performers for his theories on the "yes, and" approach to long-form sketch comedy.

A biography of Close alternates with footage from the 2015 edition, following UCB founders **Amy Poehler**, **Matt Besser**, **Matt Walsh** and **Ian Roberts** as they orchestrate three days of nonstop performance at the UBC theatre in Chelsea. Both streams are compelling in a messy, engaging way, but if you're a fan of the alt-comedy scene – or of Besser's podcast, improv4humans – this is an absolute feast of lightning-fast funny. **NW**

Apr 29, 9 pm, Isabel Bader; Apr 30, 12:45 pm, TIFF 1; May 8, 12:30 pm, Hart House



AFTER CIRCUS
(Viveka Melki, Canada). 78 minutes. Rating: **NN**

The idea of what happens to circus performers after they step off their career on the high wires is rich with potential, but director **Viveka Melki** doesn't know what to do with it.

Sarasota, Florida, is home to a tightly knit community of retired and aging big top performers, including aerialist **Dolly Jacobs**, now in her 50s and diabetic, who teaches and still occasionally performs in Circus Sarasota with another resident, the muscle-bound **Rafael Palacios**.

Despite the occasional delight, like seeing a 93-year-old woman stretch her leg above her head, the film is rambling and shapeless. There's not enough footage of the artists in their prime to provide context, and it all ends in a lacklustre performance sequence. **GS**

Apr 29, 9:15 pm, TIFF 3; May 1, 1:15 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 7, 1 pm, Scotiabank 13

MICHAEL SHANNON MICHAEL SHANNON JOHN
(Chelsea McMullan, Canada). 80 minutes. Rating: **NNN**

It's a story that's stranger than fiction, and it's irresistible: as adults, Toronto siblings **Michael** and **Shannon Hanmer** discovered that their late father, John, had started another family in Thailand and that they had two half-siblings also named Michael and Shannon.

Filmmaker **Chelsea McMullan**, a friend of the Canadian siblings, follows them as they travel to meet their new family members and follow John's trail to the site of his 2000 murder in the Philippines.

It's intriguing and atmospheric, though the reliance on montage sequences in the third act suggests that this might have been better at a shorter length. In the end, the Hanmers' quest doesn't quite produce enough material for a feature. **NW**

Apr 29, 9:45 pm, Scotiabank 4; Apr 30, 1:15 pm, TIFF 3; May 7, 9:45 pm, Hart House

OPERATION AVALANCHE
(Matt Johnson, U.S./Canada). 94 minutes. Rating: **NNN**

Matt Johnson's follow-up to The Dirties is an odd choice for Hot Docs: it's not a documentary, but a conspiracy thriller set in the late 60s that follows a pair of junior CIA agents (writer/director Johnson and his Dirties co-star **Owen Williams**) as they attempt to out a Russian mole at NASA and wind up faking the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Johnson and his crew shot clandestinely on real locations (including NASA's Texas complex and Mission Control itself) to achieve a compelling documentary effect, and the story's conceit is clever enough that it's easy to forgive the fact that Johnson is repeating the exact same story beats of The Dirties in a new context, and even playing the same excitable, morally ambivalent character.

It's a fun movie, and Johnson's comic timing is as sharp as his technical facility. But I really hope he does something different on his next picture. **NW**

Apr 29, 9:45 pm, Bloor Hot Docs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

NOW Magazine – April 28 – May 4 (5 of 20)



A full day of O.J.

EPIC DOC ABOUT THE O.J. SIMPSON CASE IS A BRUTAL INDICTMENT OF RACE RELATIONS, CELEBRITY WORSHIP, THE LEGAL SYSTEM AND ALL THE THINGS THAT AREN'T RIGHT WITH THE WORLD

BY NORMAN WILNER

O.J. SIMPSON: MADE IN AMERICA (Ezra Edelman, U.S.). 464 minutes. April 30, 12:30 pm, TIFF 4. Episode One (90 minutes) also screens April 29, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs, with talk by Edelman, Robert Lipsyte and a special guest as part of the Big Ideas series. Rating: **NNNN**

Why are we still talking about O.J. Simpson?

It's been almost 22 years since the ex-NFL star and occasional actor allegedly murdered his estranged wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Mezzaluna waiter Ron Goldman, and it's like he's never gone away.

The FX event series American Crime Story: The People V. O.J. Simpson turned his 1995 double-murder trial into an all-star kabuki performance, examining the trial's effect through the double prism of celebrity impersonation and Kardashian fixation.

American Crime Story put the Juice back into the news cycle. But now it's time for a corrective, which Hot Docs is supplying in the form of Ezra Edelman's epic documentary O.J. Simpson: Made In America.

Produced in five 90-minute segments for ESPN but screening at Hot Docs in a seven-and-a-half-hour marathon Saturday (April 30), it's the most comprehensive inquiry yet attempted into Simpson and the world that made him possible.

Yes, it's really long. It has to be. Edelman uses pacing as a narrative tool, shaping the story in deliberate movements. The first section spends a lot of time establishing the shameful history of race relations in Los Angeles so we can understand Simpson's savvy marketing of himself as a post-racial celebrity when he played for the USC Trojans in the late 60s.

He told any sportscaster who'd listen that race didn't matter on the gridiron, only athletic ability. Off the field, he set himself apart from the black community that revered him and pursued friendships with Hollywood's rich and connected. Multiple friends recall him explaining, "I'm not black, I'm O.J." – a mantra he'd be quick to abandon at his murder trial, where his Dream Team defence realized that the race card (with a largely black jury) was their best path to an acquittal.

The third and fourth segments of Made In America are taken up with the murder and trial, obviously the three most powerful hours in the documentary.

They are also the most brutal: crime-scene photos are more graphic and upsetting than anything I'd ever seen released elsewhere. But it's essential that we comprehend the violence of the crime. Sadly, it's not enough to be told that Nicole Brown Simpson was nearly decapitated by one of the knife strikes. We have to see it. We have to understand the force. This wasn't a robbery gone wrong or an accident; this was a rage killing, and a deeply personal one.

It's essential that we comprehend the violence of the crime. This wasn't a robbery gone wrong or an accident; this was a rage killing, and a deeply personal one.

Maybe that's the other reason the Simpson case still carries so much cultural weight: it serves as a nexus for everything that isn't right with the world. The awful reality of the Simpsons' marriage – a battered woman left unprotected by an indifferent police force and further victimized after her murder by a clumsy prosecution and Simpson's craven attorneys – points to a stacked legal system that abusers continue to exploit two decades later.

And the split between whites who couldn't believe Simpson had been acquitted and blacks who saw the verdict as a desperately needed victory after the Rodney King beating echoes in the response to today's Black Lives Matter movement.

All of these things are given the time to echo in the viewer's mind as Made In America lays out its story, speaking with the voices of Simpson's friends and associates as well as the police, prosecutors and defence attorneys from his various trials, including the civil case that found him liable for the murders and delivered a $33.5 million judgment to the families of his victims. They'll never see it.

Absent, of course, is O.J. himself. He is currently in a Nevada prison, serving time for felonies committed during a 2007 robbery in Las Vegas.

I don't believe he'll be missed. As Edelman makes very clear, O.J. Simpson works a lot better as a symbol than a human being.

normw@nowtoronto.com | @normwilner



TEMPEST STORM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Saturday, April 30



THE SLIPPERS

(Morgan White, Canada). 90 minutes. Rating: **NNN**

Dorothy's ruby slippers from The Wizard Of Oz are among the most recognizable items in movie history, evoking all those cozy feelings we associate with the classic.

Who knew that those shoes – rescued from the rubbish heap by costumer **Kent Warner** when MGM liquidated its assets in the 1970s – would one day be shrouded in theft, mystery and greed?

Director **Morgan White** can't avoid his film initially seeming like a minor DVD extra, but he's got a lot of information to impart and many large personalities to cover, including obsessive collectors and star **Debbie Reynolds**, whose efforts to open a Hollywood Museum went unrealized for decades.

Historian **Rhys Thomas**, who wrote a book on the subject, gives the most balanced account of the mystery. And the closing credits are a lovely homage to the film itself. **GS**

Apr 30, 3:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 1:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 8, 6:45 pm, Regent

NORMAN LEAR: JUST ANOTHER VERSION OF YOU

(Heidi Ewing, Rachel Grady, U.S.). 91 minutes. Rating: **NNN**

Bolstered by TV clips and interviews with the likes of **George Clooney** and **Rob Reiner**, this doc tracks the life of **Norman Lear**, the 20th century's most influential American TV producer.

He transformed the television landscape with his comedies All In The Family, Maude, Good Times, The Jeffersons and others, forcing the famously behind-the-times TV universe to catch up with what was happening in the U.S. So threatening was he to the status quo that he was on Nixon's enemies list. He became a crucial free speech advocate battling the so-called silent majority in the 80s.

An archival interview with Good Times star **Esther Rolle**, who complains about the show's buffoon-like character JJ, suggests Lear was not a hero to all. More of this type of thing and of his sad relationship with his father would have made this less of a love letter.

To understand Lear, back to those superb shows – this doc is on the edge of unsatisfying. **SGC**

Apr 30, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 1, 10:30 am, Bloor Hot Docs; May 6, 6:45 pm, TIFF 1; May 7, 3:15 pm, Revue



THE APOLOGY

(Tiffany Hsiung, Canada). 105 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

See review and cover story, page 12.



HOTEL DALLAS

(Livia Ungur, Sherng-Lee Huang, Romania/U.S.). 76 minutes. Rating: **NN**

During the last years of Nicolae Ceaucsescu's regime, one of the only non-propaganda things Romanians could watch on TV was the nighttime soap Dallas, possibly to show them the evils of capitalism.

This experimental doc looks at the cultural implications of that bizarre fact. We meet characters like a (sunflower) oil baron influenced by Dallas's baddie, JR, a Stetson-wearing aspiring artist who wants to emigrate to Manhattan and a mysterious man named Mr. Here voiced by **Patrick Duffy**, who played JR's brother, Bobby.

Blending truth and fiction and employing musical sequences to no purpose, this pretentious film comes to life only intermittently, especially during one sequence set in Romania's Merry Cemetery. **GS**

Apr 30, 6:30 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 1, 2 pm, Scotiabank 7; May 6, TIFF 4

FUTURE BABY

(Maria Arlamovsky, Austria). 91 minutes. Rating: **NN**

Maria Arlamovsky travels all over the world, including to the Czech Republic, Israel, Spain, Mexico and the U.S., to talk with doctors, patients and thinkers about the myriad issues, ethical and clinical, surrounding in vitro fertilization in all its forms.

It's a gripping subject, but the doc, though competently shot, has almost nothing of visual interest. If you want to illustrate these labs as baby factories, show us something that looks like an assembly line. Except for one moment, when a surrogate refuses to hold the baby she's just delivered, there's not much heart either.

All the talking heads' ideas are available by surfing the net. They don't require this kind of movie. **SGC**

Apr 30, 6:45 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 2, 1 pm, TIFF 2; May 8, 10:15 am, Isabel Bader

TEMPEST STORM

(Nimisha Mukerji, Canada/Germany/France). 83 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

At 87, **Tempest Storm** bills herself as "the oldest burlesque dancer in the world" – though these days she mostly does public appearances (and autograph signings) as one of the elder stateswomen of female empowerment.

She's earned that status the hard way, as filmmaker **Nimisha Mukerji** (65_Red Roses, Blood Relative) shows us in this comprehensive portrait, which follows Storm as she works the celebrity circuit – and tries to reconnect with a daughter she hasn't seen in decades.

This could be played for shameless manipulation – and Storm's old friend **Garry Marshall** would no doubt layer on the schmaltz. But Mukerji's sharper than that, working to nudge aside her subject's brassy burlesque persona to reveal a woman working to reconcile the various versions of herself that she's worn and discarded over the years. **NW**

Apr 30, 7 pm, TIFF 3; May 3, 1 pm Hart House

UNDER THE SUN

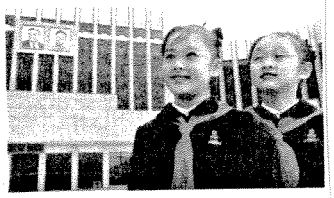
(Vitaly Mansky, Russia/Czech Republic/North Korea/Germany). 106 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

There's journalistic filmmaking and then there's what **Vitaly Mansky** does in Under The Sun – travelling to North Korea to make a documentary about a schoolgirl, **Zin-mi**, who's about to join the Korean Union for Children and become a fully vested citizen of the DPR.

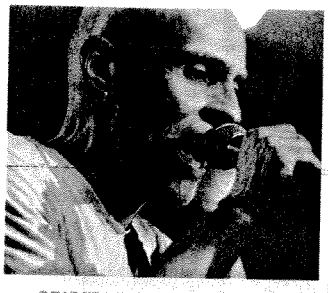
Accompanied constantly by minders, Mansky shot the (scripted) footage he was there to shoot, but he also left his cameras running between takes to reveal how much control is being exerted over everything we've seen.

Watching the finished film is a uniquely disturbing experience. It's like someone's opened a window into an Orwellian universe where lies are truth, freedom is slavery and dictatorship is the will of the people. At least when it ends we can return to our world; Zin-mi and her family are trapped there forever. **NW**

Apr 30, 7 pm, Innis; May 1, 4 pm, TIFF 4; May 7, 12:30 pm, Scotiabank 14



NOW Magazine – April 28 – May 4 (7 of 20)



SPIRIT UNFORGETTABLE

***(Pete McCormack, Canada). 86 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

It's hard to imagine a film about someone facing early-onset Alzheimer's ending on a high, but when the subject is **John Mann**, lead singer of Spirit of the West, the joy just flows.

Spirit Unforgettable follows Mann and his bandmates as they prepare for a gig at Massey Hall – which we're frequently reminded could be their last, since Mann's condition could deteriorate rapidly. But Spirit of the West is not a band given to melancholy or morbidity, and as soon as Mann takes the stage, the worry behind his eyes disappears.

And what happens at Massey Hall when the band plays its signature tune, Home For A Rest, is, without mincing words, goddamn inspirational. **NW**

Apr 30, 9 pm, Isabel Bader; May 2, 3 pm, Hart House; May 8, 12:30 pm, Royal

GOD KNOWS WHERE I AM

***(Todd Wider, Jedd Wider, U.S.). 99 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

Long-time producers **Todd and Jedd Wider** (Taxi To The Dark Side, Client 9) make their directorial debut with an artful look at the troubled life and lonely death of **Linda Bishop**, whose body was discovered in a New Hampshire farmhouse in the spring of 2008.

Through interviews with her family and friends, the Widers recount Linda's life and her deterioration after a diagnosis of severe bipolar psychosis that sent her plummeting into America's badly overtaxed health-care system.

The Widers don't sensationalize any of this. God Knows Where I Am is a gentle, elegiac work, with great compassion for its subject. Indeed, it's Linda's own voice that comes through most powerfully, represented in readings from her journal performed by the actor **Lori Singer**. **NW**

Apr 30, 9:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 2, 12:15 pm, TIFF 4; May 7, 9:30 pm, Scotiabank 13



THE SEX TEMPLE

THE SEX TEMPLE

***(Johan Palmgren, Sweden). 81 minutes. Rating:* NN**

Moral panic in Sweden over the partnership between a queer burlesque show and a straight swingers club is the hot-button issue at the centre of The Sex Temple.

But this doc's temperature feels cool and indifferent, as if it can't bother investing in the emotions its subjects are laying out on blow-up mattresses. We should be getting to know them better, building a deeper appreciation for drag queen **Robin**, who rents out the basement of his money-losing century-old theatre to **Christian**'s sex den.

This timid and unfocused film spends too much time on the carpentry involved in building the Nordic Moulin Rouge, and then has the audacity to skim over the actual burlesque production. Ironically, the film has no problem filming a peep show at the swingers club. **RS**

Apr 30, 9:45 pm, Hart House; May 1, 4:30 pm, Scotiabank 7; May 8, 9:15 pm, Hart House



TICKLED

***(David Farrier, Dylan Reeve, New Zealand). 92 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

The premise of Tickled is like a clickbait story come to life: "This New Zealand Journalist Wanted To Know More About Competitive Endurance Tickling. What Happened Next Will Shock You!"

The thing is, it's not an exaggeration. As Tickled documents, **David Farrier**'s inquiries into an ad seeking models for tickling videos led him down a rabbit hole of lies, threats and intimidation, all tied to a pathology that becomes more fascinating and more disturbing the further he and co-director **Dylan Reeve** dig.

If there's a stranger movie playing Hot Docs – or anywhere, really – I haven't seen it. Try to go in cold. **NW**

Apr 30, 9:45 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 2, 10:30 am, TIFF 3

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

AIM FOR THE ROSES



Magnificent Obsessions

FROM A GUY CONSUMED BY A TICKLING FETISH TO AN OSCAR-NOMINATED DIRECTOR, DRIVEN PEOPLE MAKE GREAT DOCUMENTARY SUBJECTS

BY NORMAN WILNER

It's my job as a film critic to find trends in a festival's programming. And what I've seen at Hot Docs this year keeps bringing me back to obsessive personalities.

This makes perfect sense, since interesting subjects are the greatest asset to any documentary filmmaker – and people whose commitment to an idea or a behaviour goes above and beyond a conventional level of interest are pretty damn interesting.

Consider **Darius McCollum**, the subject of **Adam Irving**'s **Off The Rails** (review, page 22). He's so obsessed with the New York City transit system that he's compelled to steal buses and drive them crosstown, picking up passengers and making all requested stops.

Jay Cheel's **How To Build A Time Machine** (review, page 19) introduces us to two men driven to recapture the past: one metaphorically, by building an exact replica of the vehicle from the 1960 movie The Time Machine, and another literally, by becoming a physicist and researching theoretical time travel in the hopes of reconnecting with the father who died far too young.

John Bolton's **Aim For The Roses** (review, page 17) finds intriguing parallels in the stories of daredevil **Ken Carter**, who tried to jump the St. Lawrence River in a rocket-propelled Lincoln, and musician **Mark Haney**, who set out to make a concept album about Carter's stunt three decades later.

And there's the mysterious puppet master behind the events of **Tickled** (review, page 9), whose attempts to intimidate journalist **David Farrier** and co-director **Dylan Reeve** into abandoning their investigation into the world of competitive endurance tickling lead them to unpack a pathology that's as fascinating as it is monstrous.

It's not just individuals: **Vitaly Mansky**'s **Under The Sun** (review, page 8) peels back the carefully manicured image of North Korea to reveal a culture entirely obsessed with its own illusion of happiness and perfection, while **My Scientology Movie** (review, page 11) lets **Louis Theroux** document the tactics the Church of Scientology uses to discourage outside inquiry by inadvertently calling them down upon himself.

Hey, I can stretch this even further and include **De Palma** (review, page 19), a profile about a director who's so compelled to repeat and restage his favourite Hitchcock moments that he actually remade Vertigo and called it Obsession.

And, yes, I know that seeking out patterns in unrelated works of art is a kind of obsessive behaviour in itself; there's probably a movie about it somewhere in the festival. And if there isn't, well, there's always next year. ◎

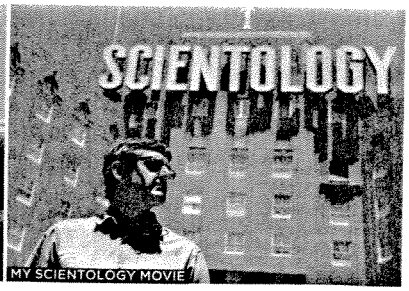
normw@nowtoronto.com | @normwilner



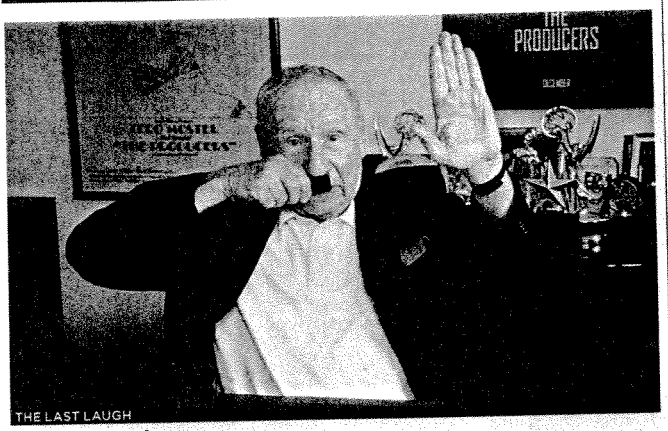
OFF THE RAILS



HOW TO BUILD A TIME MACHINE



MY SCIENTOLOGY MOVIE



THE LAST LAUGH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Sunday, May 1

THE LAST LAUGH

***(Ferne Pearlstein, U.S.). 85 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

Does a joke about the Holocaust go too far? Ferne Pearlstein talks to Jewish comedians, including **Mel Brooks** and **Sarah Silverman**, both of whom have gone into that territory, and Holocaust survivors to see where they draw the line.

This is a movie guaranteed to generate conversation. Survivor **Renee Firestone**, who has a lust for life but has never heard a funny gag about a concentration camp, is a great character.

But there are too many platitudes about free speech and too much glib talk about "surviving through humour" in this not exactly balanced pic. I mean, pitting the likes of Brooks, **Carl Reiner**, **Gilbert Gottfried** and **Harry Shearer** against one schlub from the Anti-Defamation League isn't exactly fair.

Stay for the credits. Silverman tells a joke about Auschwitz that's pretty funny. **SGC**

May 1, 1:15 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 2, 9 pm, Isabel Bader; May 7, 10:30 am, Isabel Bader

MY SCIENTOLOGY MOVIE

***(John Dower, UK). 100 minutes. Rating:* NNNNN**

Does the world need another Scientology exposé after Alex Gibney's Going Clear? **Louis Theroux** finds another way in: all he has to do is announce he's casting actors to play church head David Miscavige in filmed re-enactments and suddenly he's Suppressive Person #1.

Peppered with legal threats and constant, obvious surveillance – the standard intimidation whenever Scientology feels threatened – Theroux politely refuses to back down, walking up to hovering cameramen and asking what's up in sequences that crackle with nervous energy and genuine risk.

Then My Scientology Movie deploys its masterstroke: borrowing a conceit from The Act Of Killing, Theroux employs former Scientology enforcer **Marty Rathbun** (who also turned up in Going Clear) to consult on those re-enactments – and to watch his reactions during the shoot. Seeing Rathbun's psychic scars emerge is far more compelling than any talking head could ever be. **NW**

May 1, 4 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 3, 10:30 am, TIFF 3; May 8, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1

RAVING IRAN

***(Susanne Regina Meures, Switzerland). 85 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

House music is illegal in Iran, which makes **Anoosh** and **Arash**'s livelihood pretty much impossible.

They are Blade & Beard, DJs who organize noisy but clandestine raves in the desert and try to shop around their album to printers and storekeepers who keep reminding them that jail is the final destination.

People surreptitiously recorded on cellphones explain why the music is dancing with the devil; having a female lead singer is one reason. The hidden camera lets us eavesdrop on a restrictive culture, but also leaves a lot of information outside the frame.

I couldn't shake the feeling that scenes were being staged to amplify Blade & Beard's story. Download their music today on SoundCloud. **RS**

May 1, 4:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 3, 3:15 pm, TIFF 2; May 7, 7 pm, TIFF 3



ANTS ON A SHRIMP

***(Maurice Dekkers, Netherlands). 88 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

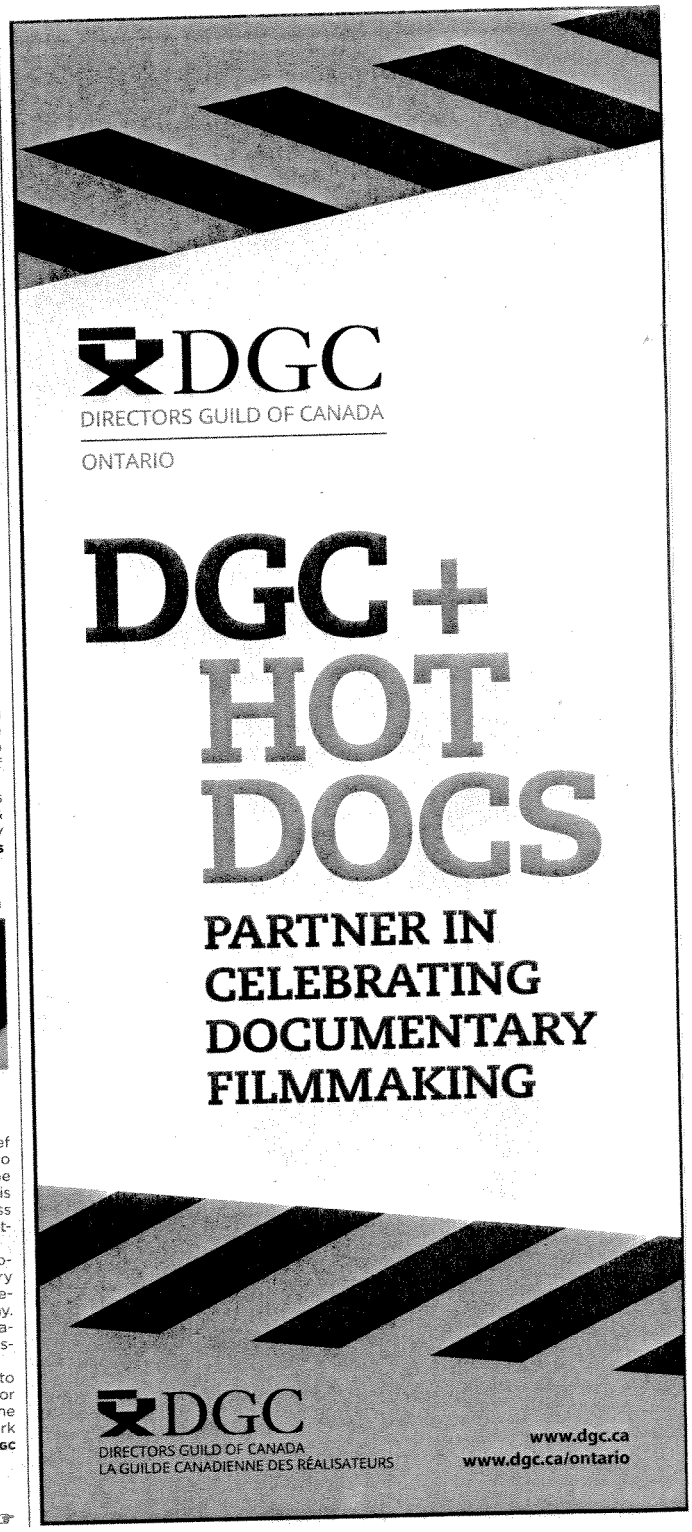
This irresistible pic follows Danish chef **René Redzepi** – whose Copenhagen resto Noma has been named the best in the world by many food mags – as he takes his team through the pressure-filled process of opening a Japanese iteration of the eatery in Tokyo.

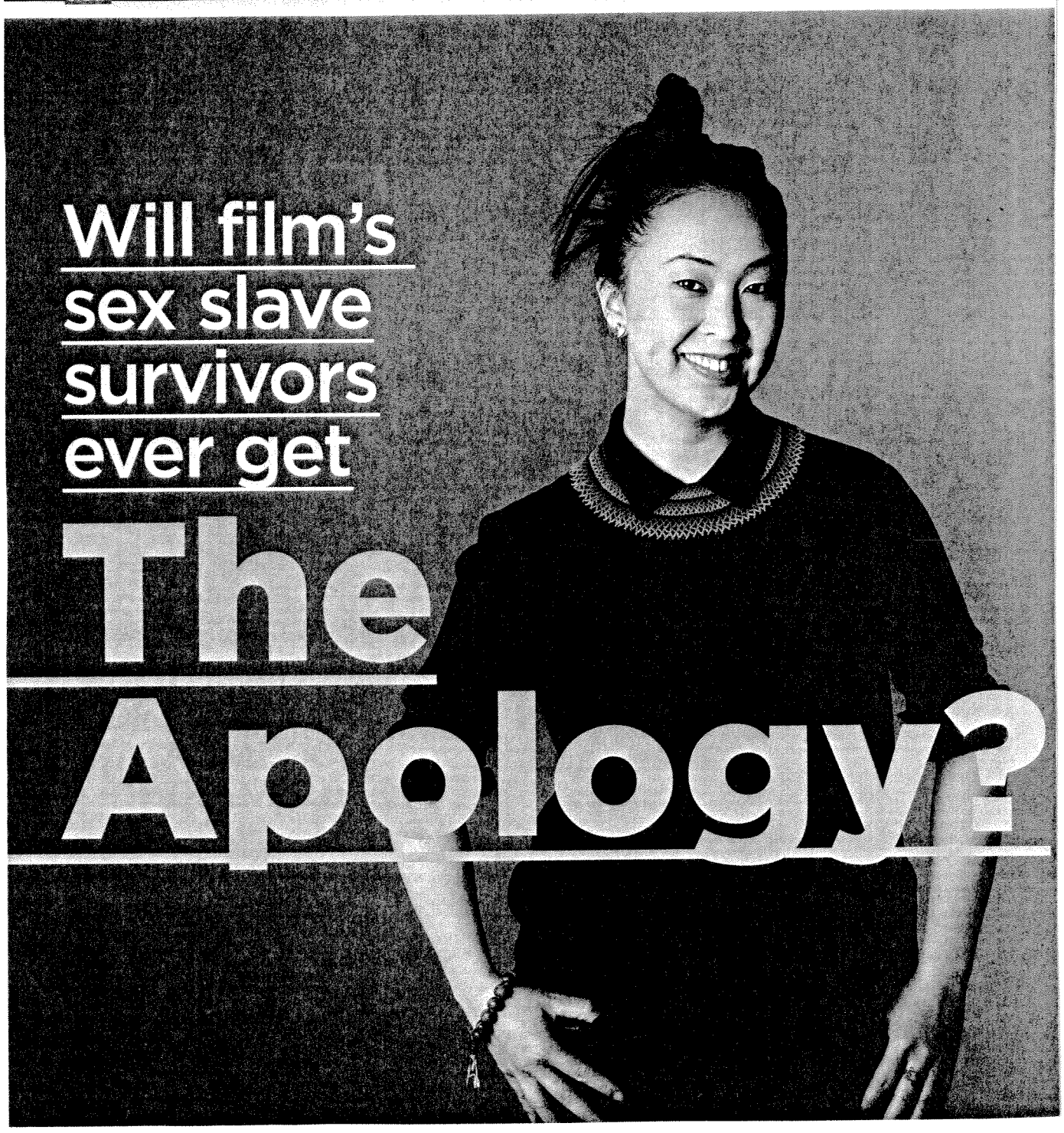
Redzepi isn't one of those bullying, egomaniacal chefs – the usual documentary fodder – but he is very precise and demanding, and his team likes it that way. Watch them lovingly wash down their stations and you can appreciate their passion.

Your average foodie couldn't afford to eat at Noma – either in Copenhagen or Japan – but you can clap eyes on some gorgeous culinary creations if you fork over the dough for a ticket. **SGC**

May 1, 6:45 pm, Isabel Bader; May 2, 12:30 pm, Hart House; May 4, 6:30 pm, Isabel Bader; May 8, 6 pm, Royal

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16





Will film's sex slave survivors ever get The Apology?

DEBUT FILMMAKER TIFFANY HSIUNG SHARES HER EXPERIENCE WITH THE EX-COMFORT WOMEN FORCED INTO PROSTITUTION, THEIR RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF AN APOLOGY FROM THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOURCE OF HER OWN PASSION ABOUT THE PROJECT

BY SUSAN G. COLE

THE APOLOGY directed by Tiffany Hsiung. 105 minutes. Screens April 30, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs, as part of the Big Ideas series, with Hsiung and Grandma Gil interviewed after the screening. Also screens May 1, 10:30 am, TIFF 1; May 8, 12:45 pm, Isabel Bader and 6:30 pm, Hart House. Rating: **NNNN**


GRANDMA GIL

Early on in Tiffany Hsiung's exceptional first film, The Apology, young men can be seen screaming obscenities at protesters: "Whores, go home!" "Fuck you, commies!"

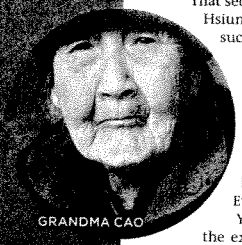
The target of their rage is a clutch of very elderly women who are picketing in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. They are former "comfort women," a euphemism for females forced into prostitution by the Japanese army during the Second World War.

They've been protesting every single Wednesday for the last 25 years. They want no money. All they demand is an apology and recognition of the historical fact of their trauma.

The scene in which that verbal abuse is hurled at these women – affectionately referred to as grandmothers by their supporters – comes just four minutes into the film. And it's devastating.

"I was floored," recalls Hsiung. "It was hard for the editor to use that footage because I could be heard swearing over it."

That sequence, so hard to take as a viewer, made me wonder how Hsiung managed to cope over the years she spent working with such difficult material.


GRANDMA CAO

"Are you kidding me? I'm fucked up," she laughs sardonically. "I went through so many relationships while I was making this movie. No one could handle me, and I wouldn't listen. You know how passion drives you and you say to yourself, 'I have to do this.' And people say, 'Yes, but you have to take care of yourself.' But you're just driven by adrenaline and emotions: 'How can I sit on this? Everyone has to know about it.'"

You can tell Hsiung hasn't yet recovered from the experience. During our conversation, the articulate and mostly very animated local filmmaker and Ryerson film school graduate becomes so overcome with emotion that she grows tearful and has to stop talking.

She learned of the grandmothers' situation in 2010, when she was invited on a study tour documenting World War II atrocities. She met survivors from China, Korea and the Philippines.


GRANDMA ADELA

"I was blown away," Hsiung says, "I realized I had never been taught any of this in school."

Sexual assault has been used as both a weapon and a perk for soldiers for centuries. The word "hooker" refers to General Hooker, who had a parade of sex workers following his regiment during the U.S. Civil War.

I was part of a demonstration on Remembrance Day in the late 70s when, after the official ceremonies, members of Women Against Violence Against Women put up our own makeshift cenotaph that read, "For every woman raped in every war."

But that referred to random – though systemic, too – rape.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

REVIEW

THE APOLOGY
(Tiffany Hsiung, Canada). 105 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

A pack of women in their 80s have been picketing Japanese consulates all over the world for over 20 years. Former comfort women forced into prostitution by the Japanese army during the Second World War, they want the world to know about it, insisting that the Japanese government give them an official apology.

Their persistence is epic – they're often jeered at and mocked or dismissed as Communists by Japanese men determined to thwart them. Right-wing politicians defend the forced prostitution as a necessary military strategy.

As their numbers dwindle, these women continue to fight, gathering supporters in what's turning into a world-wide movement. Director **Tiffany Hsiung** gives three of them their voice in a film that's both upsetting and inspiring. **SGC**



GRANDMA GIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

What's different here is the way in which rape was institutionalized. Some right-wingers in Japan say the comfort women were required for army morale. Buildings were seconded in which the women were forced to live. In one sequence, one of the three grandmothers Hsiung highlights is taken to the garrison where she was imprisoned. She can barely look at the building.

"But the worst were the caves," says Hsiung. "One woman described how in one cave, what separated her from the sex slave beside her was a stack of artillery. That's what created their individual little corner. Rape is a weapon, too."

When Hsiung decided she would make a movie about the women she met, she launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund trips to Asia. Sympathetic friends at Aeroplan threw in free flights that allowed her to head east and begin shooting.

"You say to yourself, 'I have to do this,' and people say, 'But you have to take care of yourself.' But I thought, 'How can I sit on this? Everyone has to know about it.'"

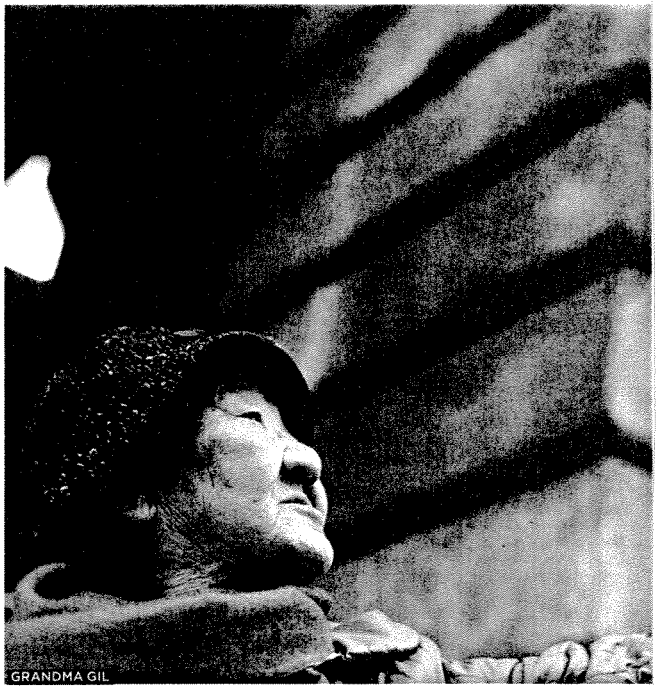
Gradually, she made connections and found her three central subjects: Grandma Gil, from Korea, who has been relentless in her pursuit of justice and has taken the case to the UN, Chinese Grandma Cao, and Grandma Adela from the Philippines. Her choices were determined by relatives' willingness to talk about a shameful experience on screen and, of course, by her ability to make an authentic connection.

But the women opened up, mainly because the director has her own history as a survivor of sexual abuse.

Unbelievably, at the same time as Hsiung was working on The Apology, she and her sister were involved in the trial of their own abuser, one of their mother's boyfriends, who had assaulted Hsiung when she was eight. In fact, it was those early sessions with the grandmothers that inspired Hsiung to break her silence and testify.

"We were in our 20s and decided we had to do something – we were really concerned that he was going to continue to hurt girls. Just before the grandmothers' 1,000th demonstration, I was going through two weeks of trial during the appeal. But my testimony was inadmissible because I didn't say the exact words I said to the police when I was 10."

Hsiung recognizes all the connections between the grandmothers, her own story, the Ghomeshi trial and all survivors. Central to her relationship to the women whose stories she was telling was her profound understanding of their shame.


GRANDMA GIL



TIFFANY HSIUNG AND GRANDMA CAO

"When I was at Ryerson I could never talk about what happened to me. I felt embarrassed and worried that people would label me, even someone as progressive-thinking as I am, gay and proud. When it came down to it, I felt shame. Even though we experienced it very differently, the grandmothers and I could talk about shame and silence and the people around us who perpetuate that."

With over 100 hours of footage in hand, in 2013 Hsiung took the project to the National Film Board. She may have been a first-time director, but when they looked at what she'd shot they quickly stepped in to help her complete the project.



The NFB was also smart enough to see the value in giving Hsiung an all-woman, entirely Asian crew. Three generations were involved: Hsiung, NFB producer Anita Lee and editor Mary Stephen, a long-time collaborator with Éric Rohmer and the person who cut the award-winning Last Train Home.

"Stephen was my dream. I told Anita that the ideal editor would be an Asian woman so she could understand the Asian nuances and culture, and old-school, someone who appreciates patience and lets things unravel and takes that time."

As for the issue itself, the Japanese government made what Hsiung refers to as a bullshit apology late last year. It had conditions. They would apologize only if the women agreed to stop talking about the issue and ceased their petitions to the UN. Officials said nothing about putting information about comfort women into history texts – a real problem, says Hsiung, because they've been so expert at expunging the info anywhere it surfaced.

The movement, which is rapidly growing, bolstered by scores of younger women, has rejected this approach.

"The international community said, in effect, 'What the fuck? You're taking one step forward and two steps back and silencing these women even more.'"

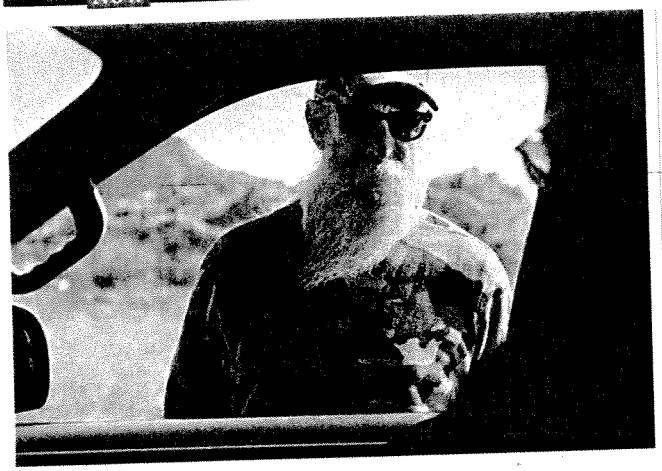
Which is why, though it's about something that happened in the past, The Apology is not a historical account. It's a contemporary story about these women today, their families, what they've gone through, yes, but also how that affects them now.

"And it's still happening every single day," says Hsiung passionately. "These grandmothers are setting an example for all of us."

I'll be interviewing Grandma Gil with Hsiung onstage after the April 30 screening. It will be the first time the intrepid campaigner has ever seen a film in a movie theatre.

"I asked her if she would come see the film when it's completed. 'If it ever gets done,' she responded, 'and if you invite me. I've never been to a movie before. When would I have time?'"

susanc@nowtoronto.com | @susangcole



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

WHERE IS ROCKY II?

***(Pierre Bismuth, France/Germany/Belgium/Italy). 93 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

Legend has it that somewhere in the middle of the Mojave Desert there's a fake rock named Rocky II, a piece by pop artist Ed Ruscha. In 2006, the slyest of stones captured the attention of **Pierre Bismuth**, the witty screenwriter behind Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind, who began a quest to find it.

Running in parallel to the hunt, two Hollywood screenwriters are given free rein to riff on this story, and Bismuth weaves their fictional sequences into something brilliantly meta. Who's really behind this mystery?

What starts as a doc unfolds as a detective thriller, making this a debut that's creative, original and eminently watchable – even if those expecting a "real" documentary about "fake" art may be disappointed.

JH

May 1, 6:45 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 3, noon, TIFF 4; May 8 , 6:30 pm, TIFF 3

CHEER UP

***(Christy Garland, Finland/Canada). 86 minutes. Rating:* NN**

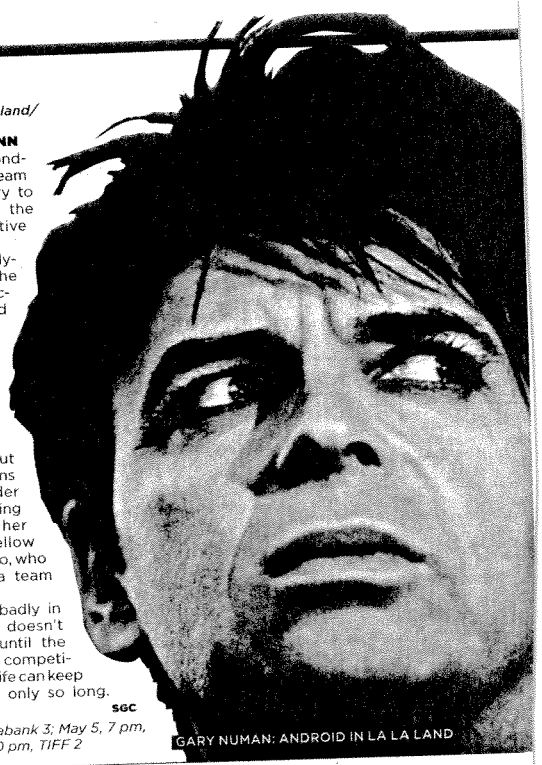
Members of a second-rate cheerleading team and their coach try to find happiness in the face of competitive disappointment.

If this were a Hollywood feature, the team would magically turn into world champions. But **Christy Garland**'s much more interested in reality, tracking the lives of coach **Miia**, who's so committed, she heads to Dallas to find out how the Americans do it, cheerleader **Patu**, who's grieving the death of her mother and fellow team member Aino, who isn't sure she's a team player.

The film sags badly in the middle and doesn't ramp up again until the team returns to competition. Dreary teen life can keep your interest for only so long.

SGC

May 1, 7 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 5, 7 pm, TIFF 3; May 7, 6:30 pm, TIFF 2



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DE PALMA

(Noah Baumbach, Jake Paltrow, U.S.). 107 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

This is a feature-length tribute to **Brian De Palma**, a cult director if ever there was one, having given the world Carrie, Dressed To Kill, Blow Out, Scarface, The Untouchables and the first Mission: Impossible as well as The Bonfire Of The Vanities, Raising Cain and Mission To Mars.

Director/producers **Noah Baumbach** and **Jake Paltrow** simply sit their subject down and have him recount his life story, mixing in clips from his films as illustration.

There's no outside commentary, which means his defences of later-period junk like Snake Eyes, The Black Dahlia and Femme Fatale go unchallenged, but that doesn't really matter. The guy's a hell of a storyteller. **NW**

May 2, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 10 am, Isabel Bader; May 6, 9:30 pm, TIFF 1

HOW TO BUILD A TIME MACHINE

(Jay Cheel, Canada). 82 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

Jay Cheel's Beauty Day mined our nostalgia for 90s cable-access lunacy; his new doc examines the pull of the past in a very different manner, following two men obsessed with recapturing it: one metaphorically, one literally.

Rob Niosi has been painstakingly crafting an exact replica of the vehicle from George Pal's 1960 adaptation of The Time Machine for more than a decade at a cost of thousands of dollars, just to relive the experience of seeing the movie as a kid. **Ron Mallett**, a physicist at the University of Connecticut, is working on theoretical time travel because he wants to reconnect with his father, who died when Mallett was 10.

Cheel shapes their stories for maximum emotional impact, but his film never feels manipulative. Instead, it finds resonance and solace in these impossible quests. The journey is the destination. **NW**

May 2, 6:30 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 10 am, TIFF 2; May 7, 8:45 pm, TIFF 2

CONTEMPORARY COLOR

(Bill Ross IV, Turner Ross, U.S.). 96 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

In 2015, **David Byrne** staged a Luminato event at the Air Canada Centre in which high-school colour guards performed choreography to new songs by **St. Vincent**, **Devonté Hynes**, **tUnE-yArDs**, **Nelly Furtado** and others.

The show was restaged a few days later at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn and captured by Tchoupitoulas directors **Bill Ross IV** and **Turner Ross** for this fly-on-the-wall concert doc, which cuts between performances and backstage interactions.

It's wonderful to watch the older performers mentor their younger collaborators, and it's exhilarating to see stage fright turn into electric confidence in a split second as the kids take the stage. Byrne's closing number packs a wallop of emotion that left me weeping in my seat. **NW**

May 2, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 4, 4:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 8, 1 pm, Bloor Hot Docs

WHOSE COUNTRY?

(Mohamed Siam, U.S., Egypt). 57 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

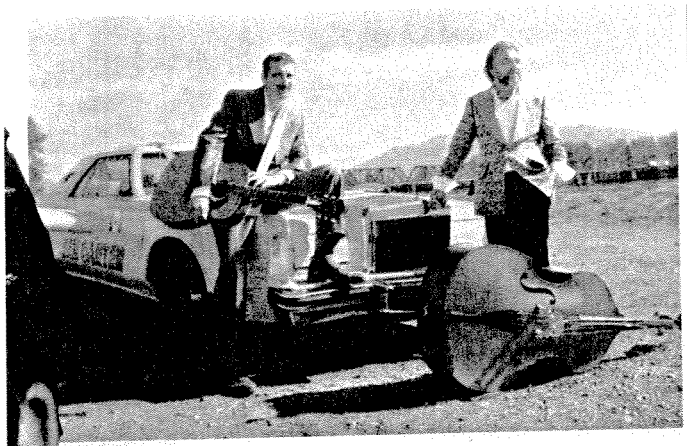
The confusion and hopelessness surrounding Egypt's revolution permeates this intimate, quizzical and troubling doc.

An unnamed police officer engages in a series of guarded conversations that span the years since the Arab Spring. He admits to engaging in the brutality and abuse of power – torture and frame-ups included – that inspired the events in Tahrir Square in 2011. He also claims to support the revolution since he, too, feels like a victim of an unjust system.

While viewing the events in Egypt through the officer's perspective, director **Mohamed Siam** doesn't necessarily trust a subject whose politics are fickle and motivations unclear. Those suspicions set the tone for an uneasy film that doesn't get clear answers but gives us a sense of why Egypt is still in conflict. **RS**

May 2, 6:30 pm, Scotiabank 7; May 5, 11:30 am, TIFF 4; May 7, 4:00 pm, Scotiabank 13

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



AIM FOR THE ROSES

(John Bolton, Canada). 102 minutes. Rating: **NNNNN**

In 1976, a Canadian daredevil named **Ken Carter** announced he was going to jump the St. Lawrence River in a rocket-propelled Lincoln; the stunt took years to put together but didn't go quite as expected.

In 2008, Vancouver musician **Mark Haney** decided he was going to make a concept album about Carter's jump. The album also took years to produce and turned out very far from what he conceived.

Aim For The Roses is **John Bolton**'s attempt to synthesize the two stories, finding the common ground between two very different dream projects. Part long-form music video, part archival documentary, it's experimental and conventional at the same time; a concept movie about a concept album. It's delightful. **NW**

May 1, 7:15 pm, Scotiabank 7; May 2, 1:15 pm, TIFF 3; May 6, 1 pm, Scotiabank 13

GARY NUMAN: ANDROID IN LA LA LAND

(Steve Reed, Rob Alexander, UK). 85 minutes. Rating: **NNN**

Reality TV hasn't rescued **Gary Numan** from oblivion as it did with contemporaries Ozzy Ozbourne and Flavor Flav. This doc could remedy that.

The Brit-pop musician famous for pioneering electronic music three decades ago with Are "Friends" Electric? and Cars makes the move to L.A. from the English countryside to make his comeback album, Splinter.

His creative process doesn't conjure much excitement in a film clearly engineered to be a promotional tool. Instead, Numan charms at the homestead. He's an awkward sort, diagnosed with Asperger's, who credits wife **Gemma** with holding things together and being the spark-plug in his life. Their relationship is endearing. The music just gets in the way. **RS**

May 1, 9:15 pm, Isabel Bader; May 3, 12:45 pm, TIFF 1; May 8, 8:30 pm, Royal

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

(Tim De Keersmaecker, Belgium). 70 minutes. Rating: **NN**

For migrants from Africa, Lampedusa is a gateway to Europe. The Italian island nestled in the Mediterranean can look like paradise until you wander into a graveyard of shipwrecked boats that once held refugee cargo.

Director **Tim De Keersmaecker** makes these images pop, but he struggles with the sociopolitical argument he really wants to make. The film follows two young refugees who have been welcomed into the homes of separate families. One barely has a moment to start a new life because his hosts found a new way to make slavery seem like charity, while the other has it really nice.

You feel for both guys, lonely for different reasons, but their stories don't come together. **RS**

May 1, 9:30 pm, Hart House; May 3, 4 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 7, 1 pm, Isabel Bader

TOWER

(Keith Maitland, U.S.). 94 minutes. Rating: **NNN**

At noon on August 1, 1966, Charles Whitman started shooting people from the observation deck of the University of Texas clock tower in Austin. Before he was stopped 96 minutes later, Whitman killed 14 people and wounded another 33.

Keith Maitland's Tower elects to recreate Whitman's siege with actors who read interviews with survivors and other witnesses, rendered in digital animation in the same process as Richard Linklater's Waking Life and A Scanner Darkly.

It's a daring choice, but I don't know that it fully works. The animation distracts us from the fact that we're watching a dramatization rather than a documentary, but it also distances us from the horror and immediacy of the event. It's artful, but more than a little frustrating. **NW**

May 1, 9:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 2, 1 pm, Isabel Bader; May 6, 3:15 pm, Hart House

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FEAR ITSELF

(Charlie Lyne, UK). 88 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

Charlie Lyne, director of Beyond Clueless, returns with another cinematic pastiche, this time constructing an unsettling new narrative using footage from horror movies.

Clips screen from classics and lesser-known movies gathered from all over the world as an unnamed young woman (actor **Amy E. Watson**) recounts her relationship with scary cinema in voice-over. It gradually becomes clear that she's using these movie memories to reorient herself after experiencing something terrible.

Her story is really just an excuse to revisit these images from a new angle, creating a sort of dream state of disquiet that the audience can experience together. Which is what horror movies do, after all. **NW**

May 1, 10 pm, TIFF 3; May 3, 3:45 pm, TIFF 3; May 4, 9:45 pm, Bloor Hot Docs

Monday, May 2

UNLOCKING THE CAGE

(D.A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, U.S.). 92 minutes. Rating: **NNNN**

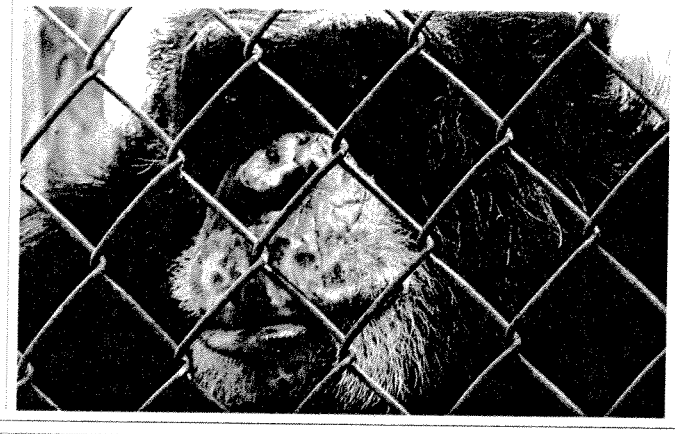
Steven Wise is a lawyer who's been battling for the rights of animals for decades, asserting the personhood of animals in order to grant them habeas corpus rights, thus allowing them to be freed from abusive captivity in labs and zoos and resettled in preserves.

D.A. Pennebaker and **Chris Hegedus** follow Wise as he argues a series of cases for the Nonhuman Rights Project, most powerfully one on behalf of a chimpanzee named **Tommy** who's spent most of his life caged in his owner's shed.

Pennebaker and Hegedus are renowned for their unadorned studies of process, and Unlocking The Cage is no different. They ultimately find its thesis statement in a sequence of Wise and his team working to reduce 30 years of his crusade to a single core principle: the detention of an autonomous being is, simply, inhuman.

That idea should stay with you long after the credits roll. **NW**

May 2, 3:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 3, 9:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 8, 10 am, TIFF 1





CAMERAPERSON

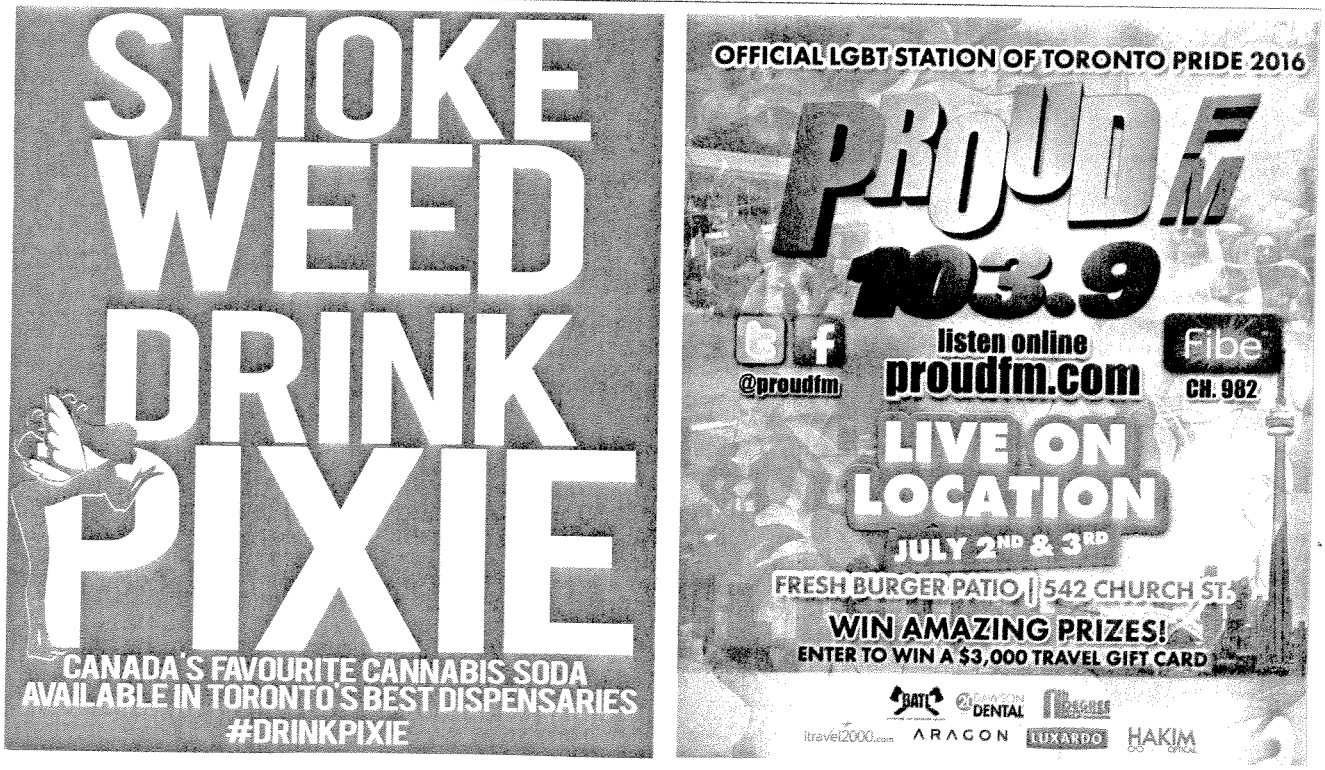
(Kirsten Johnson, U.S.). 102 minutes. Rating: **NNNNN**

Kirsten Johnson has been working as documentary cinematographer for a de ade and a half, shooting for filmmakers li Kirby Dick (The Invisible War), Laura Po tras (Citizenfour), Michael Moore (Fahre heit 9/11) and Dawn Porter (Trapped).

For Cameraperson, Johnson and edito **Nels Bangerter** and **Amanda Laws** ha assembled footage she's shot over t years into a personal diary, representir her peripatetic career and – almost impe ceptibly – showing us the cost of bearir witness to horrors in Bosnia or Darfur Jasper, Texas, where she covered the mu der trial of the men who dragged Jam Byrd Jr. behind their pickup.

Johnson also hints at a much more pe sonal toll, with glimpses of her mothe worsening Alzheimer's and her twir growth spurts between clips. It's a grac ful, deeply affecting work produced in entirely original manner. N

May 2, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 3, 2:45 pm, TIFF 4; May 7, 6:15 pm, TIFF 4





Koneline spectacle nurtures nuance

NETTIE WILD FINDS THE VISUAL POETRY IN EVERY ASPECT OF THE TAHLTAN FIRST NATION'S CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND TO THE MINERS MOVING IN

BY SUSAN G. COLE

"This is Oscar, whose family allowed me under the skin of their culture. Oscar [who's working to preserve the Tahltan language] is very sophisticated in terms of his understanding of language. His dad, who makes moccasins, talked to us a lot about his past. That's not a traditional dogsled, though. It's store-bought."

Nettie Wild says Koneline: Our Land Beautiful, her spectacular meditation on the Tahltan First Nation's complex relationship with the land – and the mining industry gradually invading – takes more risks than any movie she's made before.

"I've been in war zones where people have actually shot at me, but with Koneline, I am taking the biggest artistic leap of my career," she says in a phone interview from her home in BC.

The key, she says, was to shed any sense of judgment.

"Could I, along with my crew, bring a curious heart to everyone in front of our camera? Could we seek the beauty and poetry in every one of those people – understanding that good poetry embraces contradictions – rather than run away from complexity?"

What she means is that the film neither idealizes the First Nations nor demonizes the miners and company honchos.

"I felt strongly that in the roar of all the rhetoric, I didn't want to make a polemical film. We asked what would happen if we went into this extraordinary time, just as it's on the cusp of change. Our objective was to find the poetry in every single person in front of our camera, no matter who they were."

Here are some gorgeous images and Wild's commentary on them.

KONELINE: OUR LAND BEAUTIFUL

***(Nettie Wild, Canada). 96 minutes. Rating:* NNNNN**

This visually stunning film conveys the unique relationship of the Tahltan First Nation to their remote lands in British Columbia, now seriously threatened by mining interests.

Spectacular images of the pristine hills contrast with brutal degradation of the territory at the hands of corporations. But **Nettie Wild**'s smart enough to show nuanced appreciation for the hard work some Tahltans do for the mine. An extended sequence of four workers trying to secure a hydro tower is very impressive, making this more than just an ideological statement. **SGC**

Apr 29, 6:30 pm, TIFF 3; May 1, 12:45 pm, TIFF 2; May 7, 3:15 pm, Hart House

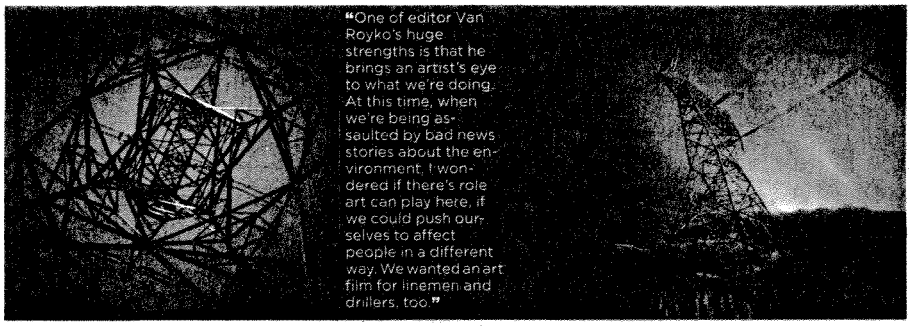




"While shooting the sequence where the moose is hunted and gutted, I wanted the audience to go through what we went through: it was gory, and there was a lot of meat. As Orville and Elliott started to saw their way through the grunt work for hours and hours, I could see that it was a skill being passed from one to the other. We wanted the audience to get past the ick factor and see a respected elder passing on information to Elliott. In hunting culture, it's a favourite scene. In the south, it might be contentious – vegetarians might want to pound their way out of the theatre."



"I started to discover that it didn't matter who I talked to or what they were doing there, every single person started with a real tie to the land and love of being in the bush. That was true of the lineman and the drillers as well as the Tahltan who were hunting and fishing. That differs from the assumption that people inhabit their polarized quarters."



"One of editor Van Royko's huge strengths is that he brings an artist's eye to what we're doing. At this time, when we're being assaulted by bad news stories about the environment, I wondered if there's role art can play here, if we could push ourselves to affect people in a different way. We wanted an art film for linemen and drillers, too."

"We knew what our focus point had to be: that little pole (where the tower was being attached). We started by working with the company to get the camera close enough so that we could get what we needed, but far enough away so that our camera wouldn't be destroyed by the backwash and so that we wouldn't cause a safety issue for the camera or the chopper. As we were making that sequence on the ground, it was thrilling."





"Before the horses got into the river, Heidi, a big-game guide outfitter, acted as if she were in preproduction. She was shooing the horses, there were logistics to deal with, but when she got on the horses and got them to move across the river, it was like she turned into a nine-year-old. The bones on her face changed. She wasn't just surviving, she was living it and totally loving it."

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GIRLS DON'T FLY

***(Monika Grassl, Germany/Austria). 89 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

In Ghana, young women attend the Aviation and Technology Academy, where they hope to learn how to fly.

Determined to escape traditional roles, they have to cope with their British male instructor, a bully who acts like a colonialist, consistently undermining their self-esteem.

It's fascinating to watch the young girls yearning to meet their personal goals while coming to political awareness. Just watch them ask why he insists on referring to them by number rather than by name. **SGC**

May 2, 6:30 pm, TIFF 3; May 4, 1:30 pm, TIFF 2; May 8, 9 am, Isabel Bader

WIZARD MODE

***(Nathan Drillot, Jeff Petry, Canada). 82 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

BC's **Robert Gagno** has spent much of his life playing pinball, racking up those bonuses, avoiding tilts and working his way up the world rankings.

But now that he's in his mid-20s, he must decide on his future, which is complicated by the fact that he's on the autism spectrum. **Nathan Drillot** and **Jeff Petry**'s workmanlike doc follows Gagno around to various tournaments, and makes great use of home movie footage of his early life.

There are only so many ways to capture flippers and blinking lights, however, so the excitement soon wears off. More compelling is watching Gagno trying to achieve independence from his parents by learning to shop, drive and make non-pinball friends. Perhaps one day he'll even date.

The film doesn't have much of an ending, but Gagno's engaging personality shines through, and it's clear he's getting ready to play the next ball life gives him. **GS**

May 2, 7:15 pm, Scotiabank 4; May 4, 1 pm, Hart House; May 7, 6:15 pm, Scotiabank 14

RANDOM ACTS OF LEGACY

***(Ali Kazimi, Canada). 77 minutes. Rating:* NNNNN**

Moving images from the early 20th century showing people of colour in the U.S. and Canada are rare. So when **Ali Kazimi** won, in an online auction, a cache of home movies about the Fungs, a middle-class Chinese-American family based in Chicago, he tracked down surviving family members to piece together a portrait of their lives.

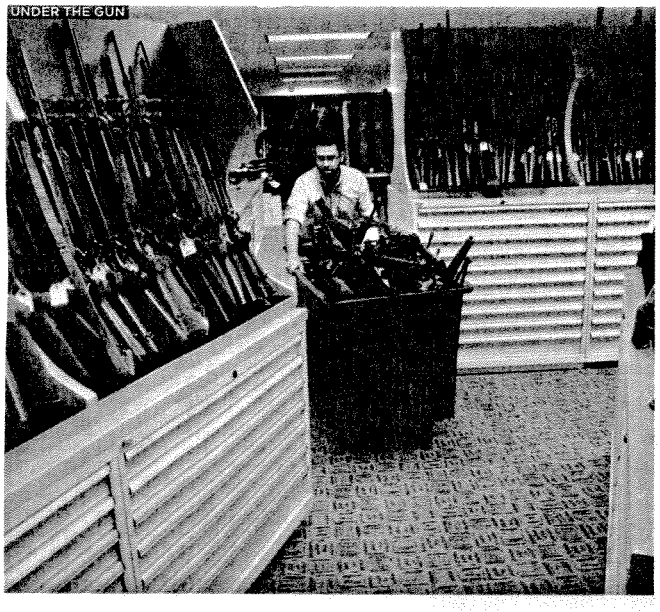
The result is a gorgeous, multi-layered document not just about the extended Fung family, but also about immigration, integration, racism in pre- and postwar America and economic opportunities. Historian **Henry Yu** points out that the "normal" images we see often contradict those from Hollywood and the press.

The man behind the home movies is **Silas Fung**, a commercial artist who was obsessed with Chicago's 1933 World's Fair; his wife, **Edythe**, sold insurance to Chinese immigrants, basically funding Silas's home movie hobby.

Their surviving daughter, **Irena Lum**, brings a forthright personal touch to the film, and Kazimi keeps his own comments to a minimum, resulting in a haunting, essential document that, for all its specificity, comments on the universal human condition. **GS**

May 2, 9 pm, TIFF 3; May 5, 1:30 pm, TIFF 3; May 8, 4:30 pm, Innis

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OBIT
***(Vanessa Gould, U.S). 93 minutes. Rating:* NN**

Here's a pic in which just about everybody dies and it's still pretty damn dull. Focusing on the obituary writers for the New York Times who tell us all about the challenges and pressures of making people come alive again, the film never takes off.

There are some fun moments when writers read their opening paragraphs before revealing the subject – a standard strategy of obits – so you can play a guessing game. But there's no tension or surprise. Unless you're intrigued by an ed board's discussion about, for example, which obit should go on the front page, you won't find much to get excited about. **SGC**

May 2, 9:15 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 3, 3:45 pm, Isabel Bader; May 7, 9:15 pm, Isabel Bader; May 8, 1 pm, Regent

Tuesday, May 3

UNDER THE GUN
***(Stephanie Soechtig, U.S.). 110 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

In 2014, filmmaker **Stephanie Soechtig** teamed up with broadcaster **Katie Couric** to take on the sugar industry in Fed Up, an angering documentary that declared childhood obesity an epidemic. The pair are back with this calmly composed call-to-arms aimed at the tragedy of American gun violence.

The doc effectively counters the media conditioning that leads people to believe the biggest problem is mass shootings or that firearms would be confiscated under expanded gun control.

With Soechtig's directorial eye and Couric's journalistic skills, gun violence is framed as a public health issue and a legitimate crisis. **JH**

May 3, 3:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 5, 9:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 8, 9:30 pm, Regent



THE PEARL
***(Jessica Dimmock, Christopher LaMarca, U.S.). 94 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

Jessica Dimmock looks at four trans people – all middle-aged and living in the Pacific Northwest – whose lives change over three years as they transition. **Jodie** and **Krystal** are sisters – Jodie came out to her brother as trans only to discover that he, too, is trans-identified. **Nina** struggles with coming out to her partner, and **Amy** seeks gender confirmation surgery.

The doc tends to wander, focusing more on the women's everyday lives. But when they travel and are free from the strictures of their closets inside their home communities, you see how beautiful real freedom can be. **SGC**

May 3, 6 pm, TIFF 2; May 5, 3:15 pm, Hart House ; May 6; 4 pm, Fox

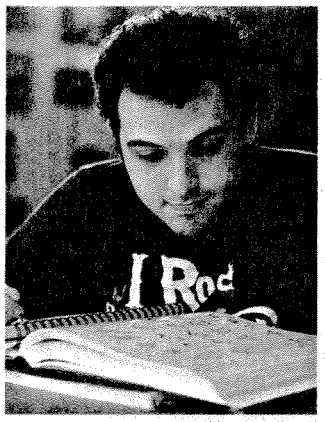
BOBBY SANDS: 66 DAYS
***(Brendan Byrne, Ireland/UK). 105 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

In 1981, **Bobby Sands** started a hunger strike to draw attention to deplorable conditions in the Maze prison and to get the British government to acknowledge IRA members as political prisoners. His demands were not met, and 66 days later Sands was dead, the first of 10 men to starve themselves to death as part of the protest.

Bobby Sands: 66 Days places the Maze hunger strike, and Sands himself, in the larger social and political context of the Troubles. Director **Brendan Byrne** lays out his case methodically and precisely, breaking up the standard talking heads and archival footage with passages from the diary Sands secretly kept for the first 17 days of the hunger strike.

It's a solid work, though the pacing flags as Byrne struggles to frame the long stalemate in a dramatic manner. But when Sands's protest reaches its awful, inevitable end, you'll feel it. **NW**

May 3, 9 pm, TIFF 2; May 5, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 7, 7 pm, Hart House



LIFE, ANIMATED
***(Roger Ross Williams, U.S.). 91 minutes. Rating:* NNNNN**

Life, Animated is a moving testament to the power of film.

Owen Suskind was diagnosed with autism at three, and it took years for his parents and doctors to realize that he made sense of the world through Disney animated movies. His first words after four years of silence concerned The Jungle Book and Peter Pan, and a tiny line of dialogue from The Little Mermaid expressed his desire to communicate.

Director **Roger Ross Williams** uses generous clips from the Disney canon, as well as original drawings and animation by **Mac Guff**. As Owen, now in his 20s, attempts to move away from his very comfortable family nest (his dad, **Ron Suskind**, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author), we get to see whether Disney has lessons for that.

Williams has trouble finding the right ending, but one of the concluding scenes involving The Hunchback Of Notre Dame will have you smiling and reaching for a tissue. **GS**

May 3, 9:15 pm, Isabel Bader; May 5, 12:30 pm, Hart House; May 7, 1 pm, Fox

Wednesday, May 4

SOUTHWEST OF SALEM: THE STORY OF SAN ANTONIO FOUR
***(Deborah S. Esquenazi, U.S.). 89 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

As America fell into a panic about Satanic ritual (and thanks also to a climate of homophobia), four Latina lesbians were convicted in the late 90s of gang raping two children and received sentences of 16 to 37 years.

Deborah S. Esquenazi's infuriating film details the trumped-up charges, how the alleged victims were manipulated by a jealous father and the way the judge caved even though there was barely a shred of evidence to convict the accused.

She scores when she's able to catch one of the "survivors" recanting her testimony and stays with the women through their exoneration hearing, which take place – unbelievably – in front of the same judge who convicted them. This movie is as much a condemnation of the justice system as it is a celebration of the accused women's courage.

You're gonna get really mad. **SGC**

May 4, 6:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs; May 5, 10 am, TIFF 1; May 8, 12:45 pm TIFF 1



SUITED
***(Jason Benjamin, U.S.). 74 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

Bespoke tailors **Daniel Friedman** and **Rae Tutera**'s Bindle & Keep studio is geared toward people who'd feel too uncomfortable to venture into a retail store, knowing they'd never find anything that fits them.

Whereas lots of people of all genders have bodies with hard-to-fit curves, director **Jason Benjamin** and the store put the focus on non-gender-conforming clients, whom Friedman and Tutera cater to with uncommon sensitivity. They seek to learn not only their customers' personal aesthetics but their whole life stories.

Lesbians looking for some representation should hang in there. At the very end of the movie, a sequence tracks Bindle & Keep's New York fashion show, where you can see the full queer range of their clientele. **SGC**

May 4, 7 pm, TIFF 1; May 5, 12:30 pm, TIFF 1; May 6, 6:45 pm, Revue; May 8, 10:30 am, Bloor Hot Docs

NOW Magazine – April 28 – May 4 (20 of 20)





A DOG'S LIFE

***(Hélène Choquette, Canada). 67 minutes. Rating:* NN**

A Dog's Life follows half a dozen people in Toronto and Montreal who've lived on the streets (or in their cars) because most shelters don't allow pets.

They all credit their dogs with giving them emotional stability and even the will to be rid of self-destructive habits, and it's clear they all depend on their dogs as much as their dogs depend on them.

But that's a thesis rather than a story, and after about 15 minutes it's obvious that **Hélène Choquette** is just repeating that thesis over and over again with minor variations. Narrowing the focus to one or two subjects, or just making a shorter doc, would have made for a better experience. **NW**

May 4, 6:45 pm, TIFF 2; May 5, 10:15 am, Isabel Bader; May 7, 1:30 pm, TIFF 2

OFF THE RAILS

***(Adam Irving, Canada/U.S.). 87 minutes. Rating:* NNN**

Darius McCollum has spent half his adult life in prison because, he says, the specific expression of his Asperger's syndrome compels him to be part of the New York City transit system. He's claimed to be a supervisor and wandered around work sites; he's stolen city buses and driven them across town, picking up passengers and making all requested stops.

McCollum's lawyer sees him as a harmless enthusiast; the MTA sees him as – quite literally – an accident waiting to happen.

Adam Irving's Off The Rails is totally on McCollum's side, painting him as an affable victim of compulsion and turning a blind eye to the whole "unqualified, uninsured, uncontrollable" aspect of his actions. That throws the doc off; empathy is one thing, but I got the creeping sense that the movie is dancing around events and acts in order to frame McCollum in the most sympathetic light.

It makes for compelling viewing, but not necessarily for the reasons Irving thinks.

NW

May 4, 9:15 pm, Scotiabank 3; May 6, 1 pm, TIFF 2; May 7, 9 pm, Scotiabank 14; May 8, 7:15 pm, Innis

THE BAD KIDS

***(Lou Pepe, Keith Fulton, U.S.). 101 minutes. Rating:* NNNNN**

The eponymous students at the alternative Black Rock High School in the middle of the Mojave Desert are dealing with a lot besides getting enough credits to graduate: drugs, emotional and physical abuse, homelessness, teen pregnancy and, the big common denominator, the absence of a responsible adult in their lives.

The compassionate but strict teachers at the school – particularly **Vonda Viland**, who often phones repeated no-shows in the morning to wake them up and personally greets everyone as they disembark from their school bus – try their best, providing consistency and sound advice.

Lou Pepe and **Keith Fulton**'s unobtrusive cameras are there to catch every joyous or heartbreaking moment, as **Lee** (a black teen dad who thinks he's not smart enough), **Joey** (who's bright but whose mom is on meth), **Jennifer** (whose father resents her success) and others try to gain confidence and graduate.

The school takes them up only so far, however. In one of the most gut-wrenching sequences, a young woman sobs over not wanting to leave and enter the big bad world. Viland, neglected herself as a child, is there to hold her hand.

Devastating. **GS**

May 4, 9:45 pm, Hart House; May 5, 6:15 pm, TIFF 1; May 6, 12:30 pm, Hart House

Sunday May 8

TONY ROBBINS: I AM NOT YOUR GURU

***(Joe Berlinger, U.S.). 115 minutes. Rating:* NNNN**

Square-jawed motivational speaker **Tony Robbins** gives his week-long Date With Destiny seminar once a year, and people from around the world pay $5,000 to bask in his wisdom and maybe experience a breakthrough.

Paradise Lost director **Joe Berlinger** and his crew are the first cameras allowed to film the event, and they capture both the intimidating fist-pumping energy of the crowd and the painful, life-changing truths that the people are asked to confront. Bring tissues; some revelations will devastate you.

Berlinger has lots of access to Robbins himself – at home, exercising, prepping in his Town Car – and the man seems open, spontaneous and completely authentic. He's got nothing to hide, and neither does his wife, **Bonnie-Pearl**, who's obviously still in love.

The least sincere scenes come from the cheesy music piped in by the organizers to underscore certain moments. But that's not Tony's fault. **GS**

May 8, 6 pm (with director and subject in attendance) and 9:30 pm, Bloor Hot Docs.



You need to know about these four women directors at Hot Docs

April 27, 2016 by: Kiva Reardon

Forty per cent of the filmmakers at the Toronto documentary festival are female



League of Exotique Dancers, directed by Rama Rau (Storyline Entertainment)

When it comes to women working in the film industry, the story told by the numbers is rarely a happy one. Women are underrepresented behind the camera, on screen, at the executive level and on funding bodies. When it comes to film festivals, things aren't much better (we're looking at you, Cannes).

- **The largest analysis of gender in movie dialogue is out, and it ain't pretty**
- **Take a tour of Hamilton's thriving art scene**
- **5 films that inspired the breakout director of Sleeping Giant**

That said, there is the occasional good news story: 40 per cent of the films at Hot Docs this year were helmed by women. The reason why the documentary filmmaking world fosters a better (though far from perfect) sense of inclusivity is held to be because it's less institutionalized. When you DIY, there are fewer roadblocks (read: men in suits saying no). Here are four women to watch at Toronto's Hot Docs festival who never took "no" for answer.

Rama Rau: *League of Exotique Dancers*

Rau got her start in film working in Mumbai, India before setting up Trinetra Productions in Toronto. Her early work explored her connection to these two countries (*Fingers of Fire*, *Losing My Religion*), which has infused her docs with a personal-as-political touch. Never one to shy away from controversial subject matter, Rau displayed her journalistic skills with *The Market* (an intimate doc that connects a Canadian woman with her would-be illegal organ donor in India), and by getting unprecedented access to Rehtaeh Parsons' family in *No Place to Hide.*Her most recent film *League of Exotique Dancers*, which will open Hot Docs, is a lively and loving portrait of aging burlesque dancers.

Tiffany Hsiung: *The Apology*



The Apology, directed by Tiffany Hsiung (NFB)

Hsiung displayed an extraordinary amount of patience for a first-time filmmaker by taking five years to complete *The Apology*. The NFB-backed doc sheds light on a dark chapter in World War II history: the women who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army. History calls them "comfort women," but in Hsiung's doc they're presented as activists, mothers, grandmothers and, above all, humans who won't rest until their story is heard. Shot in China, the Philippines and Japan, Hsiung captures personal moments of the women in their homes and with their families, movingly demonstrating a level of trust between herself and her resilient subjects.

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Alethea Arnaquq-Baril: *Angry Inuk*



Angry Inuk, directed by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril (NFB)

Iqaluit-based Arnaquq-Baril's first doc embodies the best of what the form can do: give voice to those who are systematically silenced. As the title suggests, Arnaquq-Baril is fed up with the marginalization her community faces, especially when it comes to the seal hunt.Outside the North, we're bombarded with demands to "save the seals," but this is only one side of the story. By capturing the process of the hunt (from the feasts to the transformation of sealskin into garments), Arnaquq-Baril shows that banning the seal hunt threatens an important part of Inuk tradition and robs her community of a valuable source of income. Arnaquq-Baril embraces the oral tradition of Inuk culture by frequently directly addressing the camera, inviting the viewer to see the world from her point of view.

Zaynê Akyol: *Gulîstan, Land of Roses*



Gulîstan, Land of Roses, directed by Zaynê Akyol (NFB)

Women are often forgotten in war, being cast as helpless victims or their exploits on the battlefield erased in favour of the common masculine narrative of heroics. Akyol's *Gulîstan, Land of Roses* acts as a corrective to this misperception.

Akyol embeds herself with the armed female faction of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a paramilitary group fighting for Kurdish independence, which has long been engaged in campaigns against the Turkish state. The PKK, which western governments including Canada have listed as a terrorist organization, is also battling Daesh, and these women are on the front lines — while calling for female empowerment.

Filmed on the borders of Iraq and Syria, Akyol captures the daily routine of the women — from political meetings to weapons training — with stunning cinematography. With a patient observational eye, Akyol allows the women's individual stories to come to the fore, offering insights into a rarely explored segment not just of Middle Eastern politics, but also of feminism.

Hot Docs takes place Thu., Apr. 28-Sun., May 8 in Toronto. See website for details.

CTV – Canada AM – April 27, 2016

League of Exotique Dancers: Trailblazers of burlesque dance

April 27, 2016 by: Host Beverly Thomson



'I'm not black. I'm O.J.!'

April 27, 2016 by: John Semley

ESPN's 7.5-hour documentary uses O.J.'s story as a Trojan horse to plumb America's central theme: race



Closeup casual view of San Francisco 49ers O.J. Simpson on movie set of "Firepower." Bridgeport in 1978. (Lane Stewart /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images)

In February 1995, *Vanity Fair*'s Dominick Dunne summed up the incontestable allure of O.J. Simpson's murder trial. "The Simpson case," he wrote, "is like a great trash novel come to life, a mammoth fireworks display of interracial marriage, love, lust, lies, hate, fame, wealth, beauty, obsession, spousal abuse, stalking, brokenhearted children, the bloodiest of bloody knife-slashing homicides, and all the justice that money can buy." Our fascination with it has not only persisted, but grown in time.

The scintillating trashiness Dunne wrote about was played up compellingly this year by the FX network's cartoonish courtroom drama *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story*, which unfolded like the TV equivalent of airport fiction. By contrast, ESPN's new 7.5-hour documentary film event, *O.J.: Made In America*, premiering at Toronto's Hot Docs festival this week, is *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Beloved*,*The Great Gatsby*, and *In Cold Blood* all at once. It's the Great American Novel take on O.J., positioning his story not as mere lurid exploitation but as a distinctly American epic that articulates so much about the nation's central, and perhaps its only, theme: race.

"Think of the original sin of slavery, and how this country was built," says *Made In America* director Ezra Edelman. "While the film speaks to a number of things, race is the primary theme in the story, for sure. I would like to think there's an inherent argument about what it means to be black that one can use O.J. to discuss."

In her 2001 book *Playing the Race Card*, scholar Linda Williams, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, examined the Simpson trial as a contemporary iteration of American racial melodrama. From the moment Simpson was formally charged with murdering his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend Ron Goldman, the case immediately fit itself to archetypes of the barbarous black man attacking the white woman, she argues. Edelman's film complicates this racial drama, adding shades of grey to the literal black/white dynamic.

Made In America's earliest section focuses on Simpson's complex relationship with racial politics. He came of age as a pro athlete in the era when Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali, and African-American runners Tommy Smith and John Carlos threw up a clenched-fist black power salute at the 1968 Summer Olympics. As a star running back on scholarship at the University of Southern California in the late '60s, and as winner of the eminent Heisman Trophy, Simpson had no apparent interest in such militancy. He was constantly trying to erase, or transcend, his race. Instead of deeming him some kind of race traitor, *Made In America* attempts to understand Simpson's relationship to his own blackness. "I think that the choices O.J. made are easy to denigrate," says Edelman. "I also think of the pressure that must have been on him in that era, when the most prominent athletes were speaking out, and were very strident in their rhetoric. There was an expectation that you had to be down with the cause."

One of Edelman's interviewees describes Simpson as a "counter-revolutionary." It's this lack of political visibility, combined with his stardom, charm and conventional good looks, that accounted for Simpson's acceptance in mainstream white America: as a football player, a spokesman for Hertz rental cars (whose CEO, looking back in the film today, candidly calls him "colourless") and, eventually, an actor. His self-ennobling motto, repeated throughout *Made In America* and uttered by Cuba Gooding Jr.'s pint-sized Simpson in the recent FX miniseries, was, "I'm not black. I'm O.J.!"

Related from macleans.ca: O.J. Simpson and Hollywood's social conscience

"You see him swayed by the American dream," says Edelman. "And then you think about what American exceptionalism means. I think there was a very real sense of O.J.'s exceptionalism that existed in his head. He thought he was special." This sense of uniqueness seems to have driven Simpson throughout his career. In the affluent L.A. neighbourhood where he and Nicole made their home, he was nicknamed the "Mayor of Brentwood." As Nicole's close friend, the actress Robin Greer, puts it in *Made In America*, "Los Angeles isn't like other places. If you're a celebrity, you have no colour."

On June 17, 1994, O.J's specialness fell away. When the Los Angeles Police Department formally charged him with double-homicide—leading to the most infamous low-speed getaway in TV history—Simpson's wealth, celebrity, acting credits, sporting accomplishments, and symbolic mayoralty were effectively stripped. Suddenly, O.J. Simpson became a black man first and foremost, Edelman's film argues.

His blackness quickly proved its usefulness in Simpson's murder trial. *Time* magazine drew heat for darkening Simpson's mugshot in order to make him appear, in the words of the NAACP's Benjamin Chavis, like "some kind of animal." His all-star defence team positioned their client as yet another black male being beat down by the institutionally racist police whose officers had been recently acquitted for the brutal battering of black L.A. cab driver Rodney King, resulting in citywide race riots. In Edelman's film, one former Simpson juror talks openly about how she—like several of the jurors—saw the controversial not-guilty verdict as "revenge" for the Rodney King verdict.

By the end of the trial, Simpson, who'd made a point of distancing himself from racial politics as a young man, became an unlikely civil rights hero. When he was acquitted on Oct. 3, 1995, a black male juror stood up, his clenched first thrust in the air in solidarity—a lot like those black athletes back in the '68 Olympics. "It's like, 'what?!' " says Edelman. "That to me is the ultimate irony. How do you get from Tommy Smith and John Carlos to O.J. Simpson's acquittal 27 years later? That's the journey I want to discuss."

That Simpson was a record-breaking athlete fortifies *Made In America*'s narrative and thematic heft. Sports, after all, is perhaps the purest representation of the fabled American meritocracy, in which anyone can use his God-given gifts to achieve success, despite upbringing, class or, perhaps especially, race.

Sports network ESPN has made a name for itself in recent years investigating the rich stories behind American athletics. Popular documentary programming like *30 for 30*and *Nine for IX* made the grandeur and mythos of sports more palatable to audiences who may not care so much about stats, figures, or even the sports themselves. "I think it took a long time for people to understand what we were trying to do," explains ESPN's vice-president and executive producer of original content, Libby Geist. "It wasn't what people expected of ESPN. We were going a little deeper."

Made In America is perhaps the ultimate deep-dive. Geist notes the film feeds a renewed interest in true crime binge-watching, thanks to shows like *The Jinx* and*Making A Murderer*. But the Simpson trial, which had the public gorging for more than a year on TV and magazine coverage, as well as tell-all books authored by pretty much anyone tangentially involved with the case, was there first.

Related: **The stand-alone episode meets its end**

Edelman's not shy about his contempt for the renewed appetite for true crime horror stories. He calls the trend "gross," while simultaneously capitalizing on it. But, for him, and for ESPN, the so-called Trial of the Century is almost a Trojan horse for examining the grander issues. "Everybody kind of thinks they know O.J.," says Geist, "but this is a different story. Ezra uses O.J.'s story to take you through so many eras in American history."

There is also, sadly, plenty of resonance with contemporary America. As Williams writes, the Simpson trial created a kind of "double vision" for viewing the American justice system. O.J. was acquitted of murder, yet the public felt he was guilty (a feeling further justified by the guilty verdict in the subsequent civil trial). *Made In America*offers a wonky, inverted, funhouse mirror reflection of recent cases of radicalized violence in America against people like Trayvon Martin, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, and others too countless to name here.

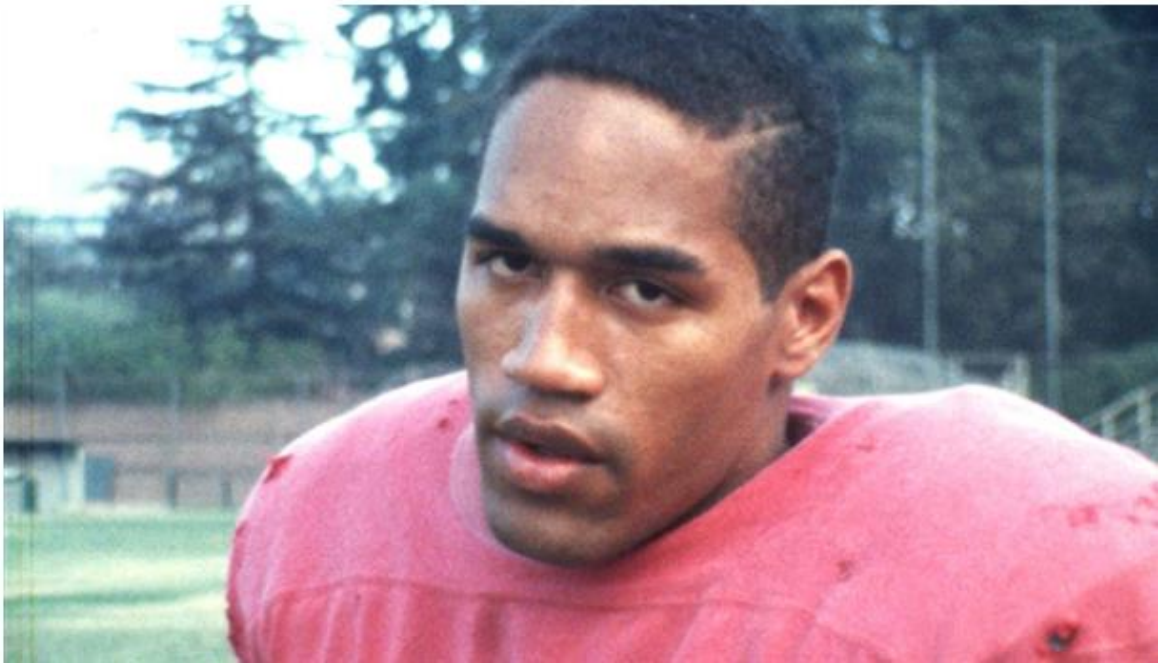
For Edelman, the injustice was further compounded in 2008 when Simpson was sentenced on burglary and weapons charges, after stealing a few boxes of sports memorabilia from a Las Vegas hotel room—a verdict widely read as symbolic revenge for Simpson's double-homicide exoneration, and one that came down 13 years to the day after he was acquitted of (double) murder. Instead of restoring faith in the cops and the courts, the Simpson verdicts further eroded it.

Ezra Edelman calls his film a "tragedy." It may be hard to view it as such, given the general consensus that O.J. probably did brutally murder two people in cold blood and get away with it. His story is tragic in the sweeping, almost Shakespearean sense. It's tragic like Macbeth—another story of a vaunted hero whose sense of exceptionalism drives him to violence, and finally reduces him to simpering cowardice. Because after all his attempts to erase, transcend and rise above his blackness, O.J. Simpson was finally reduced to that most quintessentially racist American cliché: just another incarcerated black man.

Bell Media – eTalk – April 27, 2016

'OJ: Made In America' Docu-Series Set for Exclusive June Premiere on CTV

April 27, 2016 by: **Staff**



CTV announced today it has landed the much-anticipated docu-series "OJ: Made In America" for an exclusive premiere over one week, starting Saturday, June 11 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

Directed and produced by Emmy-award winner Ezra Edelman, the five-part, two-hour episode mini-series explores themes of race and celebrity, while tracing the personal journey of Orenthal James Simpson. The series covers how he became a prolific NFL legend and why the country fell in love with him off the field, to his being accused of murdering his ex-wife and his subsequent acquittal, and why he is now sitting in jail 20 years later for another criminal charge.

Following its international debut at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto this weekend, "OJ: Made In America" will make its Canadian television premiere Saturday, June 11 at 9 p.m. ET/PT on CTV and CTV GO, with episodes airing over the next seven days and subsequent airings on TSN. The series will also make its streaming debut on CraveTV on July 29.

"O.J.: Made In America" is a Laylow Films Production for ESPN Films.

Hot Docs ’16: Smith, DiFelice share fest highlights



April 27, 2016 by Kevin Ritchie



The 23rd edition of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival will take over Toronto starting on Thursday (April 28). Over 11 days, 232 titles from 51 countries will screen across 12 programs, including Rama Rau’s opening night film *League of Exotique Dancers* and buzzy 2016 doc titles such as *Cameraperson*, *Unlocking The Cage*, *All These Sleepless Nights*, *Weiner* and *The Peacemaker.* Commissioners, funders and producers in search of funding will also be on hand for the Hot Docs Forum, a mainstay for docmakers on the festival pitching circuit.



Shane Smith, Sarafina DiFelice

New this year is a greater emphasis on doc shorts and cross-disciplinary work, following the launch of a program dedicated to interactive and VR docs last year. Ahead of the kick-off, *realscreen* spoke to programming head Shane Smith and associate director of programming Sarafina DiFelice for highlights from this year’s festival.

Short Films

The Hot Docs program boasts a 55% increase in short film programming over last year. Shorts will screen in two new thematic programs (Command and Control and the Pursuit of Happiness) and ahead of mid-length and feature-length films. To complement the programming, the industry conference will feature a digital shorts-focused panel with Condé Nast's Sarah Lash, Channel 4's Adam Gee and CBC's Lesly Birchard, as well as a workshop with Gee on social impact shorts.

From May 2 to 6, Hot Docs will host breakfast meetings from 9 to 10 a.m. for short filmmakers to meet with producers and execs and screen their work. "We realize shorts are sometimes a starting ground for emerging filmmakers so we want to help them maximize the potential of their films and maybe get that seen and sold," says Smith. "We also want to make sure the industry for shorts is aware of us and what we can do to support their business goals."

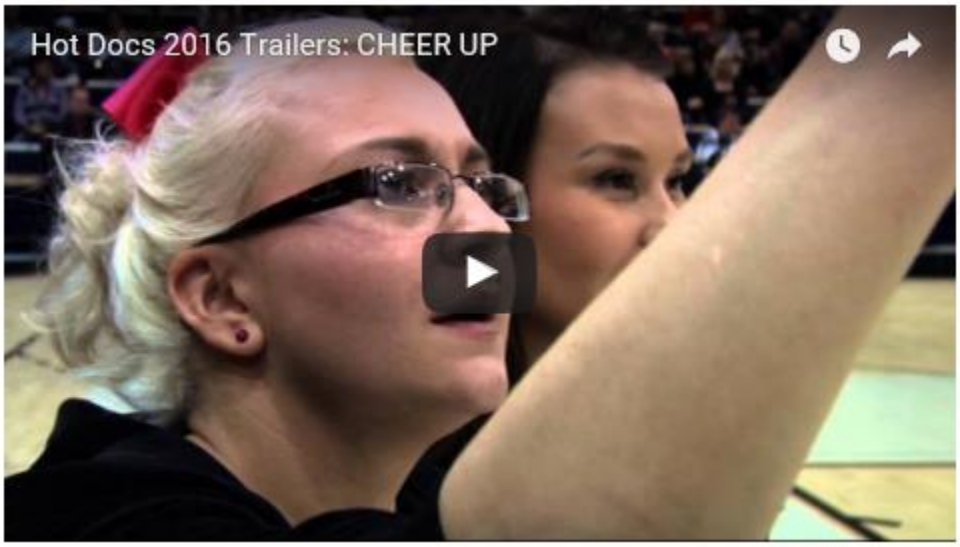
International and Canadian Spectrums

"It's a really strong year for Canadian films," says Smith, adding that this year's crop of docs in the Canadian program is among the festival's most diverse. And, indeed, diversity in Canadian documentary is among the topics to be discussed during the industry conference.

He highlights Min Sook Lee's *Migrant Dreams*, about two women caught in Canada's migrant worker program; Sebastian Rist's *Living with Giants*, about teenage romance in a remote Northern Quebec community;and Tiffany Hsiung's look at sex slavery during World War II, *The Apology* (pictured above).

The latter will feature in the festival's Big Ideas program with an April 30 event featuring Hsiung, one of the film's subjects, Gil Won-Ok and Meehyang Yoon, director of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Slavery.

From the International Spectrum, he highlights Christy Garland's *Cheer Up*, billed as a look at Finland's "worst cheerleading team." "It's got a surface hook that is intriguing, but it digs beneath that to the real substance of the women involved in the team," says Smith.



Live performance

The festival's cross-disciplinary program DocX is returning for a second year and includes several VR and interactive documentaries, a buzzy narrative feature – Canadian filmmaker Matt Johnson's Sundance favorite *Operation Avalanche* – and live performances. On May 5, Hot Docs is hosting the world premiere of Oscar-nominated director Sam Green and live cinema artist Brent Green's "live documentary" performance, which involves the reproduction and deconstruction of documentary elements, such as score and narration.

The cross-over between documentary and live theater is already being experimented with in territory labs run through CPH:DOX in Copenhagen and the Sundance Institute. DiFelice sees the trend as a reaction to the shift to digital. "There's something nice about bringing back that live element and playing with the audience dynamic there," she says.

VR

Of course, digital experiences are the backbone of DocX, which now have a dedicated space at Hot Docs House (610 Markham Street). Last year's inaugural program comprised of three virtual reality experiences that were viewed thousands of times, but this year audiences can participate in interactive installations and 360-degree video experiences in addition to VR.

Hot Docs is a relatively new player on the VR circuit compared with other festivals so DiFelice's challenge is to get audiences used to making the interactive programming (which is free) part of their festival itinerary.

To that end, organizers are staging pop-up VR stations with Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail's* VR effort *Surviving Solitary* and the reproductive health-focused *Across The Line,* which will screen in conjunction with Dawn Porter's *Trapped.*

VR will also feature at the industry conference during VR On Trial, a mock judicial inquiry into the viability of the technology featuring Google's principal VR filmmaker Jessica Brillhart and Canadian Film Centre chief digital officer Ana Serrano.

Big Ideas

In addition to *The Apology*, five other docs are featured in Hot Docs' fifth annual Big Ideas showcase. ESPN and Ezra Edelman's seven-and-a-half-hour look at the life of O.J Simpson, *OJ: Made In America*, will continue its festival run at Hot Docs ahead of its U.S. broadcast premiere. Edelman, sports journalist Robert Lipsyte and former Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti will be on hand for the screening.

Also in the program are Stefan Sagmeister's *The Happy Film*, which is headed to Hot Docs following a premiere at Tribeca earlier this month; Deborah S. Esquenazi's *Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four*; Beth Murphy's *What Tomorrow Brings*; and Joe Berlinger's look at the life of motivational speaker Tony Robbins, *Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru*. Berlinger is also due to appear during the industry conference on May 6, as is filmmaker Heidi Ewing who will discuss her film *Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You* for an industry audience on May 2.



Tags: 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival, Across The Line, Cheer Up, Heidi Ewing, Hot Docs '16, Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Joe Berlinger, Living with Giants, Migrant Dreams, OJ: Made in America, Sarafina DiFelice, Shane Smith, Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four, Surviving Solitary, The Apology, The Happy Film, Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru, What Tomorrow Brings

Indiewire

5 New Must-See Documentaries From the 2016 Hot Docs Festival

By David Ehrlich, Steve Greene and Eric Kohn | IndiewireApril 27, 2016 at 12:51PM

The Toronto non-fiction celebration is a good opportunity to showcase some of the best new documentaries of 2016.



"Operation Avalanche"

Documentaries are flourishing on film and television alike, but few film festivals provide a platform for the art form on the scale of the Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival, which opens its 26th edition this week in Toronto. The widely-attended event unites influential figures in the non-fiction filmmaking community with general audiences eager to consume a broad spectrum of new work. This year's edition features a whopping 232 titles from 51 countries. Here are five notable highlights.

"66 DAYS: BOBBY SANDS"



"66 Days: Bobby Sands"

Joining Steve McQueen's "Hunger" as one of the most visceral and comprehensive films ever made about the Troubles, Brendan Byrne's new documentary begins as an intimate chronicle of Bobby Sands' fatal hunger strike before widening into a study of colonialism as a war of attrition. Sands — who, in 1981, refused food for 66 days in an effort to force the British government to recognize incarcerated IRA members as political prisoners rather than common criminals — is one of the most famous Irishmen in recent history. And yet, as one person reflects early in the film: "So little is known about Sands' life that you can fill in the blanks however you want." While Byrne's film features talking head interviews with people who knew him personally (one guy played on his football team, another fed him the prison food that he didn't eat), "66 Days" is less interested in demystifying Sands as a martyr than it is in dissecting how he became one. Using loads of choice archival footage, and even a pinch of animation to depict Sands becoming dislocated from his own body, Byrne conceives of a hunger strike as something akin to a work of art. In doing so, he makes one of his own. *—David Ehrlich*

"HOTEL DALLAS"

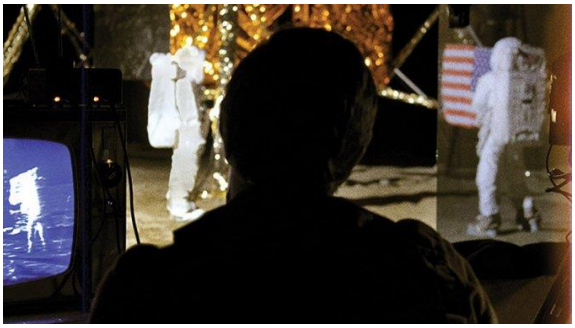


"Hotel Dallas"

"Dallas" memorably used dream reasoning to retroactively delete a whole season's worth of episodes from the show's canon, so it's no surprise that a documentary springing from a generation culturally influenced by the 80s primetime soap wastes no time reinventing its own internal logic. Director (and quasi-star) Livia Ungur initially charts how "Dallas" became the first trickle of western culture into her own life in Romania during the waning years of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime. But "Hotel Dallas" quickly embraces an amorphous approach to examining the show's lingering aftereffects, decades after the show went off the air. (Come for the black-and-white reenactment of a pivotal "Dallas" car accident scene, stay for the montage where time literally begins to reverse.) Ungur's companion through this bizarre artistic essay is Patrick Duffy, the impetus for and benefactor of that notorious 1986 retcon. As a Lynchian version of his "Dallas" Bobby Ewing character, Duffy speaks to and with Ungur as she visits with family members and tries to reconcile her life as an artist in New York.

Through the lens of a family whose ups and downs dovetail with the Ewings in some unexpected ways, “Hotel Dallas” doesn’t reflect American entertainment as much as it refracts it, reveling in its own unclassifiable spirit. —*Steve Greene*

"OPERATION AVALANCHE"



"Operation Avalanche"

Although it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January, Matt Johnson's sophomore feature following his 2013 debut "The Dirties" merits inclusion here for one specific reason: it's technically not a documentary. Instead, "Operation Avalanche" follows a fictionalized version of Johnson and his pal Owen Williams as a pair of dopey filmmakers in the late sixties who uncover a CIA conspiracy to fake the moon landing. Their odyssey takes them from secure meetings with top officials to a Stanley Kubrick film shoot. But this isn't your average mockumentary. As with "The Dirties," Johnson displays a tremendous command over the non-fiction form, blending multiple formats, archival materials and inventive camerawork to create a truly convincing sense of time and place. The result is a gripping comedic thriller that suggests "Dr. Strangelove" by way of Christopher Guest. The continually engaging mashup of genres outdoes most contemporary studio comedies for sheer entertainment value — it's got slapstick moments and killer chase scenes alike — but Johnson also proves himself adroit at showing how documentary techniques create a precise framing device to rendering historical events on a personal scale. While not a documentary, it's a shrewd meditation on the public's relationship to real life, and nobody's carving out a niche in that area better than this inventive filmmaker. —*Eric Kohn*

"SOUR GRAPES"



The “F For Fake” of the wine community, Reuben Atlas and Jerry Rothwell’s “Sour Grapes” is a doc that’s almost as cagey as its subject. In fact, the film doesn’t reveal what — or who — its subject really is for the first 30 minutes or so, as it jauntily dives into the weird world of wine auctions that sprung up during the dot com boom. Through that strange lens, the film introduces us to an eccentric collection of super-rich men who get together and spend their “fuck you” money on absurdly expensive bottles of Burgundy. Slowly, a young Indonesian immigrant begins to emerge from the pack, a genius young oenophile who has a mysterious family background and one of the most refined palettes that any of his friends have ever seen. Needless to say, it’s not a huge surprise to learn that all is not quite what it seems, but as his story begins to collapse, his downfall uncorks a number of fascinating questions about what ultimately determines the true value of art. —DE

"WHAT HE DID"

In 1988, Danish writer Jens Michael Schau killed his longtime partner and fellow novelist, Christian Kampmann. The lives of the two men and the events leading up to the night of the murder formed the basis for both Schau’s memoirs and a resultant theatrical work presented by the Mungo Park theatre in Allerød, Denmark. Weaving together on-camera testimony from Schau and behind-the-scenes footage of the play’s production, Jonas Poher Rasmussen’s film foregoes a meticulous dissection of the crime and focuses instead on the surreal process of constructing an artistic narrative. As Schau sits in on the preliminary production meetings, the shock doesn’t come from the fact that a convicted killer is collaborating on his own story, but instead from the calm, rational approach of the play's director and performers. Throughout these discussions, as Schau observes the various edits and creative liberties affecting this public presentation of his life’s story, he becomes a ghost who is both haunter and haunted. His reticence to participate in both the documentary and an impending public reading of his work (at one point, Schau himself tells the camera, “This is a bad idea”) offers an intriguing parallel to the ethical questions pondered by the Mungo Park creative team. Some may find the film a bit too removed or clinical in its approach, but there’s a reward in finding the tiny differences in Schau’s telling of the story and what’s put on stage. “What He Did” doesn’t posit Schau as a maltreated genius or a despised monster, but showing him exist in a space almost impossibly between those two. —*SG*

Broadcaster

Bell Media Keeps it Reel with Hot Docs Festival Partnership

April 27, 2016

As doc fans gear up for the 23rd installment of Hot Docs, the Canadian International Documentary Festival running April 28 – May 8, Bell Media announced today its expansive involvement. Bell Media has been a prominent sponsor of Hot Docs for more than 15 years, and this year's partnership continues the company's longstanding role as Presenting Partner with the return of the CraveTV Box Office at Hot Docs House, the Hot Docs Forum, the Bell Media Kickstart series, and the Hot Docs Short Film Pitch. Additional Bell Media presence includes the exhibition of Bell Media-backed feature-length and short Canadian documentary films screening at the Festival, and branded cross-promotion on leading video-streaming service CraveTV. As well, Bell Media executives will be on-hand during the Festival to offer expertise on various topics during industry sessions.

"Canadians love documentaries and Hot Docs is North America's premier celebration of the format," said Scott Henderson, Vice-President, Communications, Bell Media, and Hot Docs Board Member. "We are proud to support this incredible festival as well as many of the Canadian filmmakers whose works will debut to public and industry audiences. Congratulations to everyone involved on what will surely be a fantastic event."

Here is a complete run-down of Bell Media's involvement in this year's Hot Docs:

Presenting Partner Activations

Bell Media is the Presenting Partner of this year's Festival and has been a sponsor of Hot Docs for more than 15 years. Additional sponsorship elements of this year's Festival include: the CraveTV Box Office at Hot Docs House; the Hot Docs Forum, North America's most effective international documentary market and pitching event; the Bell Media Kickstart series, dynamic industry sessions that provide the essentials for emerging and mid-career doc-makers; and the Hot Docs Short Film Pitch, a BravoFACT-sponsored live pitch event.

Bell Media's support of Hot Docs extends to the organization's year-round initiatives such as Bell Media Best of Hot Docs, bringing festival hits to cities across Canada, and the Bell Media Hot Docs Showcase, which helps indie exhibitors across Canada show outstanding Hot Docs titles to their communities.

Bell Media-Supported Films and Filmmakers

Bell Media's premium pay TV network The Movie Network has commissioned two Canadian titles that will have their world premieres at this year's Festival.

Spirit Unforgettable, from Little Kingdom Productions, Project 10 and director Pete McCormack, follows the multi-Platinum winning band *Spirit of*

the West and lead singer John Mann, who at the age of 52 was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease. *Hip-Hop Evolution*, a Banger Films production from director Darby Wheeler, is a Special

Presentation at this year's Festival and follows critically acclaimed MC and journalist Shad Kabango who sets out to understand how Hip-Hop became the world's biggest music genre by meeting with the Djs and MCs who set the template for all to follow. Both TMN original documentaries will premiere later this summer and will join the Documentaries Collection on CraveTV following their Pay TV run.

Two short films supported by BravoFACT (Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent), the Bell Media fund dedicated to helping Canadian producers and directors who seek to create entertaining and engaging short-form content, will also bow at this year's Hot Docs. *Terranova Matadora* is a portrait of Canadian Carolyn Hayward, who was the highest-paid female bullfighter in the world, by her granddaughter, director Rhonda Buckley. *Conversations with a Dead Prime Minister*, from director Daniel Roher, follows two mediums who attempt to contact deceased Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King.

Another Bell Media supported Canadian filmmaker participating in this year's Hot Docs is acclaimed director Rama Rau, a graduate of the Bell Media Diverse Screenwriter Program, whose feature documentary *League of Exotique Dancers* screens as a Special Presentation on opening night.

Hot Docs-Branded Titles on CraveTV

CraveTV, sponsor of the Festival's Box Office at Hot Docs House for two years running, is also putting Hot Docs in the spotlight by branding festival titles as part of its popular Documentaries Collection on Canada's leading video-streaming platform. Thirteen titles streaming now on CraveTV, including acclaimed, award-winning documentaries from HBO and SHOWTIME, as well as CTV Canadian Original titles, have all played at either the Hot Docs festival or screened at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. More Hot Docs branded titles will come to CraveTV later this year.

Hot Docs Industry Events Featuring Bell Media Properties and Executives

Bell Media executives will share their expertise and participate in a wide range of industry panel discussions. This year's lineup includes a spotlight on Bell Media network Discovery with *Close Up With . . . Discovery Channel Canada*, and *Online Channel Surfing*, a panel discussion with leading digital networks including Bell Media's Mike Cosentino, Senior Vice-President, Programming, CTV Networks and CraveTV.

The Globe and Mail – April 28, 2016 (1 of 2)

The Apology and League of Exotique Dancers: Memoirs of women whose lives were bound by male sexual desire

April 28, 2016 by: Kate Taylor



The Apology
Directed by Tiffany Hsiung
Classification N/A; 105 min
4 stars

League of Exotique Dancers
Directed by Rama Rau
Classification N/A; 90 min
4 stars

As women age, they become invisible to the society around them. There are many heartbreaking moments in the National Film Board of Canada documentary *The Apology*; one occurs when Gil Won-Ok, a Korean woman in her 80s, reminds a group of teens that she was once the same age as they are now. It may seem to them, as it does to the viewer, almost impossible that this wrinkled, white-haired creature was also a girl, but it is crucial to remember Grandma Gil at many ages, for when she was all of 13, she was snatched from her family by Japanese soldiers and forced into sexual slavery for several years, an experience that cast a long shadow over the rest of her life.

The Apology is partly a documentary by director Tiffany Hsiung about that war crime – it is estimated that more than 200,000 women from Korea, China, the Philippines and Indonesia were enslaved by the occupying Japanese armies – but mainly it is a film about the incredible resilience of the survivors who have been petitioning the Japanese government for an apology and restitution since the stories of the so-called comfort women first came to light in the early 1990s. Their refusal to disappear is inspirational.

So, too, is the exuberant continuance of a happier group, the former strippers, now women in their 60s and 70s, who are the subject of another Canadian documentary, Rama Rau's *League of Exotique Dancers*, the opening-night film of the Hot Docs Festival in Toronto on Thursday. As they prepare to make their appearances at the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas, women such as Gina Bon Bon, Lovey Goldmine and Holiday O'Hara discuss how they entered the field and how they left it.

Some of them insist on the artistry of burlesque, a form of popular entertainment that was eclipsed in the 1980s by lap dancing, pole dancing and looser legislation governing porn cinemas; others acknowledge they are sex-trade workers. "It wasn't the symphony," says one. Some of them still work in the trade – there's a phone-sex worker, a club manager and a dominatrix – while others have blended into civilian life. All of them seem overjoyed at the opportunity to strut their stuff again, this time for a mixed audience that views burlesque as a lost art form and celebrates its camp.

In hindsight, the women all speak of their work as a kind of sexual liberation, a way to use their bodies to hold power in a man's world and earn a good living that didn't involve marriage and housework. Still, that empowerment clearly came at a price: Many of them discuss serious problems with drugs and alcohol.

If they were sexual objects in their heyday, their joyous reappearance now is a notable retort to the fetishization of young, female bodies as they reveal their sexiness through broad hips and sagging flesh. *The Apology*, on the other hand, ends without triumph: Two of the women interviewed died

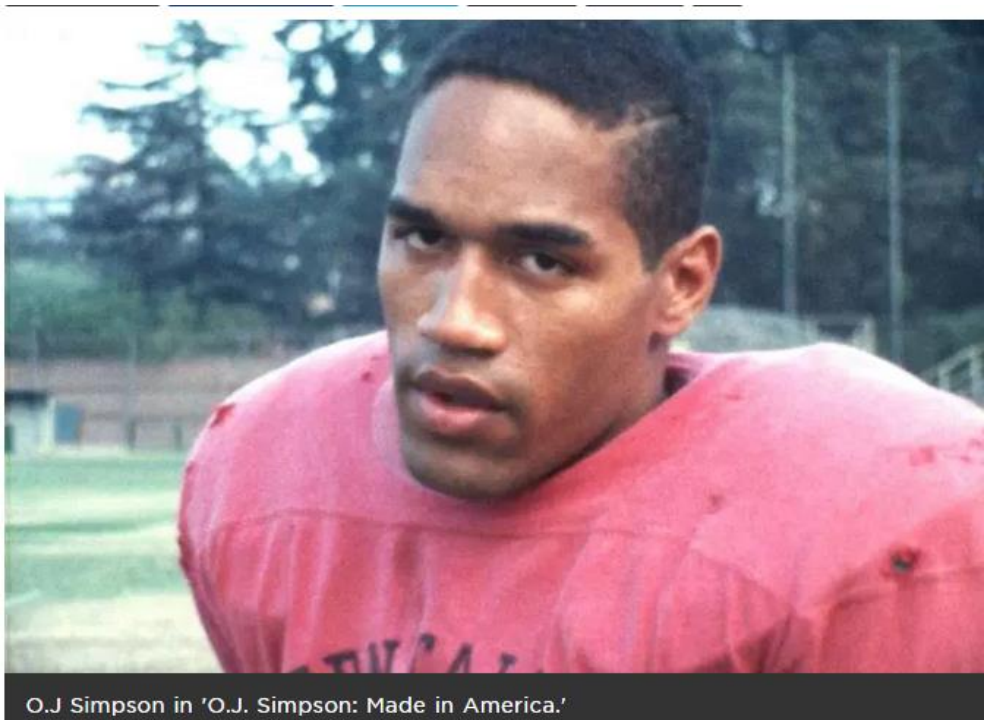
during the course of filming and Grandma Gil is visibly tiring of the fight. Perhaps not wishing to muddy the story, Hsiung does not mention the half-hearted apology and paltry compensation the Japanese did offer in later 2015, after the film had wrapped.

In all kinds of different circumstances and places, women lead lives bounded by male sexual desire. One former stripper jokes that she inherited her mother's long legs and needed to make a living; a Japanese politician refuses to retract his comment that the comfort women were necessary. Yet, in these films the anonymous men who took their pleasure are all long gone and what emerges powerfully is the insistence of these aging women that they are free and that they are themselves.

The Apology and League of Exotique Dancers both premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs in Toronto through May 8 (hotdocs.ca).

Hot Docs 2016: 13 documentaries to see this year

April 28, 2016 by: **Chris Jancelewicz**



O.J Simpson in 'O.J. Simpson: Made in America.'

Over the 23 years of its existence, Toronto's Hot Docs has grown from the biggestdocumentary film festival in Canada to become the largest documentary film festival in North America.

From 2,735 film submissions, this year's slate will present 232 titles from 51 countries in 12 screening programs, with work by female filmmakers representing close to 40 per cent of the 2016 festival.

Topics range from biopics about O.J. Simpson and wellness guru Tony Robbins to a close-up analysis of what the internet has done to our society at large, and whether or not it's ethically right to manufacture your baby's looks, sex and genetic makeup before birth.

READ MORE: *Vaxxed* filmmakers: 'This is not an anti-vaccination movie'

The stories presented at Hot Docs this year are very engaging; in fact, it's difficult to choose what to see. In order to help make your decision easier, here are some top docs from this year's fest.

League of Exotique Dancers

Everybody loves burlesque. It's impossible not to smile at the dancing, the boas, the makeup, the flair.

This year's Hot Docs opener is no exception, as we meet and follow burlesque dancers from its Golden Age as they're inducted into the Burlesque Hall of Fame. Yes, that exists, and these women haven't lost one iota of their magic.



Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru

Tony Robbins, the motivational-speaking superstar who was all over your TV for years, is still somewhat of a mystery. His methods are also clandestine. While this movie doesn't necessarily dig very deeply in a critical fashion, it's still fascinating to see what Robbins' life was like in the height of his heyday.

[No trailer available for this title yet]

Hip-Hop Evolution

From Canuck music documentary filmmakers Scot Macfadyen and Sam Dunn (along with another director Darby Wheeler), this engrossing doc is narrated by CBC's Shad, who walks us through the streets of New York City — the birthplace of hip-hop — to discover its roots and beginnings. Bonus: great music throughout. *[No trailer available for this title yet]*

Southwest of Salem

Many people are calling this the new *Making a Murderer*, but it's not quite the same. Yes, it deals with four wrongly imprisoned women (sent to jail for being lesbians, essentially), but the story is more insidious, and it's abundantly clear that the women were committed before being proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.



O.J. Simpson: Made in America

There has been much fascination with O.J. lately, and it's easy to see why. Taking a look at the life of Simpson, who went from the ultimate success of his football career and Hollywood life to the darkness of murder suspicion and his eventual incarceration, it's impossible to look away.



Spirit Unforgettable
Bring the tissues for this one. This doc focuses on the lead singer of B.C. band Spirit of the West, John Mann, who was recently diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease. We follow the band (as well as Mann and his wife, Jill) as it preps for its final show at Toronto's Massey Hall.



Future Baby
Technologies in fertility and human reproduction are rapidly advancing. These days, it's not unusual to hear about international surrogates, in-vitro fertilization or "designing" children. So imagine, not too far into the future, how likely it is that people will be literally constructing their children before they're even conceived.



Obit

New York Times fans, this is your documentary. You'd think the life of an obituary writer would be all about death and sadness, but instead, it's actually a profession that uncovers the lives of interesting, diverse people. Watch as this rare breed researches and composes little masterpieces about the dearly departed.

[No trailer available for this title yet]

Off the Rails

If you don't know the story of Darius McCollum, you will soon. The New York City man has Asperger syndrome and is obsessed with trains, so much so that he's been arrested more than 30 times for impersonating drivers and stealing transit vehicles. A spellbinding look into mental illness and fixation.



Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World
The latest from director Werner Herzog, this close-up examination of the internet is as wonderful as it is scary. While the interconnectedness computers have given us is a valuable thing for humanity, it also has its detrimental qualities too. Told in chapters, this isn't a doc for tech and futurism nuts to miss.



Life, Animated
This doc focuses on an autistic man who had difficulty communicating while growing up … at least, until

he was exposed to Disney films. He began to memorize characters and their speeches, and he and his family would sing the songs to one another, establishing a deeper connection via Disney music. A film about the power of art. *[No trailer available for this title yet]*

Check It

Life in Washington, D.C., is tough, especially for those folks stuck in the cycle of poverty. It's even harder for gay and trans black youth, who've banded together to combat bullies in the first-ever gay "gang." The gang, called Check It, protects its members as they try to navigate their way to a better life.



After Circus

Where does one go after they "retire" from circus life? You find out in this heartwarming-yet-heartbreaking doc, which looks at a vibrant community of ex-circus performers in Sarasota, Florida.



Hot Docs runs from April 28 – May 8 in Toronto. Visit the Hot Docs website for tickets and showtimes.

NATIONAL POST

‘It’s difficult to be a human being and complicated’: At 93, television producer Norman Lear still gets it



David Berry | April 28, 2016 2:21 PM ET

More from David Berry | @pleasuremotors



AP Photo/Producers Guild of America, Todd Williamson

Norman Lear is getting ready to go to the television studio. There was a time when the only thing surprising about that statement was that Lear wasn’t already there.

In his ’70s heyday, he wasn’t just making the smartest, most tuned-in and tuned-into sitcoms on television: he was making almost all of them. With a hand in either creating or writing All In The Family, Maude, Good Times, The Jeffersons and Sanford and Son, among others, Lear’s average workday could have doubled as a list of the year’s best shows.



FilesThe cast of One Day At a Time.

At 93, though, one of the smartest and most outspoken television creators the world has ever seen hasn't had his hands in anything for more than 20 years. Though he's kept plenty busy with political activism and general elder-statesmanship, collecting lifetime achievement awards at an annual pace; Lear is being pulled back in by Netflix's recent decision to reboot his '70s/'80s staple One Day At a Time, which he will help oversee, if not actually run.

It's some testament to Lear's vision that even one of his not-legendary sitcoms can still find some relevance more than 30 years later. Renowned for what you might call kitchen table comedies, where characters hashed out the headlines and undercurrents of their day with witty one-liners and almost unprecedented pathos, Lear's work can still feel bolder and more engaged with the world as it stands than almost any of the shows that now rule the airwaves.

Not that Lear would necessarily be the first to say that.

"There's nothing difficult about adapting a story about a mother and two children," he explains over the phone, a creeping smile almost audible. "They exist everywhere, even this many years later."

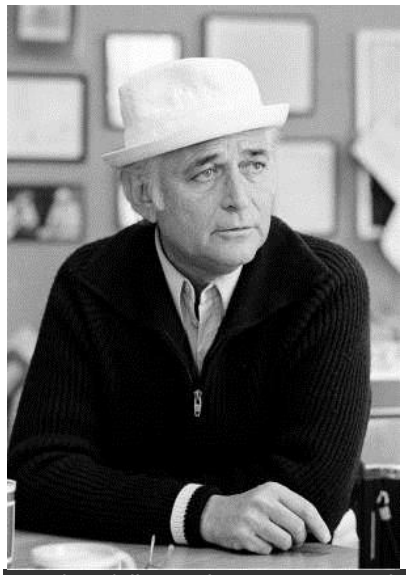


Mark Davis/Getty Images for TV LandLear accepts the Impact Icon Award onstage during the 2016 TV Land Icon Awards.

One Day At a Time was, of course, about a fair bit more than that, although even in jest Lear is speaking to the elemental quality that gave his shows their verve: they got into the messiness of people, made the television feel like it was a reflection of what was going in the living room at a time when it was more often a portal to wacky antics and scenarios that never happened off sound stages.

“If I wasn’t living it, it was a family down the street. If it wasn’t the family down the street, it was something in the newspaper,” Lear says about his close-to-the-couch style. “We were all paying a lot of attention to the papers, to our own families, what our kids were going through, what our wives or husbands were going through. What could be simpler, it seems to me, than paying attention to what’s around us?”

For someone who’s always been attuned to the world, though, Lear has only recently begun turning that rather keen eye in on himself. Though he long had plans for some kind of memoir, it wasn’t until 2014’s Even This I Get to Experience that he actually let people get a glimpse of his own life, from a not precisely rough but still troubled childhood, through his period on top of television and beyond. Even This, in turn, informed the documentary Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You, having its Canadian debut at the Hot Docs festival this weekend.



AP Photo/FileMarch 29, 1979: Lear in his L.A. office.

Both are a rare and refreshing glimpse at the man, with plenty of insight into where his ridiculous-humanist worldview came from. Lear’s father — long thought to have been the inspiration for Archie Bunker — emerges as a particularly wry influence: a small-time con man who served time in prison, he nonetheless left Lear with some insight into the push-and-pull of loving somebody.

“My father was a loveable, complicated guy,” Lear explains, acknowledging the influence he had on Bunker. “You know we went to prison when I was 19 years old, he never told the truth enough, he was a rascal — and the son loved him for it. What can I say?”

If his father gave Lear some basis for understanding just how multifaceted the human animal could be, though, he says that looking back on his life has been an even grander realization, something that more than satisfies his restlessly curious mind.

“I find, at this age, it’s amazing just how complicated and rich and interesting the journey is, just into one’s self. You mean this is who I was when I did that? New insights appear all the time, and that journey never seems to end,” he explains. “And once you realize you’re on it? Holy s—t — how much there is to learn about just yourself! We’re very complicated — it’s difficult to be a human being, and complicated. The kick is in that.”



AP Photo, FileSept. 18, 1978: Jean Stapleton, seated left, and Carroll O'Connor, seated right, hold their Emmys as they pose with Rob Reiner, Lear and Mort Lachman.

It says something about Lear’s personality that living in this difficulty and complication is a source of wonder, and even more so a source of humour. Lear — no less in person than in his work — seems to revel in holding these messy forces in superposition, making each one deeper and richer for the presence of the others. That, according to him, is something that he didn’t really have to look for: that’s just life.

“The foolishness of the human condition exists in any tragic condition. It starts with the amount of holes in our body; that’s not serious, that’s funny,” he says, before referring, true to form, to an experience he just had at the funeral of a friend. “You’re standing at a funeral, and they’re lowering the casket in, and the person that’s weeping the hardest also has to scratch her ass. So you’re standing behind her and you watch her scratch her ass and cry. You cannot avoid knowing that’s funny, in a tragic moment.

“Boy, if anybody told me I was going to go there today, in this conversation,” he adds, trailing off with a laugh.

He doesn’t have too much more time to think about it, though. He’s got to get to the studio, after all.

Director revisits exodus from Quebec in documentary

John Walker's Quebec My Country Mon Pays has its world premiere at Hot Docs on April 30.



John Walker with Denys Arcand in Walker's film Quebec My Country Mon Pays. (Katerine Giguere)

By **MARTIN KNELMAN**Entertainment Columnist

Fri., April 29, 2016

Many provocative questions are raised in the documentary *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*, which will have its world premiere at Hot Docs on Saturday.

But it was an unasked question that kept me wondering: Why hasn't there been a movie chronicling the mass exodus of English-speaking Canadians from Quebec made before now?

The exodus started four decades ago and eventually close to 500,000 people who had considered Quebec their home for generations left the province. Many of them took Highway 401 to Toronto.

John Walker, a veteran National Film Board of Canada director and writer, was among them and so were his parents.

But in 2008, when Walker's father died, there was suddenly an urgent question: Where was the family going to bury him?

"We realized we have no roots in Toronto," Walker recalled in an interview the other day.

His parents had been in exile for almost 30 years. Montreal was their real home. And that was the place the filmmaker's father was returned for burial.

That decision marked a turning point for the family.

"It brought all of this back," Walker explains. "To me, the exodus was a story I wanted to tell. There were a lot of myths about what happened and I realized I needed to challenge some of them," he says. For instance, there was a belief that only rich people from Westmount left and the total numbers were underestimated.

"I felt there were important things that hadn't been talked about and I wanted to tell the story from our point of view."

That's exactly what he does in this feature-length doc, with the help of many people who lived through it, including poets, politicians and filmmakers on both sides of the linguistic and cultural divide.

The future film director grew up in the Town of Mount Royal, where most of the neighbours were Jewish.

I happened to watch this fascinating and sad film during Passover, so it struck me as a contemporary postscript to the flight of the Israelites from Egypt thousands of years ago. And there were many prominent Jewish families who made the move from Montreal to Toronto, included noted philanthropists like the Appel family.

Looking at old family pictures now, Walker sees an innocence in his own boyhood face.

"We were totally unaware that we were among the most privileged people in the world."

But everything was about to change, starting when he was an adolescent in the mid-1960s.

That's when the first bombs went off in Westmount mailboxes near the school where John Walker's grandmother taught.

It was then that he started to feel the uncomfortable sense of being part of a minority group.

"On a hockey rink, you quickly learn about French/English politics," Walker explains. "I had no idea why the French didn't like us."

Still, this was a quiet revolution. The only violence in the early days was over hockey: the 1955 riot at the Forum in response to the suspension of Maurice "Rocket" Richard.

During the postwar period of the late 1940s and '50s, the fundamental change of attitude for most French-speaking Quebec was not antagonism to English-speaking neighbours, at least not initially. Instead the negative reaction was directed at the church and the provincial government.

Thousands of people stopped going to church and felt liberated from the iron rule of Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis. They were ready to embrace a new cause.

Thanks to the federal Massey Report in 1951, there was a push to create a Canadian culture so we could tell the difference between ourselves and citizens of the United States.

A key role was played by the National Film Board, and the NFB's move from Ottawa to Montreal in 1956 resulted in the birth of Quebec cinema.

"It was a place where intellectuals and artists could get work," says Walker. It was a haven for freedom of expression, where it was safe to defy Duplessis.

Ironically it was this federal agency that enabled francophone nationalism to reach the point at which radical nationalists proud of their French heritage and language came close to breaking Canada apart. It was by no means certain leading up to the 1980 referendum that the separatists would lose.

Movies, especially *Le chat dans le sac*, a 1964 feature made at the NFB by Gilles Groulx, helped create a mythology, an identity and a back story for those who grew up in the province speaking and living entirely in French, while feeling surrounded by millions of others in North America who spoke only English.

The radical movement stopped seeming hip and relatively harmless in 1970 when British diplomat James Cross was kidnapped and Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte was killed by the terrorist Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). Pierre Trudeau, then prime minister, imposed the War Measures Act.

In 1976, nationalists danced in the streets of Montreal when René Lévesque and the Parti Quebecois came to power.

Before long, the PQ government introduced Bill 101, making French the only official language of the province. The bill was notorious to English-speaking Quebecers. It was clear the party was over for people like the Walkers.

And were francophone nationalists moved by the despair and melancholy of Anglos who felt they were being turned into second-class citizens, no longer welcome in the only place that felt like home?

As Denys Arcand, the elder statesman of Quebec cinema, tells Walker on camera: “They couldn’t care less.”

The major change, he explains, was there were more jobs open to French workers and more houses available in Westmount at lower prices.

John Walker’s ancestors had come from Scotland and Ireland, and had considered Quebec home for 150 years on one side and 250 years on the other.

“My parents moved just before the 1980 referendum. It felt like the breakup of our family.”

It was a very emotional time for his father, a graphic artist who at age 52 found he could no longer get work.

Walker’s older sister, Joanne, returned to Montreal after a short stay in Toronto and is fiercely committed to staying put where she feels she belongs.

Walker’s parents and his younger sister stayed in Toronto. For years so did so did the director. But in recent times Walker has been living and working in Halifax, and spends time in Montreal.

In the unforgettable finale of Walker’s doc, he and his sisters have brought their mother back from Toronto to live in Montreal. She pays a visit to her husband’s grave. Instead of being a gloomy scene, joy and relief balance the sadness.

“I don’t remember seeing it before,” says Mrs. Walker. “I should be crying,” she tells her children. Instead, she’s laughing. The sense we are left with is that she feels overwhelmingly comforted by the awareness of being home at last.

League of Exotique Dancers opens Hot Docs film festival

Stereotypes about age, beauty and objectification drop like feather boas and sequined gowns in Toronto director Rama Rau's Hot Docs-opening film, League of Exotique Dancers.

By **LINDA BARNARD** Staff Reporter

Thu., April 28, 2016

Camille Sands is a 69-year-old Florida great-grandmother who drives a hearse instead of a car, has a fondness for boots and skull-embellished clothing, struggles not to curse and is once again stripping as the stage persona she adopted 48 years ago: Camille 2000, "the girl for yesterday, today and tomorrow."

She's among the women profiled in Toronto director Rama Rau's Hot Docs-opening film*League of Exotique Dancers*, where stereotypes about age, beauty and objectification drop like sequined costumes and feather boas.

The documentary has its world premiere Thursday.

As much a history of burlesque as a collection of personal stories of challenge and triumph wrapped in a powerful feminist message, there are equal amounts of peel and reveal as outspoken tassel-twirling trailblazers, now in their 60s, 70s and beyond, come out of retirement to perform as honourees at the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas.

Sands and 68-year-old Judith Stein of Nelson, B.C., known as the "Grand Beaver of Canadian Burlesque," all but took over a dining room at the swank Windsor Arms Hotel Tuesday for a media day ahead of the film's premiere. They shared stories, flirted with the waiter and posed provocatively (with a wink) swathed in heavy leopard-print curtains.

Rau, who was at Hot Docs last year with *No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story*, said she's only interested in making films that deal with race or gender issues. She was inspired to make the doc by her obsessions with both vaudeville and legendary stripper Gypsy Rose Lee (legendary peelers Lili St. Cyr and Rose La Rose also appear in the doc), ending up with "so many amazing stories" when she spent time with the hall of famers.

Toronto director Rama Rau says she wanted to explore aging and beauty in her documentary 'League of Exotique Dancers.' The film opens at Hot Docs on Thursday.

Take African American dancer Toni Elling, who helped break the colour barrier in clubs and whose elegant "parading, posing and peeling" could have been lifted from a production of the musical and film based on Lee's life, *Gypsy*.

The women were taking their clothes off, but it was on their terms.

"I refuse to believe men were in charge," says Holiday O'Hara in the doc. "I never believed that."

"I just missed that generation, which I regret," said Rau. "This is the generation of change and, for me, it was important not just to remind us of the rich history that was but also what happened to the women today. I think it's very important in the sense of getting a historical sense of entertainment."

Rau used an all-female crew to make the film, including cinematographer Iris Ng.

"To me, just going back and exploring all this was so amazing," added Rau, who was grateful "to be given the chance to see vintage burlesque and explore the history and actually meet the women."

"Camille and I were the generation when it was making a transition from the burlesque show with Gypsy Rose Lees and the Tempest Storms (the 88-year-old burlesque legend will also be at Hot Docs with the doc *Tempest Storm*)," explained Stein.



Canadian burlesque dancer Judith Stein, 68, gets the audience to pull off her trailing striped trousers to "Sam, You Made the Pants Too Long" as part of her act. (Storyline Entertainment)

The peelers took over from vaudeville, said Stein. But they kept the comedy, which was also a big part of burlesque. Stein's act included enlisting the audience to pull off her trailing striped trousers to "Sam, You Made the Pants Too Long."

While Stein worked mostly in bars and "beer parlours," Sands was a feature performer at burlesque theatres, working with elaborate costumes. Some dancers worked with a live band, the drummer hitting the snare to accentuate each bump and grind.

Around 1980, the business changed. Nobody wanted the slow build of an elaborate striptease or 20-minute acts with fancy costumes. “We were up against full frontal nudity” and stripper poles, said Stein.

It made Camille 2000’s 1970s pasties and net panties seem quaint. She retaliated by crafting an “aggressive” performance art strip show: a tribute to the Marquis de Sade that featured hot wax and provocative knife play.

The film often touches on feminism and empowerment, including a scene where Stein asserts that women of her generation gave today’s women their freedom.

“Feminism wasn’t about burning your bra and not shaving your legs; feminism was (about) shaving your legs and working in a bar as a sex object but knowing that you were and not trading your p---- and your soul for a wedding ring,” Stein says onscreen.



Judith Stein in her heydey in the 1970s. Burlesque's renewed popularity with young people encouraged Stein to get back into it in recent years. (Courtesy of Judith Stein)

Nobody has the right to judge her choices about how she earned a living, said Stein — and it was a good one, too, about $500 a week when she started out in 1972.

“I’ve supported this cause and been part of this cause for the right to choose my life and you’re telling me there are certain things I cannot do?” said Stein.

“Excuse me. It’s my life, it’s my body. Isn’t that what that was about?”

Shane Smith, Hot Docs director of programming, said the “celebratory story of powerful women” is a film that will resonate with an opening-night audience as it explores the stories of dancers who “took hold of opportunities that were presented to them and made the most of them at a time when there weren’t a lot of opportunities for women.”

Now burlesque is hot again, said Stein, embraced by a new generation of young dancers. Invited to join them, she started to dance with local burlesque reviews about seven years ago. And she has a home-based business sewing demure flannel nighties.

For Sands, who was reluctant to return to the stage, it took some convincing. When she did, it was to perform a lavish tribute to her late partner, a moving moment in the documentary.

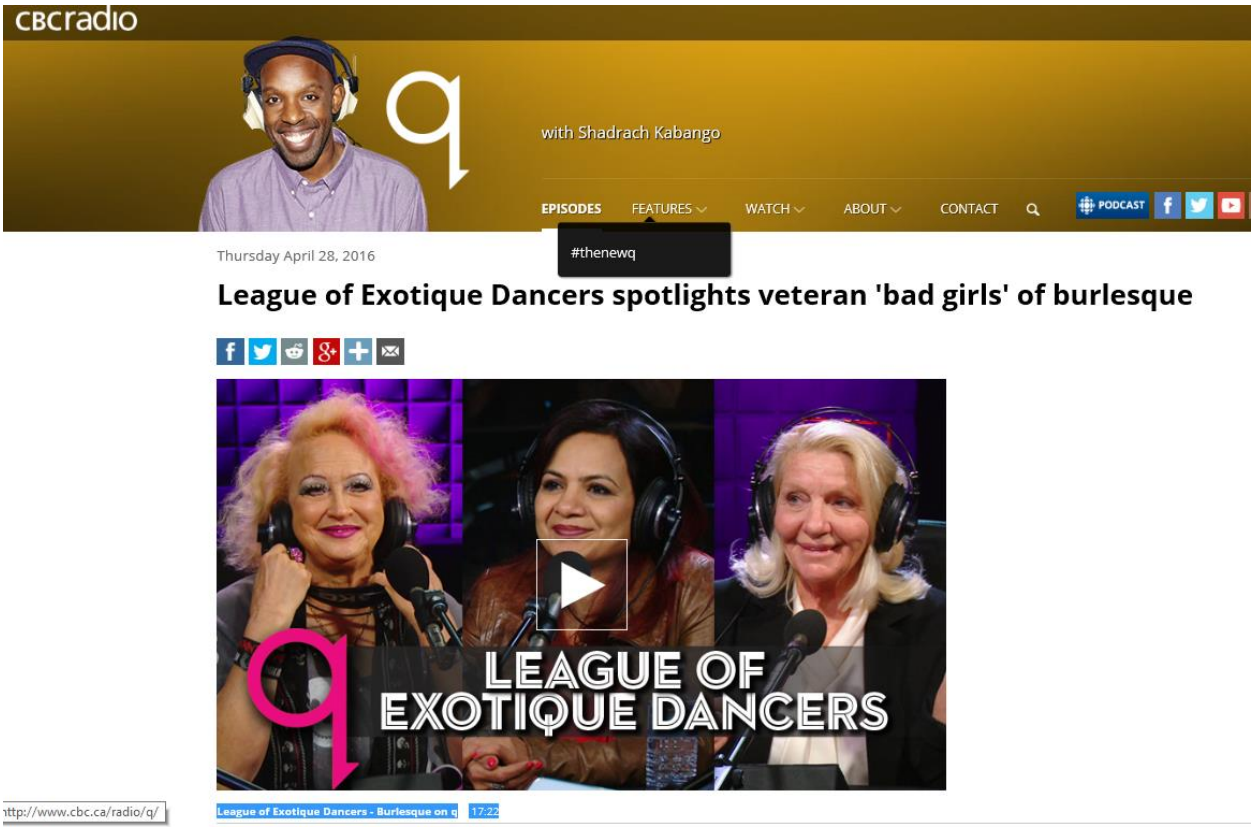
“For 10 years they asked me . . . and I refused to perform,” said Sands.

“I wanted to be remembered how I was . . . I look in the mirror and I think, ‘When did this fat old broad take over?’ I know I don’t look the same, but inside I’m still that young burlesque dancer and it’s never left me. I’m very sure of myself. I’m a very confident woman. I know I’m not 20 years old anymore, but I know I still got it.”

More than 200 films are screening at this year’s Hot Docs festival, which runs until May 8. Go to http://hotdocs.ca/ hotdocs.caEND for more information.



Judith Stein, left, and Camille Sands are both profiled in "League of Exotique Dancers." Stein is known as the “Grand Beaver of Canadian Burlesque,” while Sands adopted the stage persona “the girl for yesterday, today and tomorrow.” (Vince Talotta / Toronto Star) | Order this photo



League of Exotique Dancers - Burlesque on q 17:22

Listen 19:24

- **League of Exotique Dancers spotlights veteran 'bad girls' of burlesque**
- Celebrated writer Junot Diaz on our collective debt to society
- q playlist: Sloan's Chris Murphy moves from one chord to another
- **FULL EPISODE**

Feathers and pasties and stockings — *oh m*y! A new documentary, *League of Exotique Dancers* takes audiences inside the golden era of burlesque, which stormed Las Vegas in the '50s, '60s and '70s.

The film, which opens the Hot Docs festival in Toronto tonight, spotlights the legendary stars who took centre stage — including burlesque hall of famers **Camille 2000** and **Judith Stein**.



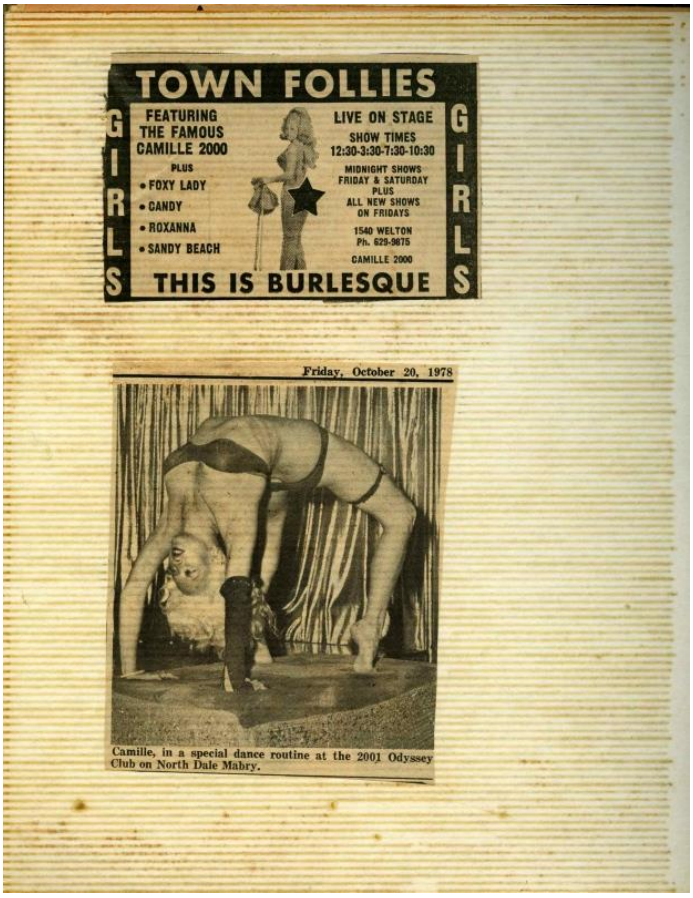
The colourful Judith Stein is among the burlesque hall of famers featured in the new documentary, League of Exotique Dancers. (League of Exotique Dancers/Storyline Entertainment)

Today Camille, Judith and director Rama Rau join guest host Gill Deacon to discuss the glitzy industry, the gritty problems that lurked just beneath the surface, and why they bill the film as "an alternate history of feminism".

WEB EXTRA | Watch the trailer for *League of Exotique Dancers.*



Plus, browse a series of archival portraits of the burlesque dancers featured in the film.



Archival riches featuring Camille 2000, one of the subjects of the new documentary, League of Exotique Dancers. (League of Exotique Dancers/Storyline Entertainment)



Holiday O'Hara is another one of the the burlesque hall of famers featured in League of Exotique Dancers. (League of Exotique Dancers/Storyline Entertainment)



It wasn't all glitz: Hall of Fame burlesque dancer Judith Stein recalls performing on crates in cramped beer halls. (League of Exotique Dancers/Storyline Entertainment)



Judith Stein and her boa. (League of Exotique Dancers/Storyline Entertainment)

The Globe and Mail – April 28, 2016 (1 of 2)

Musical docudrama Aim for the Roses pays tribute to Canadian daredevil

April 28, 2016 by: **MARSHA LEDERMAN**



It's hard to know whose ambition is most audacious/outrageous: Canadian stuntman Ken Carter, who announced plans in 1976 to jump over the St. Lawrence River in a jet-powered car; composer and bassist Mark Haney, who, more than 30 years later, decided to make a concept album for double bass about the attempt; or director John Bolton, who decided to make a film about them both that would include everything from actual documentary footage to song-and-dance numbers featuring the likes of Evel Knievel (or at least an actor portraying him).

"I was pitching it as a film about an album about a stunt," Bolton says, from his home in Vancouver, on the new documentary *Aim for the Roses*. "Right from the beginning it felt that Mark was able to locate what was not only ridiculous but magnificent about what Ken tried to do, and his album is ridiculous and magnificent. So I set out to make a film that was also ridiculous and magnificent."
The film – what Bolton calls "a musical docudrama" – has its world premiere at the Hot Docs documentary film festival in Toronto May 1 and then opens the DOXA documentary film festival in Vancouver May 5.

Carter, who was born in Montreal, started stunt jumping at 16. His crowning achievement was to be the river jump – which would see him zoom over the St. Lawrence from the Canadian side in his rocket car, travel about 300 feet in the air and land on an island on the U.S. side in a field of roses planted for the occasion. Landing in the island's trees would surely have been disastrous, the movie explains. So the plan was to aim for the roses.

He had a specially made car, a 1,500-foot runway and ramp and built up lots of hype. He even attracted Knievel to the site – who expressed concerns about its viability. "Looks like a dangerous jump to me, boy," the world-famous daredevil told Carter, shaking his head. "You got no elevation, you got no room for error. If you come down in that water, you better have somebody get you out, get you out in a hurry." Carter did not know how to swim.

If you're not aware of what happened, I won't spoil it here, but will fast-forward to Haney.

In about 2003, Haney found in his then father-in-law's guest bedroom a VHS tape of Robert Fortier's 1981 NFB documentary *The Devil at Your Heels*, about Carter's attempt.
"I was really captivated and, right from the first time I watched it, I was so struck by the idea of the roses as a landing pad."

The idea to make a concept album about it, to be called *Aim for the Roses*, crystallized in 2008. Initially a project Haney insisted could be completed in eight days, the album in fact took 2 1/2 years to write and record.

The recording – layers and layers of double bass – was organized around a musical representation of 499 digits of pi for solo double bass, with each digit of pi given a duration and pitch based on its number.

It was also made with the help, Haney explains in the film, of Carter himself – contacted by a psychic during a seance. "[She] contacted Ken Carter for me after I completed the album to make sure I had his blessing and that he was happy with what I had done," he explains in the film. "[She] informed me that in fact Ken had worked on the album with me. He was basically my spirit guide through the music."

It was released in 2010 and lauded by critics.

"Employing dialogue and a spare, mesmeric double-bass soundtrack, Haney makes his own unpromising leap, to tell a bizarre story bizarrely," wrote The Globe and Mail's Brad Wheeler in a 3 1/2 (out of four) star review.

Bolton, who attended the album launch at Vancouver's planetarium, was struck by the album's ingenuity.

"I continue to be amazed by its beauty, by its depth, by its form, by its complexity, its wit, its power, all of those things," Bolton, 39, says. "So that's the foundation of everything [in the film]."

Bolton had never heard of Carter before but Haney's concept album got him thinking about the possibility of making a film about the mad stunt attempt.

It was an outside-the-box idea with a bizarre target audience: fans of stunt driving and fans of contemporary classical music.

"The trick was finding overlap between people who were into both," Bolton says. "We used to joke about a Venn diagram … and how it wasn't actually a Venn diagram; there was no overlap, just two circles."

For the film, he constructed a replica of the runway and ramp on the banks of the Fraser River in Mission, B.C. – and on one particularly harrowing shoot, the top of the ramp became a stage for Haney and guitarist David Gannett, who also co-produced, mixed and engineered the record.

Part documentary, part re-enactment, part music video, the film is a bizarre, wild, amazing ride.

"In both Ken's and Mark's cases, those were the biggest projects they'd ever attempted, and this was the biggest project I'd ever attempted," says Bolton, who also travelled to Morrisburg, Ont., for the film, where he interviewed a couple of superfans who run the Ken Carter Preservation Society.

"It's sort of a celebration of Canadian nerdism – highbrow Canadian nerdism in B.C. and lowbrow Canadian nerdism in Ontario," Bolton says. "I realized that … all of the characters in the film have a lot in common, even with me – and that is obsession."

Aim for the Roses *is at Hot Docs May 1, 2 and 6 (*hotdocs.ca*); and at DOXA May 5 and 15 (*doxafestival.ca*).*

The Globe and Mail – April 28, 2016 (1 of 2)

Werner Herzog explores perils of the Internet in new doc Lo and Behold

April 28, 2016 by: KATE TAYLOR



The great German auteur and documentarian Werner Herzog is a master of the startling image that sticks in the mind long after the lights have come up. His admirers are unlikely to be able to banish those monkeys who crawled all over the Spaniards' raft in the final desperate scene of his 1972 feature *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, nor forget the experience of seeing prehistoric cave paintings in 3-D in his 2010 documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*.

And yet in his new film, *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World*, it is something utterly banal, a few plates of pastries sitting on a kitchen counter, that proves oddly persistent, uncomfortably turning real victims of cyberaggression into characters in a Herzogian drama.

Lo and Behold, making its Canadian premiere this week at Hot Docs, is a film about the past, present and future of the Internet in which Herzog speaks with the enthusiastic researchers who pioneered networked computers and the ones who are now working on artificial intelligence. But he also examines the dark side of the connected world. Specifically, in one scene, he films the family of Nikki Catsouras, an 18-year-old Californian who was almost beheaded in a fatal car accident in 2006. After two emergency dispatchers circulated gruesome images of her body to friends, the photos went viral, to the continuing horror and anguish of her bereaved parents and three sisters.

Herzog uses the Catsouras case as a lesson about the perils of anonymity, instantaneity and global reach, but the way in which the family is filmed seems to contradict the sympathy expressed by the director (whose voice can often be heard during his conversations with his subjects). Only the parents speak, in painfully repressed tones, as the three sisters, all dressed in black, sit grimly around a granite counter incongruously laden with generous plates of muffins and croissants. The effect of that silent chorus and the uneaten food (one can guess it may have been prepared by the family for the film crew) is creepy, creating a histrionic atmosphere well suited to the grisly story but that does the people themselves no favours.

Herzog, who insists that he is not a journalist and will not use the word "interview" to describe his working process, recently told The New Republic that he loves everyone with whom he speaks in his film. He's got a funny way of showing it.

Of course, there is a prosaic reason for Herzog's reinvention of himself an American documentarian: The kind of big-budget European auteur cinema in which he first made his mark barely exists any more. When the filmmaker does still produce features – his most recent, *Queen of the Desert*, was a poorly received drama, starring Nicole Kidman as the British Arabist Gertrude Bell, that has yet to be distributed in North America – they are in English, not German. Since *Grizzly Man* in 2005, his current reputation lies entirely with his unusual docs.

They are unique films because the German auteur's re-emergence as a documentarian also makes a lot of artistic sense.

In his features, films such as *Aguirre* or its thematic sibling, *Fitzcarraldo,* from 1982, he depicted monomaniacal men pushed to the limits of sanity by their own grand schemes and, notoriously, pushed the volatile actor Klaus Kinski to his limits to create these characters.

Art and life seemed crazily intertwined in these projects and a documentary such as *Grizzly Man* felt like an extension of that modus operandi. That film was a project that simply cut out the middle man – fiction – as it turned the video diary of the increasingly erratic bear activist Timothy Treadwell into another portrait of obsession. Treadwell, who was killed by the bears he swore to protect, seemed tailor-made for Herzog, who depicted him as a delusional amateur with a death wish, like some real-life Aguirre.

Herzog followed *Grizzly Man* with the sometimes surreal *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, which speculated on the motivations behind prehistoric art, and*Into the Abyss*, a documentary about killers on death row that wondered what it felt like to know the exact date of your demise. These docs are the creations of a singular vision that not only rejects any notion of journalistic objectivity, but also doesn't fit the model of point-of-view documentary; Herzog is not making arguments nor assembling evidence so much as he is ruminating on chosen themes the way he previously did in features.

The difficulty in *Lo and Behold* is that his philosophizing – "Does the Internet dream of itself?" he asks – leaves you wondering how much to trust the new film. It is a fascinating portrait of the Internet's rise and a thoughtful warning about its failings, but it is also an alarmist documentary in which Chicago astronomer Lucianne Walkowicz talks at length about solar flares that might knock out all power – and thus all connectivity – on Earth. Would the results really be as disastrous as Herzog suggests? Certainly no journalist could get away with showing images of the flooding in New York after Hurricane Sandy to illustrate an entirely hypothetical calamity. Good thing Herzog isn't one.

The Globe and Mail – April 28, 2016 (1 of 2)

Is virtual reality the future of documentaries?

April 28, 2016 by: **SIMON HOUPT**



It may be wrong to prosecute the young, but that's what Hot Docs will do on Tuesday, when it brings together two high-tech authorities to stage a mock trial of virtual reality, the heavily hyped technology that is still in its creative infancy. Even as Hot Docs shows off more than a dozen virtual-reality or 360-degree video experiences – including The Globe's *Surviving Solitary*project – the festival will allow VR itself to stand accused of falsely presenting itself as the future of the documentary form. In the VR on Trial conference event, Ana Serrano, chief digital officer of the Canadian Film Centre, will play prosecutor against defence counsel Jessica Brillhart, the principal filmmaker for VR at Google. We spoke with each of them to get a preview of their arguments.

Ms. Serrano, why do you hate VR?
Serrano: Oh my gosh, I don't!

So why are you prosecuting it, counsellor?
Serrano: I'm hating on it being "the future of everything." I think our media have become more immersive over time – from when we were in caves, sharing stories orally, all the way up to now, where we feel physically transported into some kind of virtualized environment. I think putting all our emphasis on essentially dumb pieces of technology that make up immersive media is not a good way for us to be thinking about how to construct the kinds of storytelling experiences we want to have in the future.

I'd like you to prove it's been overhyped.
Serrano: I think by framing arguments like, "The future of the documentary is VR"

Have you really heard that?
Serrano: I'll give you an example. [Filmmaker] Chris Milk, in his, I don't know, one-million-viewership TED Talk, he calls VR "an empathy engine." It's ridiculous!

What's wrong with calling it an "empathy engine?"
Serrano: What makes VR a dumb set of tools is that it essentially privileges physical location as a way for us to contextualize and create meaning. When we think of being in a place – of course we're in a physical location, but we typically have a much more layered context to what that location means. So, if we're in our [childhood] home, it looks like our old home, but we also know it as the place where we might have played ball, or the place where my mother would sing to me.

Over the past few months, we've seen a number of VR experiences that have sought to transport viewers into the lives of various dispossessed peoples. Don't you think VR can do what the best docs do: make us intimately feel others' experiences and lives?
Serrano: I think VR is a short-term novelty. People may feel, "Oh! Now I know what it feels like to be a Syrian refugee!" But if you just think about it for, like, a couple of seconds – no, you don't know what it's like to be a Syrian refugee. There's a lot more about it than just seeing where they live.

Thank you, counsellor. Ms. Brillhart, why do you love VR?
Brillhart: It's forcing me to rewire myself creatively, which is invigorating. It's exciting and frustrating and crazy all at the same time.

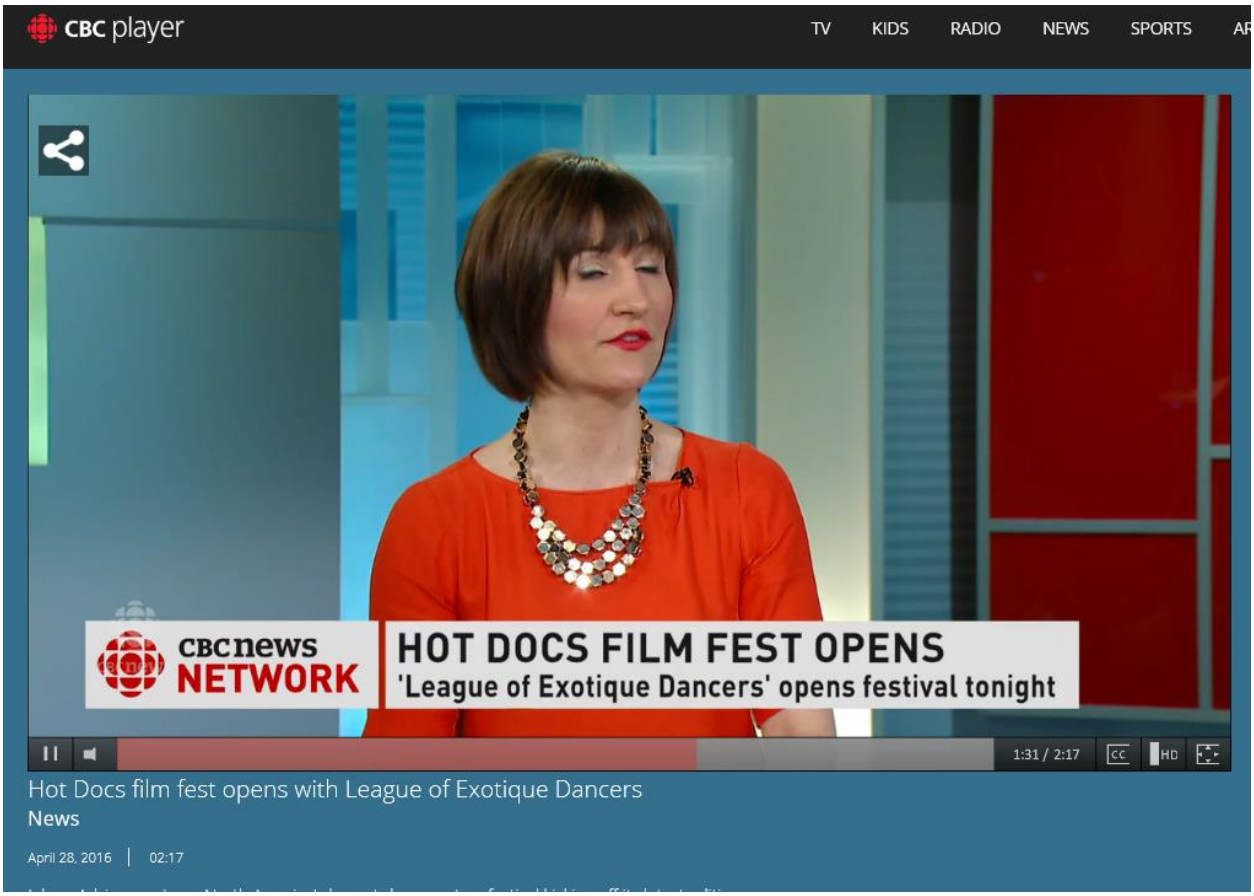
How so?
Brillhart: Film had 100 years to figure out its language, right? You go to school, you learn about the language, there are books about it, people tell you what to do – you can work within those confines, and it's fine. But with VR, that stuff doesn't necessarily all apply.

So there's a lot of trial – no pun intended, counsellor – and error?
Brillhart: Sometimes it's – "I'm just going to go in these different directions and hope something cool happens. I don't know if it will, it may be a disaster but it may be something really special," and that's where we are right now.

It doesn't sound as if you actually believe VR is ready to take us into the future, counsellor.
Brillhart: There are things that VR is good at, that film can't do. Film is a frame that we compose, and it's a remarkable medium because you're able to take this compressed atom of story and character and space and time and then transfer it to an objective viewer. But VR is about having someone actually present in that space. So, if you think of it as a compressed atom, a frame of this stuff that we've crafted, and then you just see that atom explode – think the Big Bang – then it's like, the story and everything that was in that frame is everywhere. And the potential is everywhere.

Forget the atoms. You've just blown my mind, counsellor.
Brillhart: There are things VR won't be able to do as well. If there is a very specific thing that you need someone to absolutely see, that's a film thing. There are plenty of documentaries that I've seen where it's so important to just be able to listen to someone talk about their experience and have someone focus on that. It's not a "film versus VR" thing. It's a "film *and* VR" thing.

CBC News – April 28, 2016



Hot Docs film fest opens with League of Exotique Dancers

News

April 28, 2016 | 02:17

CTV – Canada AM – April 28, 2016

Hip-Hop Evolution: New doc chronicles origins of music

April 28, 2016 by: **Marci Ien**



'Hip-Hop Evolution' at Hot Docs traces little-known origins of the genre

April 28, 2016 by: **Victoria Ahearn**

TORONTO -- In 1973, a Jamaican-American teen known as DJ Kool Herc played a bunch of funk records for his sister's birthday party in a Bronx , N.Y., rec room.

The electric energy in the room gave birth to the B-boy generation, which South Bronx DJ Afrika Bambaataa further nurtured.

It was the start of hip-hop culture as he know it today, says Darby Wheeler, Canadian director of the new documentary "Hip-Hop Evolution."



DJ Kool Herc speaks at a news conference at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in New York, on Feb. 28, 2006. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP/Henny Ray Abrams)

"Most people think it starts with Run-DMC," he says. "It doesn't."

"Hip-Hop Evolution" makes its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto on Friday and will air on HBO Canada in the summer as a four-part series.

Historian Rodrigo Bascunan wrote the film, which starts from the Kool Herc's days in the Bronx and goes up until 1992 with Dr. Dre's first solo album, "The Chronic."

"That album really puts hip hop on the map in a popular form," says Wheeler.

The doc is based on over 90 interviews with artists including De La Soul, Grandmaster Flash, Run-DMC, Ice T, Ice Cube and Chuck D from Public Enemy.

CBC Radio host Shad guides viewers through the evolution of the genre.

Wheeler says one of the earliest known rappers was DJ Hollywood, who spun disco tracks in Harlem and said "pre-rap" things to his audiences, like "Yes, yes, y'all' and 'You don't stop.'"

"He is someone I think no one's ever heard of but he inspired a generation of early guys, Kurtis Blow, you know, Russell Simmons -- he says there would never be a rap album without this guy DJ Hollywood," says Wheeler.

Artists like the Cold Crush Brothers and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five started to pop up and, with the Sugarhill Gang's 1979 hit "Rapper's Delight," hip hop started to become mainstream.

As Wheeler explains it, the song was the brainchild of studio owner Sylvia Robinson, "the first hip-hop mogul."

Inspired by a rapping DJ named Lovebug Starski, she got "some kids from her town in Englewood, New Jersey to start rapping and it creates the biggest hit, it puts it on the map -- 17 million singles sold of 'Rapper's Delight.'"

Then came Run-DMC with their hard rhymes and street style.

"They really are the Beatles, I would say, of hip hop," says Wheeler.

Hot Docs runs through May 8.

‘Aim For The Roses’: John Bolton’s Daredevil Documentary Has Epic Teaser and Poster - Watch

April 28, 2016 by: Liz Calvario



See the first look of "the hippest Canadian doc in years."

John Bolton’s latest film "Aim For The Roses" brings Canadian daredevil Ken Carter's 1976 stunt back to the big screen and Indiewire has the first teaser and poster.

Carter is known for his ambitious stunt that would have had him fly a rocket-car a mile from the banks of the St. Lawrence to U.S. territory on the other side. Ultimately unsuccessful, the hype is far removed from modern memory but in 2008 the Vancouver musician Mark Haney created a Carter-inspired concept album in honor of the stuntman. Now, Bolton brought the story of these two men together.

"In a bizarre case of art imitating life, Mark suffered through almost as many setbacks trying to pull off his album as Ken did trying to pull off his stunt," said Bolton. "He went way over budget and way over schedule. His marriage fell apart. He almost lost a thumb in an English muffin slicing incident."

Adding, "I was inspired by, and I could relate to, Ken’s and Mark’s uncompromising commitments to their crafts in the faces of mid-career crises. And so I committed to a leap of faith of my own, by making a ‘musical docudrama’ about both men."

The documentary features archival interviews, footage and contemporary expert witness. It also showcases Haney's music and his own story of being dissatisfied with the "normal" life of a bassist, comparing both artists and their crafts.

"Aim For The Roses" was co-written by Bolton and Brendan Woollard and produced by Bolton and Naomi Mark. The documentary will be released May 1 in Canada.

Check out the full poster below:



VICE – April 28, 2016 (1 of 3)

In New Film, Werner Herzog Tackles Something Even Scarier than Nature—the Internet

April 28, 2016 by: Adam Nayman



Still via 'Lo and Behold'

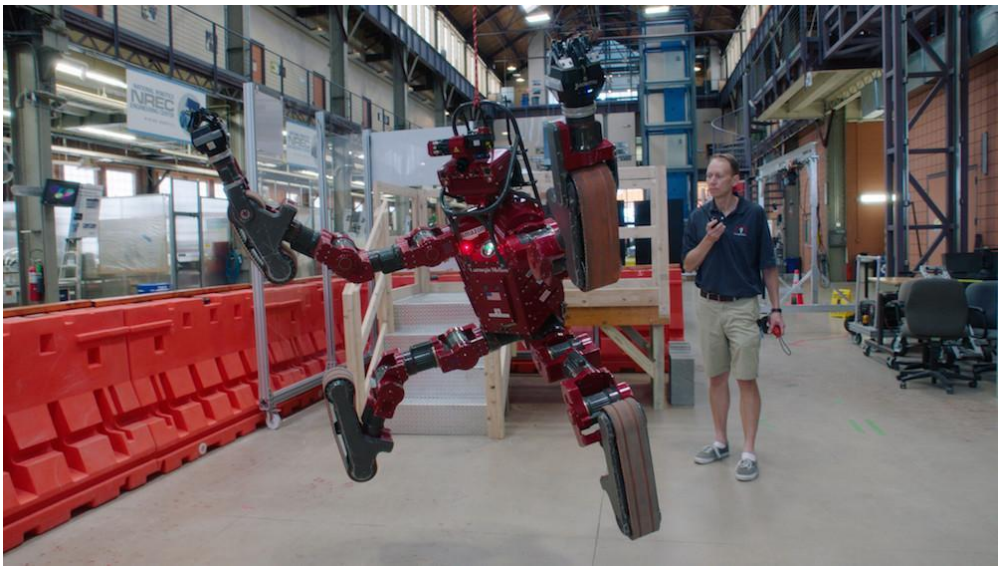
In Les Blank's documentary *Burden of Dreams*, Werner Herzog—then in the process of filming his epic period piece *Fitzcarraldo* deep in the Peruvian jungle—rants against the "obscenity" of his lushly overgrown surroundings. "Nature here is vile and base," he says. "The trees here are in misery, and the birds are in misery. I don't think they sing. They just screech in pain. It's an unfinished country. It's still prehistorical."

That was 1982, while Herzog was still relatively early in a career that has since taken him to other geographical extremes, from post-Gulf-War Kuwait to isolated research stations in the Antarctic. If the Bavarian-born filmmaker makes a habit of complaining theatrically about the habitats he enters, his grumpiness is offset by his desire to plunge ahead into uncertain terrain. He's long since secured his place in film history as a globe-trotting adventurer, unflappable in the face of danger and suited to clamboring over every kind of terrain in search of things to film.

The hook of *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World*, which premiered earlier this year in Sundance, is that it sends Herzog into uncharted territory—the virtual no-man's land of the internet. This

is a massive topic for a single movie, and the degree of difficulty is compounded by the fact that Herzog, for all his cred, doesn't seem to be the ideal man for the job. At age 75, the director is clearly of a different generation. He famously made his first phone call when he was 17-years-old, and in an **interview with TechCrunch** admitted that he doesn't carry a cell.

And yet for all his skepticism, he doesn't overplay the part of the anxious Luddite. Instead, Herzog's curiosity—always his greatest resource as a documentarian—shines through. Determined to condense the history and implications of the internet into just under 100 minutes, Herzog covers a lot of ground. He dutifully visits the primal scene of host-to-host communication on the UCLA campus, and also some more contemporary computer labs, where he seems amazed by the possibilities of technology developing exponentially by the day. In one interlude, Herzog meets with programmers developing robot soccer players, which strikes him as amusing; he's less entertained by the idea that computers could one day direct their own films.



Still via 'Lo and Behold'

With its multiple characters and subplots, *Lo and Behold* is all over the place, but Herzog's thesis seems to be that the vast expanse of the internet is a reflection of those who use it—for good and ill. One woman, who saw photos of a dead family member disseminated across the web in the aftermath of a car accident, sees something demonic in the rapid spread of information, "I think the internet is the Anti-

Christ" she says flatly. Always interested in dialectics, (it's the German in him), Herzog divides his subjects into two loose groups: those who've devoted their lives to mapping and populating social networks and those who've aggressively disconnected. In both cases, the film's thesis seems to be that our lives have gotten so thoroughly re-wired that occupying the middle ground is an impossibility.

A passage set in an Appalachian community whose residents have moved there to escape life online, presents the subjects as if they were somehow living out of time—a remote tribe plunked down in the middle of the continental United States. An interview with infamous entrepreneur Elon Musk envisions a different kind of escape plan, to the safe harbor possibly offered by Mars (not surprisingly, Herzog is willing to sign up for that mission, too).

As the film goes on, it gets into big, abstract discussions about the implications of artificial intelligence, "does the internet dream of itself?" Herzog asks two programmers, who seem bemused by the poeticism of the question. This line of thinking takes Herzog to sinister places as well: at times, Lo and Behold seems to be stoking fears that our tools are evolving beyond our capacity to control them, which offers an intriguing twist on his usual theme of the indifference of nature. But he also leaves plenty of space for viewers to cultivate their own reactions, as in the scene where he uses footage of **Honda's ASIMO robot** pouring itself a drink.

For some, this benign demonstration will seem a frightening image out of sci-fi literature—the implacable A.I. out to replace us. And yet the strange, awkward delicacy of the automaton's movements recall the weirdo outsiders of Herzog's other movies. This benign white humanoid could be kin to the demented penguin in *Encounters at the End of the World* which leaves the flock and rushes hell-bent towards the horizon. Are we looking here at a cool usurper, or a mirror image of our own frailties?

In *Lo and Behold*'s best scene, a scientist calmly explains that the most sophisticated AI in the world is still operating below the level of a cockroach, which exercises choice about where to go and what to do. It's as if Herzog, whose fear and loathing of nature has always been underwritten by a healthy respect, is reminding us—and maybe himself—that Mother Nature still has the upper hand, at least for now. Whether or not the unfinished country of the internet will render everything else prehistorical remains to be seen.

Lo and Behold plays at Hot Docs on April 28-29.

VARIETY

Toronto's Hot Docs Launches With 'League of Exotique Dancers'



APRIL 28, 2016 | 01:24PM PT

COURTESY OF STORYLINE ENTERTAINMENT

Jennie Punter

Courtesy of Storyline Entertainment
April 28, 2016 | 01:24PM PT

TORONTO — The 23rd edition of Hot Docs ignites Thursday night with the world premiere of Rama Rau's provocative romp "League of Exotique Dancers." Over the next ten days, 232 Canadian and international films screen for more than 200,000 Toronto doc-watchers, while hundreds of doc financiers and programming execs, nearly 100 from the U.S. alone, converge on the market hub next week — all part of Hot Docs' widely recognized brand, which presents and funds documentary year round through various platforms and partnerships.

When Australian-born Shane Smith, the festival's new director of programming, moved to Toronto in 1996, Hot Docs, which was founded in 1994, was mostly a screening and networking confab for the Canadian industry.

The event heated up in the late 1990s, when the public was let in and the Forum (two-day co-financing pitch event) introduced.

"It's been inspiring to watch the festival grow and see how it's built an enthusiastic audience," says Smith, formerly the Toronto International Film Festival's director of special projects and, before that, its director of public programs.

Across Hot Docs marquee series Big Ideas (U.S. director Beth Murphy's world-premiering "What Tomorrow Brings" among six high-profile features presented with extended onstage convos), competition and core strands, and focused pop-up sidebars, global themes abound.

"Scattered throughout the festival are many films about refugees and borders," Smith says. "There's definitively a meta-narrative about resettlement or displacement with films like 'The Crossing,' 'Migrant Dreams,' 'Chasing Asylum' and others." Smith also notes several Hot Docs world premieres offer fresh perspectives on historic or familiar subjects—among them Tiffany Hsiung's "The Apology" (the legacy of sex slavery in Japanese-occupied Asia circa WWII), Brendan Byrne's "Bobby Sands: 66 Days" (which draws from Sands' hunger-strike diary), Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's "Angry Inuk" (Inuit youth defend their traditions using "sealfies" and social media) and Jared P. Scott's "The Age of Consequences" (climate change examined through the lens of the military-industrial complex).

"Toronto's cinema-literate audiences are particularly adventurous," Smith says. "They're willing to be taken outside their comfort zone to experience everything the documentary form is doing right now."

Hot Docs' expanded interdisciplinary Doc X does just that, with Toronto helmer Matt Johnson's reality-blurring Sundance hit "Operation Avalanche" (Lionsgate) programmed alongside performance-enhanced screenings, interactive installations, and array of VR and 360° films that immerse viewers in hot zones and remote places.

"VR is still so new in terms of consumer experience, and the industry has had a head start," Smith says. "Documentarians, as well as many journalists and major news organizations, are advancing the capabilities and impact of these new forms of storytelling. Foregrounding this work presents a valuable opportunity for the industry to see first hand what audiences think of the experience."

Also on the new-frontier front, UK filmmaker Mike Day's world-premiering "The Islands And The Whales" (examining the isolated culture of the Faroe Islands where whales are hunted for food) is the first feature documentary to use Dolby Atmos, a technology that moves sound precisely through three-dimensional space to create an immersive experience. At the conference, Dolby, Skywalker Sound, and the filmmakers present a case study of "Islands," which is being repped by Ro*co Films.

Aside from Hot Docs “Made In” spotlight on Australia, Smith’s background has also influenced the little things this year.

“You’ll see a 50% increase in the number of short documentaries, some preceding features and some grouped thematically,” says Smith, a former shorts programmer at Sundance and other fests. “That’s partly because I greatly value the form, but also because there are more ways for established and emerging filmmakers to get shorts produced and seen widely, such as the digital platforms of the New York Times and The Guardian (both attending the market), Field of Vision, and digital initiatives of many broadcasters.

“Things are so much more fluid these days—there’s no stigma about where your story is being told.”

Spirit of the West singer's early-onset Alzheimer's subject of new doc



Victoria Ahearn, The Canadian Press
Published Thursday, April 28, 2016 7:28AM EDT

TORONTO -- Though early-onset Alzheimer's has started to take away his musical memories, songs remain a vital outlet for Spirit of the West lead singer John Mann.

As the new documentary "Spirit Unforgettable" shows, Mann still gets a lift from music, and it actually serves as a form of therapy.

"There is something called cognitive reserve that happens when he performs muscle memory," says Ben Murray, who produced the doc.

"He's able to perform onstage and function in a way that he can't necessarily in everyday life now, which is amazing. So that's been a really important part of his story and journey through the illness."

"Spirit Unforgettable" makes its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto on Saturday.

It follows the 53-year-old's journey with his disease and tracks the history of the Vancouver-based folk-Celtic band, which was formed in 1983 and has hits including "Home for a Rest."

Cameras follow the group for a year, in the leadup to a show at Toronto's Massey Hall, and show Mann as he tries to recall the origins of their songs -- if he can remember them at all.

"I think what the film conveys is the amazing network of support involved in really getting someone through this," says Murray.

"When he performs onstage now he uses an iPad to read, which is operated by one of the other band members, and they've found a way to insulate and work around the illness in a way to keep him performing.

"Because he gets such a lift from being onstage."

Mann was diagnosed with the disease in 2014. Meanwhile, drummer Vince Ditrich is also battling kidney failure.

As such, the group doesn't plan to perform in concert anymore, and announced that their show at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver earlier this month was their last.

Mann, who is scheduled to appear at Hot Docs, is exploring alternative treatments and "fighting extremely hard against the disease."

"The reality, sadly, as those of us who have experienced it first-hand know, there's only one direction for that progression," says Murray.

"(Mann and his wife) have been fighting it hard, but there are certain realities now that they're grappling with, because the disease progresses."

Hot Docs exclusive clip: “League of Exotique Dancers”


April 28, 2016 by Daniele Alcinii



For director Rama Rau, the greatest lesson learned from the more than two years spent developing her latest film, *League of Exotique Dancers*, was one first demonstrated by the advertising industry in the post-war era: sex sells.

The Toronto-based director’s film, which will tonight (April 28) open the 23rd edition of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival with its world premiere, spotlights the pioneers of burlesque during its heyday from the 1940s to 1960s, while exposing the industry’s dark underbelly of racism, sexism and abuse.

Produced by Canadian shop Storyline Entertainment and made by an all-female film crew, *Exotique* profiles some of the most colorful dancers of the period, who were indirectly at the forefront of the women's liberation movement, as they prepare to give a present-day live performance at the Legends of Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas.



League of Exotique Dancers director Rama Rau

"People talk about their sisters in the picket lines, but these are the women who were fighting [for feminism] on stage and in bars, and I think that's important because they fought for all of us," Rau (pictured, left) tells *realscreen*. "The fact that you have sexual freedom today as a woman, it's because of women like this."

Despite *Exotique*'s risqué subject matter, Rau and producer Ed Barreveld had little difficulty pitching the doc for funding.

The concept of a burlesque-focused project was initially brought to the doorstep of CBC's Documentary Channel as an "alternative history on feminism in North America." The channel – which will air the doc later this year – boarded the project almost immediately, funding the duo for further research. Producers would then travel to Europe to secure pre-sales with Scandinavian broadcasters, including DR Denmark, SVT Sweden and NRK Norway.

"We never really had an issue, and in fact when we were pitching it in Europe to SVT, we showed them the trailer on the laptop and when it ended, they shut the laptop and asked 'How much?'" Rau recalls with a laugh. "That was a dream pitch."

Toronto-based distributor Kinosmith will be distributing the film throughout Canada. London's TVF International will handle the international sales of the film and will pursue U.S. and UK deals while at the 11-day Toronto festival.



League of Exotique Dancers

Though Rau and crew ran into some roadblocks during their initial drive for funding, unearthing archival footage proved to be the bigger challenge thanks in large part to a strict prohibition on cameras in the majority of early burlesque houses.

After months of digging, however, *Exotique* researcher Erin Chisholm managed to uncover archival material of popular dancers such as Gina Bon Bon, Kitten Natividad and Lovey Goldmine.

Another problem would arise, however, with the discovery that a handful of the film's characters performed at small dives far removed from the reach of Hollywood's glitz and glamour, or the gaze of a camera lens.

The solution in the end was to take a liberal approach to the content by using readily available vintage footage from myriad library archives as a "flavor" of the era in order to bridge the gap with the film's vérité content.

"At no point do you think those are the women. It's just a flavor," Rau explains. "For me the really great part is that a 72-year-old can go up [at the Burlesque Hall of Fame] and strip. I needed that, but I also needed a glimpse of the past to show who [these performers] were."



League of Exotique Dancers

Realscreen – April 28, 2016 (4 of 4)

Rau previously held two rough-cut screenings ahead of tonight's world premiere as an attempt to gauge audience reactions and fine-tune the film. The first showing was held last year in Toronto in front of a select group of viewers, and then it was brought to Las Vegas last June where it was screened to a room of burlesque performers.

"It was amazing to screen this to them," the director says. "It was a theater full of burlesque women, and they were hooting and screaming – they loved it."

- League of Exotique Dancers *premieres at Hot Docs tonight (April 28) at 9:45 p.m. EST at Toronto's Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, and again on Friday (April 29). Visit the festival's website for complete screening info.*
- *Check out an exclusive clip of the film below:*



Tags: CBC, Documentary Channel, DR Denmark, Ed Barreveld, Hot Docs '16, KinoSmith, League of Exotique Dancers, NRK Norway, Rama Rau, Storyline Entertainment, SVT Sweden, TVF International

NATIONAL POST

Just what the docs ordered: Hot Docs festival features expanded form and function



Chris Knight | April 29, 2016 4:38 PM ET

More from Chris Knight | @ChrisKnightfilm



CP/Hot Docs/HandoutOperation Avalanche.

At this year's Hot Docs — officially the Canadian International Documentary Festival — you can binge on eight hours of O.J. Simpson: Made in America; catch a 45-second "micro-doc" before a screening; fly like an eagle in Ascent: Eagle Island, with the aid of a virtual reality headset; or watch Operation Avalanche, Matt Johnson's "documentary" about how he helped NASA fake the Apollo XI moon landing.

Welcome to the brave new world of documentaries. Once the purview of music (Don't Look Back), history (The Sorrow and the Pity), sports (Hoop Dreams) and sociology (Seven Up!), the genre long ago morphed in form and content to encompass advocacy, confession and even humour. Hot Docs this year includes The Last Laugh, with Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman, a 90-year-old Auschwitz survivor and others discussing whether it's OK to joke about the Holocaust.

The explosion in form has been driven by, and also helped to drive, a blossoming in the number of platforms on which these films can be viewed. Titles that debut at Hot Docs often wind up on iTunes — which has a Hot Docs channel — or on streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon, which were two of the biggest buyers of docs at the Sundance and Tribeca festivals this year. Some buzzy Hot Docs titles like Tempest Storm and Aim For the Roses will be available to purchase online the day after their festival premieres.

There's also broadcast, airlines, VHX (selling your doc directly online), crowdsourcing cinema-rental services like Tugg, and even old-fashioned DVD and Blu-Ray. But the first step for most remains the big screen.



CNW Group/CTVO.J.: MADE IN AMERICA

"When I started making documentaries in the '80s, there were only 12 documentaries released in theatres annually," says Ron Mann, founder of Films We Like. "Today, that number has quadrupled. And the growth of theatrical released documentaries … can be attributed to festivals like Hot Docs. Films are released theatrically because they're billboards for the ancillary markets."

Elizabeth Radshaw, industry program director with the festival, agrees. "The old-fashioned theatrical release has an entirely different execution," she says. A film that premieres at Hot Docs may have many different post-festival lives as a Blu-Ray, TV broadcast or VOD release. "They don't cannibalize each other," she insists. "They reinforce interest."

For a filmmaker like Jay Cheel (Beauty Day), caught up in the nuts-and-bolts of writing, directing and editing, the added burden of marketing can be a strain. "It's definitely not something I think about while shooting," he says.

His new film, How to Build a Time Machine, will premiere at Hot Docs on May 2 and has been pre-sold to CBC's Documentary Channel, as well as having a July theatrical release through Films We Like. Cheel has also reached out to bloggers with an interest in science-fiction, and promised funders of the film a Blu-Ray. "So now we will get a Blu-Ray," he says with a grin, pledging his allegiance to what even he considers a dying format.

Still, he notes that services like iTunes and Netflix represent a double-edged sword. “There’s a lot more opportunity but there’s a lot more noise to rise above,” he says. “And how you do that is a challenge. I don’t know what the answer is. It feels like at any moment it could disappear if you stop pushing.”

Radshaw says Hot Docs tries to help with funding initiatives, by bringing filmmakers and distributors together, and through studies like 2014’s Learning from Documentary Audiences.

“The good news is Canadian audiences love docs and they want to watch more,” she says. Fifty-four per cent of respondents would watch more docs if they played at local cinemas, and 43 per cent say they’d watch more online if they were available. “They’re willing to pay. The issue is discoverability and curation.”

Andrew Frank, vice-president of sales and acquisitions at Toronto’s Mongrel Media, says it can be difficult for a documentary to find its perfect audience. Ten years ago, Jennifer Baichwal’s documentary about photographer Edward Burtynsky, Manufactured Landscapes, did great business through video-rental stores. Her 2013 followup, Watermark, not so much. “Because of the death of Rogers and Blockbusters, we did about half the business,” Frank says. “It should have done better.”



CP/Hot Docs/HandoutLeague of Exotique Dancers.

Mongrel has distributed some great docs in recent years, including Pina, Room 237, Searching for Sugar Man, Tim’s Vermeer and the recent Oscar-winner, Amy. “We’re looking for movies with easily defined markets and fairly easy channels to reach those markets. The old-fashioned grassroots; that works. We just have to make sure we choose carefully.”

But the fragmentation of the genre means identifying an audience is a trickier task; the smaller the slice of pie, the harder it is to pick it up. Unlocking the Cage, Chris Hegedus’s and D.A. Pennebaker’s film about a lawyer seeking personhood rights for chimpanzees, will appeal to people who saw Project Nim (about a chimp raised as a human) or Blackfish, about the dangers of keeping orcas in captivity.

But how to market a title like Where Is Rocky II?, in which a detective searches for a single fake rock hidden in the Mojave Desert by artist Ed Ruscha? Or Fraud; director Dean Fleischer-Camp took more than 100 hours of a family's videos from YouTube and, through the magic of editing, created his own narrative. There's also Tickled, in which a journalist explores the "sport" of competitive endurance tickling, with shocking results.

And then there's Operation Avalanche, a feature film about a team of CIA agents (director Johnson and others) in 1967 who infiltrate NASA to find the identity of a Soviet spy by posing as documentary filmmakers. Some of the footage was shot at NASA, which they infiltrated by posing as documentary filmmakers. So it's a fake doc about a fake doc, within a fictional framework.

"Documentaries are lies," says the outspoken filmmaker. "Fiction movies are lies." He points to 2012's The Act of Killing, in which former Indonesian death-squad leaders were cajoled into re-enacting their crimes.

Related

- This year's eclectic Hot Docs festival takes us from burlesque dancers to O.J. Simpson

"It really set off a new standard of what a documentary can do in terms of using fiction techniques, not to manipulate us but to tell the story in a better way. And I'm trying to show the other side of that. How many documentary tools can fiction filmmakers use? I think it's definitely worthy of a conversation."

And Hot Docs is the place to have it. "They need to say, look guys, things are changing. Documentaries are not really what you think. Operation Avalanche is not really a documentary film, but it is a piece of the documentary conversation."

The Hot Docs festival runs until May 8 in Toronto. More information at hotdocs.ca.

CBC Radio – April 29, 2016 (1 of 3)

Documentary exposes human cost of cleaning up Brazil's favelas before Olympics

April 29, 2016 by: host Piya Chattopadhyay



Deep in the heart of the largest slum, or favela, in Brazil, it's hard to be heard by the rest of the country, let alone the rest of the world. But people are yelling as loud as they can to protest the disappearance of one of their own, Amarildo de Souza, a local brick layer.



The population of Rocinha has been estimated to be anywhere between 70,000 and 3000,000. Rocinha is nestled between two of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the city. (In the Shadow of the Hill film)

De Souza was a victim of Brazil's attempt to clean up its favelas and the drug trade inside them. In advance of the 2014 World Cup of soccer, a new militarized police force was set up to flush out the drug trade at the time.

According to de Souza's family, Amarildo was last seen when the police took him for questioning and they believe de Souza was tortured and murdered by the police.

The demonstrations for justice and the media's attention triggered by
Amarildo's disappearance, ultimately led to the conviction of the major of the police squad and the 24 officers in de Souza's death.

Since the conviction of officers in the de Souza case, more people from the favelas — once too terrified to speak up — are now coming forward looking for their own justice.

Between 2007 and 2013, about 38,000 people have disappeared in Brazil. In about 10,000 of those disappearances, there is suspicion of police involvement — only a handful have been prosecuted.



In November 2011, a combination of military and special-forces seized Rocinha without a single shot being fired. (In the Shadow of the Hill film)

CBC Radio – April 29, 2016 (3 of 3)

A new documentary, *In the Shadow of the Hill,* explores how the security force has a devastating impact on the lives of the people in the favela of Rocinha.

Dan Jackson, the film's director, joined Friday host Piya Chattopadhyay to discuss how the disappearance of bricklayer Amarildo in the Rocinha favela became a tipping point for the fight for human rights.



A young boy plays with a kite in Brazil's largest slum, Rocinha. (In the Shadow of the Hill film)

In The Shadow of the Hill is screening in Toronto at the Hot Docs festival as part of the Spotlight on Australia.

NOW Magazine – April 29, 2016

CANADIAN MUSIC WEEK'S BIG PICTURE PROGRAMMING

April 29, 2016 by: JONATHAN ROTHMAN

HOT DOCS + CMW = LOVE: APRIL 29 TO MAY 8

On the cinematic tip, CMW's Hot Docs entries are worth checking out. Among the options are Contemporary Color (**NNNN**), which features stars like St. Vincent, Nelly Furtado and David Byrne in a "one-of-a-kind, kaleidoscopic event" devised by Byrne and involving color guard teams of students doing perfectly synchronized pep-rally choreographies. In Hip-Hop Evolution (**NNNN**), rapper and CBC host Shad interviews hip-hop forefathers like Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaata, telling the tale of how the musical form rose from the underground to become a major international phenomenon. The Revolution Won't Be Televised explores activism through the lens of two of Senegal's top hip-hop artists during the 2012 presidential campaign, while Spirit of the West frontman John Mann is at the centre of Spirit Unforgettable (**NNNN**), which documents Mann's experience with early onset Alzheimer's while preparing for what could be his final show at Massey Hall. For Madonna fans, Strike a Pose (**NNNN**) follows the stories of three of the male dancers who suddenly became queer icons following well-loved 1991 doc Truth or Dare, which is also screening at the fest. That's just the beginning: visit CMW's **site** for details.

Hot Docs 2016: It's Awesome

April 29, 2016 by: Marc Glassman



Christina Clark and Émilie Gelinas in conversation in a scene from John Walker's *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*
Courtesy of Hot Docs

It's awesome. Who doesn't hate the word now that teenagers everywhere have mangled its meaning into nothingness? Being awesome meant that you inspired "fear and wonder," according to Webster's dictionary. But why rely on an American when we have the Brits to help us? According to the Oxford, awesome is "daunting; inspiring great admiration, apprehension and fear."

OK—what's awesome, in the old-fashioned sense, when you think of Toronto film festivals?TIFF, to be sure, but what about Hot Docs? And, indeed, what about great docs? Can they inspire "fear and admiration"? I'd say so. It's probably too late to revive the word "awesome" in our lifetimes, but let's try to restore its power for a few moments while contemplating this year's Hot Docs festival.
The most impressive thing about Hot Docs is that the festival's organisers, Chris McDonald and Brett Hendrie along with such creative programmers as Shane Smith, Sarafina DiFelice and Lynne Fernie (among many others), have succeeded in turning an oxymoron into reality. A couple of decades ago, the majority of people "knew" that documentaries were boring, although they might convey relevant information. Now, the apparent contradiction has been turned upside down and miraculously come into rude health: documentaries, repurposed as "docs," have indeed become "hot."

Look at the lineups over the next ten days at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, the Isabel Bader Theatre, TIFF Bell Lightbox and the other 10 venues that host the festival. Last year, the attendance at Hot Docs was over 200,000 and it's more than likely that more people will come to this year's screenings. These aren't idle filmgoers: many are enthusiasts who believe that docs are lively, innovative and formally brilliant while—yes—conveying information that is even more important today, when newspapers, magazines and TV journalism are in decline.

This year's festival offers a "Big Ideas" series, which not only shows important films but also brings on stage people who contextualise the issues presented in the docs. Afghani educator Razia Jan, featured in *What Tomorrow Brings*, has founded the first school for girls in a village in Afghanistan; after the screening, she'll be on hand to discuss her work with the film's director Beth Murphy. In a more pop-cultural vein, TV motivational speaker Tony Robbins will discuss his self-help philosophy with director Joe Berlinger after *Tony Robbins: I am not your Guru* is shown. Perhaps the best film in the series is *The Apology*, a mesmerizing film about Korean "comfort women" who were enslaved sexually by the Japanese military during World War Two. A representative from the Korean council advocating for an apology that still hasn't happened after 70 years will talk with the film's director about this extraordinary search for justice, which has been denied for so many decades.

Excitement in a far different way is provided through the new series DOCX. It's a special programme that takes film out of its box and places it in different contexts: as interactive installations, virtual reality experiences and 360 degree videos and as screenings that also encompass live performances. Heady stuff—but genuinely interesting. Two of the pieces in this series, *The World in Ten Blocks* and *Brothers in the Kitchen* were first proposed and developed at Ryerson University's Documentary Media programme, where I have taught for a number of years. I can recommend them unreservedly.

Cyrus Sundar-Singh's *Brothers in the Kitchen* is a media piece, which incorporates a theatrical performance set in a fictitious restaurant, animated by chefs who talk about their lives in Canada after arriving here as Tamil refugees. Archival footage of the dramatic arrival of the "boat people" off the coast of Newfoundland in the late '80s offers a context for this important exploration of immigrant culture.

A similar theme animates *The World in Ten Blocks*, an interactive piece by Robinder Uppal and Marc Serpa Francoeur. This media arts duo spent many months getting to know shop and restaurant owners in the Bloorcourt Village of Toronto's Bloor Street West. In classic doc style, they won the trust of the people and then shot revealing footage about what it's like to adjust to Toronto after coming here from a wide variety of backgrounds. Set up as a new media piece, this installation allows viewers a chance to "walk" through an area of Bloor Street and get to know some of its most colourful inhabitants.

This is a great year for the Canadian Spectrum, Hot Docs signal series featuring films from here.

The security issue for festivals and concerts is one we see playing out across Toronto's incisive *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*, Ali Kazimi's archival *Random Acts of Legacy*, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's sure to be controversial *Angry Inuk* —-and so many more.

I'll concentrate on three: Kevin McMahon's *Spaceship Earth* (technically in the Special Presentations programme), Nettie Wild's *Koneline: our land beautiful* and John Walker's*Quebec My Country Mon Pays*. McMahon, Wild and Walker are three of our finest veteran filmmakers, who should be better recognised for their on-going contributions to this country's cultural life. They're fearless artists, who aren't afraid to take on political and social issues but in their new works, all are offering a somewhat softer, arguably humanist approach to their subjects.

McMahon, a tough, well-spoken "green" advocate has adopted a philosophical attitude towards his favourite topic: survival in this deteriorating environment. Taking off from Buckminister Fuller's old adage that we're all members of "spaceship earth," McMahon digs deep, exposing the continuing exploitation of our resources, but he also offers more hope than in the past—giving examples of people and communities who are starting to create sustainable local cultures, which could benefit our children in many ways.

Wild, too, has moved away from the confrontational style that made her films like *Blockade*and *A Rustling of Leaves* so successful. With *Koneline: our land beautiful*, she adopts an attitude that is reminiscent of Jean Renoir's saying, that "everyone has their reasons." She spends time with the exciting characters of Northern British Columbia, both new settlers and the Tahltan people, whose land it always has been. Issues of the exploitation of the land for mining purposes are raised but Wild allows members of both sides to express themselves. The film, gorgeously shot by Van Royko, is a poetic exploration of one of the most beautiful areas in the world. And that, she seems to be saying, is enough.

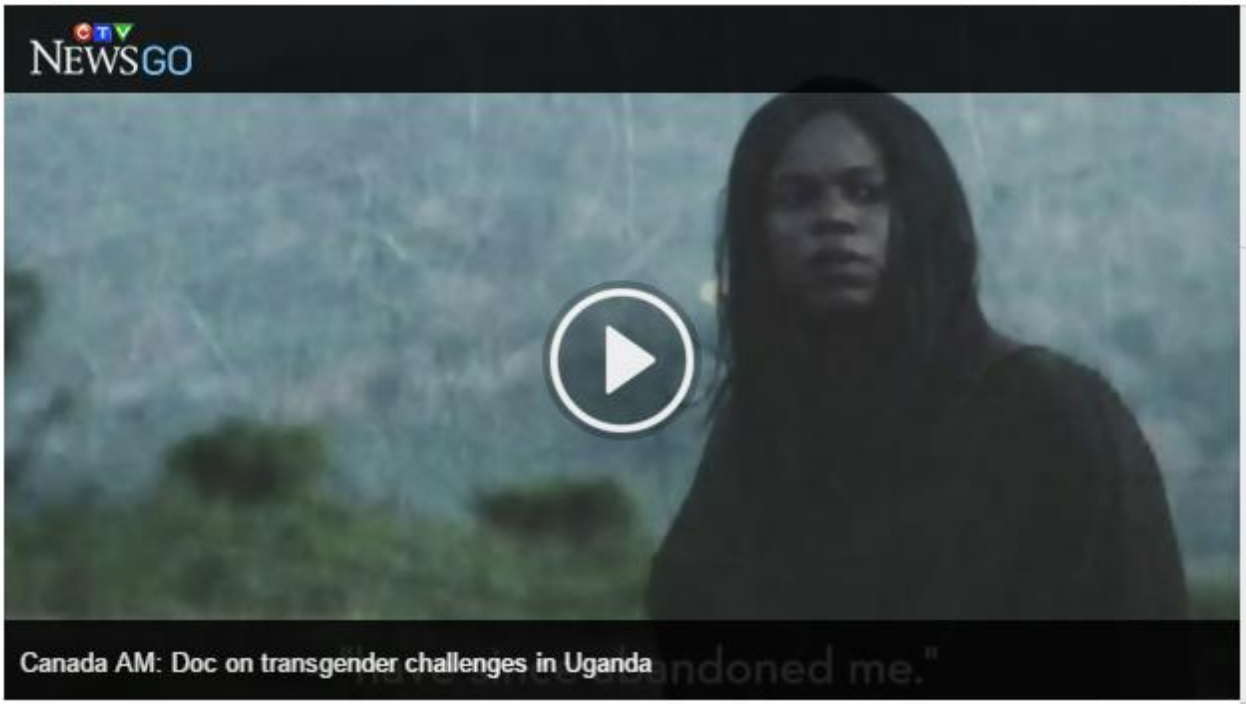
Finally, John Walker's film is a *cri de coeur* by an Anglo, who left but has never stopped loving Quebec. In this, his most personal film, Walker returns to his "pays," his country, and spends time talking to filmmakers Denys Arcand and Jacques Godbout, young women—both French and English—who are trying to negotiate life in Quebec and members of his own family, who chose to stay in Montreal. The film is wonderfully passionate about Walker's desire to return mixed with his understanding that he'll never fit into the new Quebecois reality. What's best about this moving film is Walker's philosophic acceptance: he isn't angry, just sorry that he can no longer live where he was born.

There are many other films at Hot Docs that will inspire fear and wonder in audiences over the next 10 days. And that's awesome.

Please visit the *POV* Hot Docs hub for more coverage on this year's festival. Hot Docs runs April 28 – May 8. Visit www.hotdocs.ca for more information.

Ugandan LGBT activist shares story of being publically outed

April 29, 2016 by: **Staff**



As a high school student in Uganda, Cleopatra Kambugu said she knew she was different, but she didn't know of any word to describe what she was.

Biologically born male, Kambugu said she faced bullying and abuse in high school as she struggled with her identity.

"It was hard, I didn't have language for being called transgender," Kambugu told CTV's Canada AM on Friday. "I just knew I was different, and I didn't have a 'what' for it."

PHOTOS



Cleopatra Kambugu speaks to Canada AM about the documentary 'The Pearl of Africa.'

Kambugu, the first out transgender woman in Africa, and her partner Nelson Kasaija, are the subjects of the documentary "The Pearl of Africa," which premieres this weekend at Toronto's Hot Docs festival.

Kambugu said her family didn't deal well with the fact that she was quietly participating in LGBT activism in Uganda, where the vast majority of the population is against homosexuality .

"My family took my being transgender as a pathology, as something I shouldn't talk about openly, as something I shouldn't be proud about," she said.

In 2014, Kambugu was publicly outed on the front page of one of Uganda's largest tabloid newspapers. The tabloid printed a list of what it called Uganda's 'top' homosexuals soon after the country's president signed an anti-homosexuality act into law that criminalized same-sex relationships.

"They only allowed me to stay in Uganda up to the point when that anonymity was broken, and then they couldn't deal with that anymore," she said.

At the time, Kambugu was enrolled in a master's program and working with the Ministry of Agriculture on molecular biology and Kasaija was working at a public hospital.

Kambugu said she was fired from the ministry and Kasaija said he couldn't go back to his job out of fear he would be ridiculed.

The couple say they didn't have any choice but to leave Uganda out of fear for their and their families' safety.

They fled to Nairobi, where Kambugu now works with an organization that supports LGBT rights in Africa.

"I was happy," she said. "I still wanted to contribute to the movement."

However, both Kambugu and Kasaija hope to one day return to Uganda.

The Hollywood Reporter – April 29, 2016

Hot Docs: 'Dressmaker' Star Sarah Snook to Narrate Censored Doc

April 29, 2016 by: **Etan Vlessing**



Courtesy of Hot Docs Festival

The cinema screen will go dark, except for scrolling text and Snook speaking the words of a politician, when 'The Opposition' has its world premiere on May 3.

Australian actress Sarah Snook is set to narrate over heavily-censored footage in an Aussie documentary, *The Opposition,* that will have its world premiere at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto on May 3. Festival organizers on Friday told *The Hollywood Reporter* that the screen at the Bell Lightbox theater in Toronto will go dark, except for scrolling text and Snook's voice work.

The heavy redaction of *The Opposition* follows the film being slapped with an Australian court injunction sought by former Papua New Guinea politician Carol Kidu. Snook will narrate the words of Kidu, who plays a major role in the film directed by Hollie Fifer and produced by indie Media Stockade.

Kidu's image and dialogue will be removed from the film until the Australian court case is settled, including during additional Hot Docs screenings on May 5 and 7.

"We look forward to showcasing the redacted version of *The Opposition* and to the important conversation it will spark about the challenges documentary makers face," Hot Docs programming director Shane Smith said Friday in a statement.

Kidu was granted the emergency injunction motion to stop parts of the film that show her from being screened at Hot Docs.

The Opposition portrays a David-and-Goliath battle over a squatter settlement that must make way for a hotel and marina development in Papua New Guinea. "The court action seeking in injunct *The Opposition* raises serious issues of freedom of speech," the film's producer Rebecca Barry said in her own statement.

"There are powerful forces who don't want this film to be seen, but we believe that audiences should have the right to make up their own minds," she added. The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which got underway Thursday night, continues through May 8 in Toronto.

Metro – April 29, 2016 (1 of 2)

‘"Tempest Storm' at Hot Docs profiles 88-year-old burlesque star

April 29, 2016 by: Canadian Press - **Victoria Ahearn**



Tempest Storm is shown in a handout photo from the documentary of the same name. At 88, burlesque star Tempest Storm is still a hurricane of energy.Billed as the world's oldest exotic dancer, she's still proud of what she looks like and her ability to perform — over 60 years after starting her career. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO

ORONTO — At 88, burlesque star Tempest Storm is still a hurricane of energy.

Billed as the world's oldest exotic dancer, she's still proud of what she looks like and her ability to perform — over 60 years after starting her career.

The Georgia native with flaming orange hair is the subject "Tempest Storm," which makes its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Saturday.

The Canadian Press spoke with Toronto director Nimisha Mukerji about the dancer, who was born Annie Banks and says she dated Elvis Presley and John F. Kennedy.

CP: What has Tempest's life been like?

Mukerji: Tempest came out of the Depression. There were very few options for women at that time, especially uneducated women. She came from the Deep South and survived sexual abuse, she survived poverty.

For her, becoming an exotic dancer was really about being able to take ownership and control over her life and being able to earn a living and provide for herself. And that is ultimately what she's been able to do and she is at the top of her game still, even today.

CP: Did she have spouses, and how did they feel about her career?

Mukerji: Tempest, during the '50s, fell in love with an African-American jazz singer named Herb Jeffries. He performed with Duke Ellington's band and because of that marriage, she was sort of blacklisted from Hollywood. MGM dropped her contract and she basically had to reinvent herself after that.

That marriage really changed her life and really affected her life. She really believed that people are people and the colour of your skin shouldn't determine who you love.

CP: Did she have children?

Mukerji: She had one daughter named Patricia with Herb Jeffries and the film talks about when her daughter was 10, she left her family, she walked away.

So the film examines her as she tries to reconnect with all these family members from her past who she has unfinished business with.

CP: She walked away from her daughter as well?

Mukerji: She did, she walked away from her family and one of the central questions of the film is why did she do that? I think to fully understand that, you need to go back into her history and understand who she was and the life that she had.

— This interview has been edited and condensed.

National Post – April 29, 2016 (1 of 5)

‘Why drop by Hot Docs when it’s easier to catch a non-fiction flick any time, anywhere?

April 29, 2016 by: David Berry



Operation Avalanche. CP/Hot Docs/Handout

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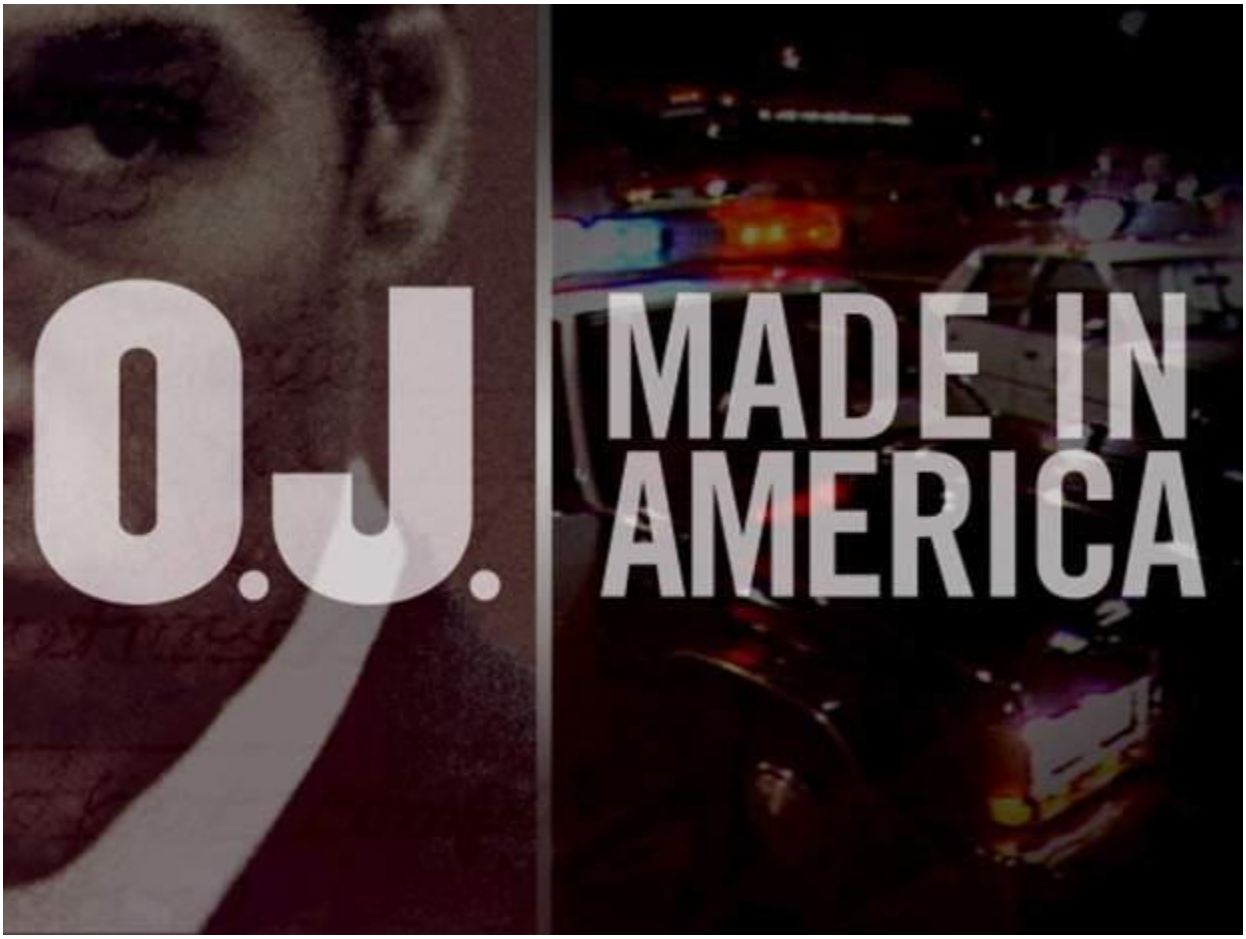
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The explosion in form has been driven by, and also helped to drive, a blossoming in the number of platforms on which these films can be viewed. Titles that debut at Hot Docs often wind up on iTunes — which has a Hot Docs channel — or on streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon, which were two of the biggest buyers of docs at the Sundance and Tribeca festivals this year. Some buzzy Hot Docs titles like Tempest Storm and Aim For the Roses will be available to purchase online the day after their festival premieres.

There's also broadcast, airlines, VHX (selling your doc directly online), crowdsourcing cinema-rental services like Tugg, and even old-fashioned DVD and Blu-Ray. But the first step for most remains the big screen.



"When I started making documentaries in the '80s, there were only 12 documentaries released in theatres annually," says Ron Mann, founder of Films We Like. "Today, that number has quadrupled. And the growth of theatrical released documentaries … can be attributed to festivals like Hot Docs. Films are released theatrically because they're billboards for the ancillary markets."

Elizabeth Radshaw, industry program director with the festival, agrees. "The old-fashioned theatrical release has an entirely different execution," she says. A film that premieres at Hot Docs may have many different post-festival lives as a Blu-Ray, TV broadcast or VOD release. "They don't cannibalize each other," she insists. "They reinforce interest."

For a filmmaker like Jay Cheel (Beauty Day), caught up in the nuts-and-bolts of writing, directing and editing, the added burden of marketing can be a strain. "It's definitely not something I think about while shooting," he says.

His new film, How to Build a Time Machine, will premiere at Hot Docs on May 2 and has been pre-sold to CBC's Documentary Channel, as well as having a July theatrical release through Films We Like. Cheel has also reached out to bloggers with an interest in science-fiction, and promised funders of the film a Blu-Ray. "So now we will get a Blu-Ray," he says with a grin, pledging his allegiance to what even he considers a dying format.

Still, he notes that services like iTunes and Netflix represent a double-edged sword. "There's a lot more opportunity but there's a lot more noise to rise above," he says. "And how you do that is a challenge. I don't know what the answer is. It feels like at any moment it could disappear if you stop pushing."

Radshaw says Hot Docs tries to help with funding initiatives, by bringing filmmakers and distributors together, and through studies like 2014's Learning from Documentary Audiences.

"The good news is Canadian audiences love docs and they want to watch more," she says. Fifty-four per cent of respondents would watch more docs if they played at local cinemas, and 43 per cent say they'd watch more online if they were available. "They're willing to pay. The issue is discoverability and curation."

Andrew Frank, vice-president of sales and acquisitions at Toronto's Mongrel Media, says it can be difficult for a documentary to find its perfect audience. Ten years ago, Jennifer Baichwal's documentary about photographer Edward Burtynsky, Manufactured Landscapes, did great business through video-rental stores. Her 2013 followup, Watermark, not so much. "Because of the death of Rogers and Blockbusters, we did about half the business," Frank says. "It should have done better."



CP/Hot Docs/HandoutLeague of Exotique Dancers.

Mongrel has distributed some great docs in recent years, including Pina, Room 237, Searching for Sugar Man, Tim's Vermeer and the recent Oscar-winner, Amy. "We're looking for movies with easily defined markets and fairly easy channels to reach those markets. The old-fashioned grassroots; that works. We just have to make sure we choose carefully."

But the fragmentation of the genre means identifying an audience is a trickier task; the smaller the slice of pie, the harder it is to pick it up. Unlocking the Cage, Chris Hegedus's and D.A. Pennebaker's film about a lawyer seeking personhood rights for chimpanzees, will appeal to people who saw Project Nim (about a chimp raised as a human) or Blackfish, about the dangers of keeping orcas in captivity.

But how to market a title like Where Is Rocky II?, in which a detective searches for a single fake rock hidden in the Mojave Desert by artist Ed Ruscha? Or Fraud; director Dean Fleischer-Camp took more than 100 hours of a family's videos from YouTube and, through the magic of editing, created his own narrative. There's also Tickled, in which a journalist explores the "sport" of competitive endurance tickling, with shocking results.

And then there's Operation Avalanche, a feature film about a team of CIA agents (director Johnson and others) in 1967 who infiltrate NASA to find the identity of a Soviet spy by posing as documentary filmmakers. Some of the footage was shot at NASA, which they infiltrated by posing as documentary filmmakers. So it's a fake doc about a fake doc, within a fictional framework.

"Documentaries are lies," says the outspoken filmmaker. "Fiction movies are lies." He points to 2012's The Act of Killing, in which former Indonesian death-squad leaders were cajoled into re-enacting their crimes.

Related

- This year's eclectic Hot Docs festival takes us from burlesque dancers to O.J. Simpson

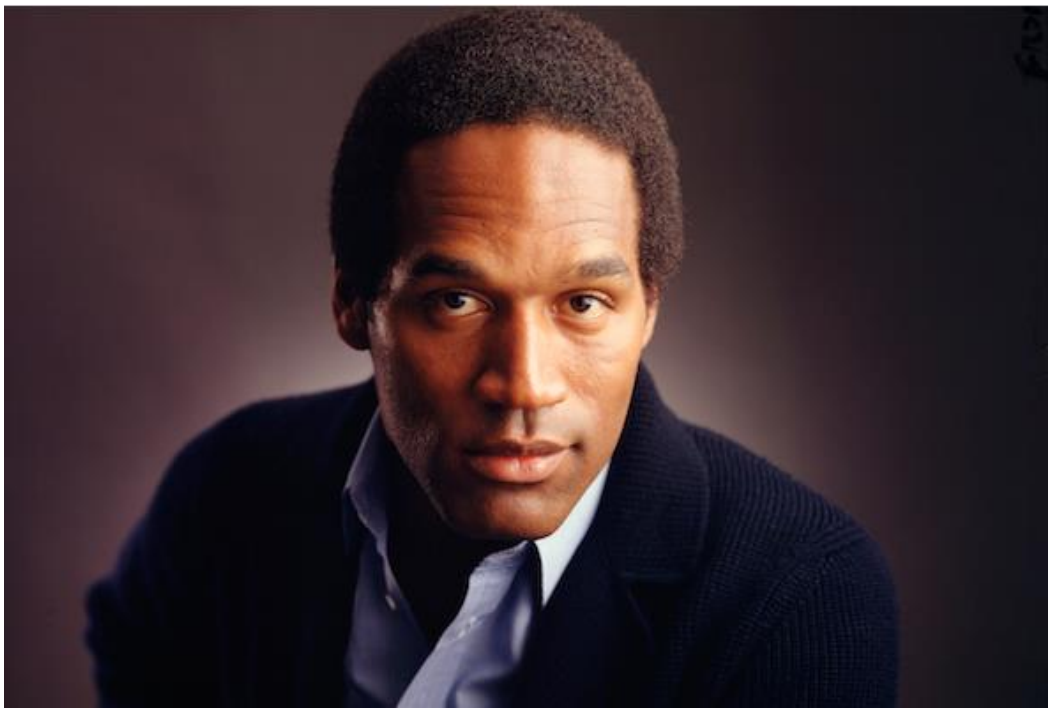
"It really set off a new standard of what a documentary can do in terms of using fiction techniques, not to manipulate us but to tell the story in a better way. And I'm trying to show the other side of that. How many documentary tools can fiction filmmakers use? I think it's definitely worthy of a conversation."

And Hot Docs is the place to have it. "They need to say, look guys, things are changing. Documentaries are not really what you think. Operation Avalanche is not really a documentary film, but it is a piece of the documentary conversation."

The Hot Docs festival runs until May 8 in Toronto. More information at hotdocs.ca.

Hot Docs ’16: Making “O.J. Made In America”

April 29, 2016 by: **Kevin Ritchie**



Just over two years ago, ESPN Films producer Libby Geist met with director Ezra Edelman in a New York cafe and said something many directors would not mind hearing: “We’re thinking of doing a five-hour film.”

That was the good news.

“I was like, ‘OK, you got me, but what’s it about?’” Edelman recalls. “She said, ‘O.J. Simpson.’ And I was like, ‘Oh.’”

The former football hero is probably one of the most contentious figures in recent American history. The media circus that erupted after Simpson’s arrest in connection with the brutal slayings of his ex-wife Nicole Brown and waiter Ron Goldman was so intense that many of the participants in his nearly seven month-trial stopped talking after the jury handed down a verdict of not guilty.

Edelman was a college student at the time. “Not only did I live through it, I’m very cognizant of how over-reported this subject has been,” he says. “What could I add to it? It didn’t seem like fertile ground.”

Initially, execs at ESPN could not figure out how to approach Simpson's story either. Since the '30 for 30′ documentary strand launched eight years, producers at the Disney-owned cable sports network had Simpson's name up on a whiteboard of profiles to tackle at some point.

His story always seemed too big for the strand, but after doing 90 documentaries, executive producers Connor Schell and Geist decided a five-hour account of the Heisman Trophy winner's life that went beyond the murder trial would be a way to take '30 for 30′ to a new level.

They thought of Edelman, who had directed the HBO doc *Magic & Bird: A Courtship of Rivals* and the '30 for 30′ doc *Requiem for the Big East.*



Ezra Edelman, Libby Geist

"So much of our audience – especially [those] 35 and under – haven't seen O.J. play football," says Geist. "Maybe they heard about him as the Hertz guy, the actor in *The Naked Gun* or the guy who was accused of committing two murders, but why did America love him the way it did and why did he become as successful as he was? Those questions became really fascinating."

Over two years, *O.J.: Made in America* would grow from a five-hour doc to seven and a half hours – or 10 hours of television with commercial breaks. The first episode will premiere on ABC on June 11 before moving to ESPN for the remaining four episodes. It will also air on Canadian broadcaster CTV in a five-part event this June. The doc premiered at Sundance in January and continues its festival run at Hot Docs in Toronto this weekend.

The doc builds two intertwining narratives that then converge during the murder trial.

Edelman spends the first two 90-minute episodes delving into Simpson's rise to fame as a child from San Francisco's housing projects who attended University of Southern California, a wealthy school full of predominately white students, and became a break-out star in the late 1960s.

"I was not interested in having [the] conversation about his guilt or innocence, retrying the case or re-investigating the murder," says Edelman. "I was interested in going backwards 40 years and discussing the environment of the city."

Using a mix of archival footage and interviews with childhood friends, sports journalists and business associates, *Made In America* covers Simpson's crossover appeal among white audiences first as a star athlete and later as the first black celebrity pitchman for brands such as Hertz.

Although the Black Power movement reached a boil around the same time, Simpson had an aversion to the kind of firebrand activism that made other black athletes of the era, such as Muhammad Ali, polarizing figures. Simpson, the film shows, did not want to be known for his race and consequently marketed himself in ways that were palatable for white audiences.

Concurrently, Edelman delves into the strained relationship between the African-American residents of southern Los Angeles and the LAPD, which exploded in the Watts riots of 1965. Racial tensions continued to simmer throughout the 1980s as Simpson moved into the tony, predominantly white neighborhood of Brentwood.

Race riots erupted again in 1992 after four police officers were acquitted on excessive force charges in the videotaped arrest and beating of Rodney King. By the time Simpson was charged with double homicide in 1994, there was a charged atmosphere in the city that some believe his defense team successfully exploited.

"This was like the ultimate American studies paper," says Edelman. "It's a deep dive into a place and time over decades and through the lens of this unique cultural force."

The scope of the project made it easier for Edelman and his production team – which included producer Caroline Waterlow, Tamara Rosenberg and Nina Krstic – to approach interviewees, many of whom had been burned by the media circus during the trial.

Edelman conducted 72 interviews, 66 of which made it into the final cut. Interviewees included defense lawyer Carl Douglas, Simpson's former agent Mike Gilbert, prosecutor Marcia Clark, former LA district attorney Gil Garcetti and the key players involved in the bizarre 2008 robbery case that landed Simpson in a Nevada prison with a 33-year prison term.

In Edelman's Brooklyn production office, the production team put up a 12-foot-long canvas board full of color-coded note cards outlining the doc's storyline, themes and interview wish list. Simpson's first wife Marguerite, friend Al Cowlings and his USC teammates refused to talk, as did prosecutor Christopher Darden and Judge Lance Ito.

"We paid for the sins of the quote-unquote media because people are so burnt out from being manipulated," Edelman recalls. "It was difficult to get people to acknowledge us, but they soon realized we'd done a lot more work than anyone else had. So many times we'd be done with an interview and people would [say] 'That was by far the best, most informed conversation about this we've had.'"

Since many of the figures in Simpson's early life had either passed away or declined interviews, archival footage became especially important in shaping the first two episodes.

Krstic and Waterlow led the archival effort with support from Geist's team at ESPN. Hundreds of archive sources contribute to the film, including the NFL, Getty Images, ABC and content from home movie footage. Key finds included an early ABC interview Simpson gave as a USC student, and staged footage Gilbert shot of Simpson removing the American flag from his Brentwood home.

"I'm still fascinated by that transformation of a guy coming from poverty in the projects of San Francisco and arriving at this elite, white, conservative place full of wealthy students," says Edelman. "His self-possession at that age is fascinating. There was no model for him to say, 'There are all these black athletes who've done this before me so I'm gonna become a pitch man.' How did that happen?"

By last September, Edelman's cut had grown from five hours to seven-and-a-half. Geist arrived at a rough cut screening with pen and notebook in hand, ready to provide notes on where to chop two hours off the run time.

Instead, Geist and Schell emerged from the marathon screening in a kind of daze and decided that the length felt right. After several meetings with higher-ups at the network, they were able to secure more financing for the extra hours (and archive).

"We fought hard. We said, 'We think this is going to be the biggest thing we've ever done,'" says Geist. "It's pretty rare to love something that much in the rough cut stage."

Another challenge was programming 10 hours of television. Once ESPN settled on a June airdate, Geist and Schell decided to do a festival roll-out beginning with Sundance in January.

The strategy was partly a reaction to the Ryan Murphy-produced scripted series *American Crime Story: The People vs O.J. Simpson*, which premiered on FX in February and aired for 10 episodes.

"Sundance was important to us just in terms of the timing of the FX roll-out," Geist says, adding that ESPN's doc was underway before she knew about the FX show. "Once we landed on the June air date, we wanted our film to be out there to gain momentum and get people talking."

More broadly, *O.J.: Made In America* is arriving at a time when police brutality and systemic racism are both back in the news.

Edelman hopes the doc's focus on the historical context for the murder trial will act as a meaningful contribution to conversations that are already happening, but says he does not have a specific agenda.

"We go through periods where we have public discussions on police brutality," he says. "The notion that there were riots in 1965 and 1992 speak to this consistent cycle of history. Certain segments of the population tune in when things happen and go, 'Oh my God, that's terrible,' but it's always been terrible. It's about understanding history and how, frankly, we don't learn from it."

O.J. Made In America ***screens at Hot Docs on April 30 at 12:30 p.m. at the TIFF Bell Lightbox. Visit the festival's website for ticket info.***

Read more: **http://realscreen.com/2016/04/29/hot-docs-16-making-o-j-made-in-america/#ixzz47EvdC9nH**

Three Hot Docs films show the medium is the message, but the hubris is human: Howell

April 29, 2016 by: Peter Howell

Hot Docs movies Weiner, Tickled and Lo and Behold explore the Internet's terrible toll.







Humans and the Internet have been failing to communicate since the very first online message was sent in 1969.
It happened on Oct. 29 of that year, as Werner Herzog shows in his new film *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World*, a Sundance hit receiving its Canadian premiere Thursday and Friday at Toronto's Hot Docs festival (April 28 — May 4, details at www.hotdocs.ca).

On that momentous day 47 years ago, UCLA computer professor Leonard Kleinrock and his student programmers sent history's first Internet message to a computer at Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, California, a distance of nearly 600 kilometres.

The intent was to send the computer greeting "LOGIN," but only "LO" came through before the system crashed. How poetic it was, as Herzog and Kleinrock remark, that the first word on the Internet would be an exclamation of wonder or surprise.

And how appropriate that this first brief message would be an unintended communication, the consequence of people thinking they knew exactly what they were doing and saying with their machines. The medium is the message, as Toronto's Marshall McLuhan famously observed of mankind's technological extensions, but the hubris is entirely human.
The folly of digital arrogance is shot through the cautionary tale that is *Lo and Behold*, and two other Sundance films making their Canadian debut at Hot Docs: *Weiner* and*Tickled*.

The message in all three films is that the human capacity to create marvellous machines is surpassed only by the human tendency to use them incorrectly, even to the point of evil. Often it's the result of people not understanding the ramifications of the Internet's incredible reach and permanent record.

The Internet pioneers interviewed in *Lo and Behold* talk about how the Net was conceived as a worldwide community of helpful people, not a minefield of anonymous antagonists, so security precautions weren't adequately baked into its design.

Herzog visits a California family who sadly understand this all too well: the parents and siblings of Nicole "Nikki" Catsouras, 18, who died in a crash while driving her father's Porsche on Oct. 31, 2006. One of the first responders, an investigator for the California Highway Patrol, took a photo of Nikki's body and nearly severed head. It was later illegally uploaded to the Internet, for reasons that could range from simple misjudgment to sick sport to pure malevolence.

The grisly image went viral, and online trolls from around the world began relentlessly taunting the Catsouras family. Nikki's mother Lesli says she now considers the Internet "the spirit of evil" and adds, "I didn't know such depravity existed in humans." (The family successfully sued the CHP, winning nearly $2.4 million (U.S.) in court-awarded damages.)

Digital hubris is also evident in *Weiner*, by Josh Kriegman and Elyse Steinberg, which began as a redemptive chronicle of disgraced former Democratic Congressman Anthony D. Weiner. He's known worldwide for the "Weinergate" scandal of 2011, when he admitted tweeting sexually explicit photos of himself to young women he'd met online.

Weiner figured he'd never be caught — one of his aliases was "Carlos Danger" — but he also admits he didn't fully understand what he was doing. He also lied about ceasing his "sexting" habits, which caught up to him when ran for mayor of New York City in 2013.

The camera catches the shock and paralyzing fear of Weiner, and the anger and dismay of his wife Huma Abedin and campaign staffers, as an online gossip site reveals the candidate is still sexting women, at least one of whom is seeking some kind of vengeance

Weiner rails against "the technology that undid me," yet he's the author of his own misfortune. The narcissistic politician is so wrapped up in his own bubble, and his pathetic need for recognition, he allows the astonished Kriegman and Steinberg to continue filming him.

New Zealand doc *Tickled* is in many ways the most disturbing of the three films in its depiction of widespread digital hubris. Directors David Farrier and Dylan Reeve begin their film as a humorous report on a bizarre yet apparently harmless pastime called "competitive endurance tickling."

Their investigation leads down a rabbit hole of Internet links involving cyberbullying, identity fraud, online shaming and extortion. Not much should be said about the film going in — it proceeds like a thriller — but it's no spoiler to say that anyone who has seen the 2010 doc *Catfish* will recognize how deception is now very much a part of online activities.

I contacted Farrier by email and he said he's heard the *Catfish* comparison, including from some of his sources in the doc who feared being "catfished" themselves.

The Internet is now part of the daily lives of many people, Farrier wrote, "but I think there is still a huge portion of society that's naive to the dangers of the online world. People still click on terrible scam emails. People trust that the person they're chatting to on Tinder is a real person and not a bot, or a person with ulterior motives …

"The Internet is a great tool, but where there are humans involved, there's always someone who will be using it to be a little naughty. Or a lot naughty."

Toronto Star – April 29, 2016

April 29, 2016 by: JASON ANDERSON

Retros and Redux at Hot Docs: But since Hot Docs' selection of brand new titles is so vast, it's easy to overlook the filmmaker spotlights and vintage titles that also feature in the 23rd edition's generous program. The subject of this year's retrospective on a Canadian filmmaker is Rosie Dransfield. Hot Docs screens five of her films since 2002, including *Who Cares* (April 29), about the grim lot of Edmonton sex workers, and *Broke*(May 2), a portrait of a memorably crusty pawnshop owner. The American maker of such landmark docs as *Hoop Dreams*, Steve James is the recipient of the festival's annual Outstanding Achievement Awards — Hot Docs screens six of his films, including*No Crossover* (May 4), his terrific made-for-ESPN doc about basketball legend Allen Iverson.

Just as noteworthy are the contents of the festival's annual Redux section of older docs that deserve a fresh look in the present. Among this year's worthies are *Medium Cool* (April 29), the spellbinding merger of fact and fiction that was concocted by Haskell Wexler amid the chaos of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and *Sherman's March* (May 1), still the most famous (and hilarious) example of Ross McElwee's personal and highly idiosyncratic brand of filmmaking. Similarly sterling efforts by Gillian Armstrong and Alanis Obomsawin provide more reasons to journey through the past at Hot Docs.

‘Things are going to happen to you’: Film details dark underworld of ‘competitive tickling’

April 29, 2016 by: TRISTIN HOPPER



A still from the documentary Tickled, premiering Saturday at Toronto’s Hot Docs festival. Itt may have started out as an innocent attempt to profile an eccentric Internet trend, but it quickly became “a story about power and control,” its director said. Hot Docs

At first glance, competitive endurance tickling seems like so many other unusual pursuits that flourish online.

Buff men gather in a nondescript Los Angeles studio, give brief on-camera interviews about their relative ticklishness — and then are strapped to a bed to endure tickling from other buff men.

“Meet John. He’s ticklish,” reads the description for the 36-minute video Ticklish Blonde John.

The ticklers and ticklees are all body-builders, actors and MMA fighters lured by the prospect of easy money. They’re offered free flights to Los Angeles, swank hotel accommodation and US$1,500 — all paid for by a company known as Jane O’Brien Media.

“Our Participants (sic) enjoy accomodations (sic) at our 5-Star Partner Hotel,” reads the Jane O’Brien Media website.

But for many, this tickling dalliance quickly leads down a nightmarish rabbit hole of deceit, threats and intimidation. Says one former tickler, “it was ruining my life at the time.”

The documentary Tickled, premiering Saturday at Toronto’s Hot Docs festival, may have started out as an innocent attempt to profile an eccentric Internet trend. But quickly, it became an expose into the dark world of Jane O’Brien Media and the shadowy forces pulling the strings behind “competitive endurance tickling.”

“If you piss off this company, then things are going to happen to you … it was pretty obvious this was a story about power and control,” director David Farrier said by phone to the National Post.

Ticklers who crossed the company would see their video plastered across the Internet, featured on dedicated websites featuring their personal information and emailed to family and employers. Threats would be called in to the White House in their name. Devastating online hacks would be made to seem as if it was coming from their computer.

One former tickler had been promised that his video would remain private. And when he later saw it online and requested that it be taken down, Jane O’Brien Media retaliated by barraging his family and employers with emails alleging he was a drug addict and child molester.

“I don’t think you’ve grasped the magnitude of what you have provoked,” the company told him via email.

Related

Another, a banker from a “Republican military family,” attempted a similar video removal, and immediately saw web searches of his name dominated by his tickling video.

Dave Starr, a former tickle video producer, was similarly hit with an avalanche of vicious letters and postcards when he tried to break ties.

“Roses are red, violets are blue … perhaps you wish, perhaps instead that David your failure, not Edward, were dead,” read one card to Starr’s mother mentioning his dead brother.

As Farrier notes, Jane O’Brien Media has no obvious revenue stream. The company’s website promises salaried “Reality TV/Video projects,” but no such products appear to exist.

The thrust of Tickled is that the whole operation seems to exist solely to abuse people. “The tickling and the abuse go hand in hand; it’s the same thrill,” said Farrier.

Farrier, a well-known New Zealand TV reporter, is relatively new to the investigative journalism scene. Normally, he’s an entertainment journalist sticking to what he would call “light, fluffy” topics.

And indeed, that was the intent when he first shot off a message to Jane O'Brien Media seeking an interview about its unusual competitive tickling videos.

"To be brutally frank, association with a homosexual journalist is not something we will embrace," came the immediate reply.

The viciousness of the message was all the stranger, said Farrier, because competitive tickling videos inherently "look a bit gay."

So he wrote a blog post and started hashing out the first outlines of Tickled; two actions that spurred a massive response to warn him away — threats, lawsuits, private investigators. The company even dispatched three of its employees to New Zealand.

"If you want to stick your head in a blast furnace, do it," one tells Farrier in Tickled. "Just between us, take the lawsuit seriously," says another.

In a phone message, one of the trio even notes that the film's co-creator, Dylan Reeve, has a family, and he would "hate" to see a family man caught up in the gears of Jane O'Brien Media.

The Internet is home to a legitimate tickling subculture, to be sure.

Tickled speaks with the founder of MyFriendsFeet.com, a gay porn site that features strapped-down muscular men being tickled with feathers, hairbrushes and electric toothbrushes.

But where MyFriendsFeet features willing models appearing in a for-pay website, Tickled shows Jane O'Brien Media as seeming to relish in harassing its own unwitting former models.

And the reach is massive: hundreds of websites and an operation that's been going on for years all over the world — and funded by a seemingly bottomless well of money.

As for Farrier, his own antagonistic relationship with Jane O'Brien Media is far from over.

At the January Sundance Film Festival screening of Tickled, audience members were stunned to realize that one of the Jane O'Brien employees featured in the film was among them, taking notes.

In Missouri, where the film was shown at a festival, two private investigators were escorted out of a Tickled screening by police when they tried to record the film.

"It's possible they work for one of the people in the film who appears to have a very litigious background," film festival director David Wilson told the Missourian.

During the same visit, a Missouri process server also hit Farrier with court papers.

Jane O’Brien’s a ghost. Nobody knows who it is
Tickled made its New Zealand premiere earlier this month.

Just as Farrier will likely do when it premieres in Toronto, the filmmaker said he spent much of the time simply wondering what Jane O’Brien would do next.

“The whole time I was looking into the audience, looking for these people.”

Strangest of all, whether they are appearing in the movie itself or tailing Farrier to screenings, none of these agents for Jane O’Brien Media had ever met Jane herself.

As another employee tells Farrier later in the movie, “Jane O’Brien’s a ghost. Nobody knows who it is.”

And the twist — the part of the movie that producers explicitly asked the National Post not to reveal — was the precise forces pulling the strings behind the seedy world they uncover.

Hot Docs ’16: Steve James’ sustainability tips for doc makers

April 29, 2016 by: Manori Ravindran



Steve James, director of the critically acclaimed *Hoop Dreams* (1994), *The Interrupters* (2011) and *Life Itself* (2014) half-jokingly laments that his career is going backwards.

While some filmmakers 30 years into feature doc-making might step back from shooting films themselves, he says he’s spending more hours behind the camera. *The Interrupters* (2011) was filmed over 13 months, and James shot all 350 hours himself, while also serving as a producer and editor – as he does on most projects.



Steve James at a DOC Toronto masterclass in 2014

At the moment, he's spending the bulk of his time at a local Chicago high school filming a doc series examining race, achievement and the disparities in between. The MacArthur Foundation supported the production with a US$200,000 grant back in January, and James expects to have shot about 800 hours by the end of May."I'm supposed to be doing less, but I seem to be doing more. I enjoy it," the director tells *realscreen*. "I'm a very hands-on filmmaker and I don't like to juggle a bunch of films at once, even if I could."

But for someone whose career is "going backwards," James has always been forward looking with his output. He is, after all, this year's recipient of the Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award, whose past honorees include Albert Maysles (1999), Errol Morris (2005), Alanis Obomsawin (2009) and Kim Longinotto (2010), among others.

The 61-year-old director was first at Hot Docs in 1994, where he pitched the doc series *The New Americans* at the Forum. Though his feature doc *Hoop Dreams* didn't play the festival that year, the film about two inner-city Chicago youth aspiring to become professional basketball players had won the Sundance Audience Award in January and was garnering critical praise, particularly from the likes of late critic Roger Ebert.

The following year, the film became part of cinematic lore when its failure to earn an Academy Award nomination in the feature doc category (it was only nominated for editing), led to a public outcry resulting in a revision of the nominations process for docs.

Hoop Dreams is among six of James' films playing in a retrospective throughout this year's festival. Others include *Stevie* (2002), *At the Death House Door* (2008), *No Crossover: The Trial of Allen Iverson* (2010), *The Interrupters* and *Life Itself*.

The work, he says, is diverse in subject matter but there are clear parallels and themes that winds through it.

"Not every film I've done deals with race, but a lot of them do in some fashion. Class and race combined," he remarks. "I'm very interested in people who are often on the fringes of society – disenfranchised in some fashion – and following their lives and seeing what they try to make of them."

James adds that he is more interested in the complexity and gray areas around social inequality. It figures, given that many of his films are inextricably linked to the production company Kartemquin. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the Chicago-based outfit known for a strong social justice platform has worked with James – or as the director puts it, "taken him under their wing" – since 1986. Kartemquin co-founder Gordon Quinn has served as an EP on just about all of James' feature docs, beginning with *Hoop Dreams*.



Filming *Stevie*

"One of the things Kartemquin provides is it's truly a community of filmmakers," notes James. "And I think filmmakers at any stage of their career – but it's especially crucial when you're starting out – [need] a community there that can support you, guide you, give you honest feedback and challenge you to be better."

But James also has advice for those going it alone, which myriad filmmakers do, especially in today's healthy but saturated market for docs.

"Someone said to me, once you get your film into Sundance and you feel like you've made it – because Sundance is considered making it in the indie film world, both narrative and docs – what you really need to look at is if [you] get that second film made," says James.

“Because a lot of people will go to Sundance and through blood, sweat and tears, they’ve gotten a film made and gotten it to Sundance and then that’s it. They think that they’ve made it, and now it’s going to be easy. And you know what? It should be easier, but it’s not. ”

James’ second feature doc after *Hoop Dreams* was *Stevie*, a portrait of Stevie Fielding, a Little Brother from Southern Illinois he once mentored.

“Everyone wanted to see the demo, like, ‘Oh, you got a new doc? Yeah, send it!’ but as soon as I sent it, they were like, ‘Uh no, we’re not interested in this story.’ We didn’t get a single U.S. broadcaster,” says James, noting that the subject matter simply didn’t resonate with many funders.

The doc received some funding from Canadian broadcaster CBC and UK pubcaster BBC, but James self-financed the rest of the doc until a private investor boarded the project. *Stevie* went on to win the Cinematography Award at Sundance and also earned an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Documentary.



Steve James with Ameena Matthews of *The Interrupters*

“If your goal in life is to direct films, direct documentaries, it’s good if you have another craft within the field that you master enough that people hire you to do it, whether it’s to shoot or edit or do sound, or produce for other people,” advises James.

“Have other skills that people will hire you [for], because that can be part of both growing you as a filmmaker, but also [will] help sustain you while you pursue projects that people may not be willing to give you money for,” he imparts.

On balance, James says he feels positively about the present climate for docs. Most people keen on making a documentary can access the means to do so even if they can’t necessarily get paid to do it, he reasons. The trick, of course, is fostering a sustainable career.

“When I started out, coming out of school, if you’d said to someone, ‘I want to make documentaries for a living’, people would have said, ‘What? That’s not a very practical goal.’ It just wasn’t possible to want to work in this field and conceivably make a living at it – not completely, anyway.

“That’s all changed. There’s a lot of non-fiction work going on. It might not be exactly what people want to be doing all the time – it might be work-for-hire, they might be shooting something that’s a TV reality series, and some are more agreeable than others – but there’s a ton of work and platforms and opportunities

CTV – The Social – April 29, 2016

The former DA of the O.J. Simpson trial opens up about the case

April 29, 2016 by: **The Social Hosts**



As the former district attorney of LA County, Gil Garcetti oversaw the prosecution of fallen football legend O.J. Simpson during what has been coined "the trial of the century". Two decades later, what transpired continues to fascinate a lot of people and is the subject of an upcoming 5-part documentary series, *OJ: Made in America*.

In the above clip, we got a glimpse of the doc before launching into a conversation with Gil about why people are still so intrigued by the case and what it was like for him to be the district attorney during such a volatile political and social climate.

He also revealed how he really felt about the outcome of the trial and how he thinks the O.J. trial has affected the way major trials are now handled in court.

Watch the fascinating conversation in the video above.

The 5-part document series *OJ: Made in America* is coming to CTV, TSN and CraveTV this June and makes its international debut this weekend at Hot Docs in Toronto.

National Post – April 29, 2016 (1 of 2)

From Operation Avalanche to Sour Grapes, here are the 10 films to see at the Hot Docs Film Festival

April 29, 2016 by: CHRIS KNIGHT



Tickled, directed by David Farrier and Dylan Reeve. Hot Docs/Handout

Gone are the days of the presumed boredom and dreaded narrative of a documentary film. With the Hot Docs Film Festival, which runs from April 28 to May 8, an entire slew of oddball eccentricities prove that non-fiction flicks these days are all about subculture and life behind-the-scenes.

With selections featuring a stuntman, a time machine and the moon landing, here are 10 films that piqued our interest and would suit you and just about anyone you know.

Aim for the Roses, directed by John Bolton (Canada): In 2008, a Vancouver musician decided to commemorate a 30-years-past motorcycle stunt. And now there's a doc about it.

Fraud, directed by Dean Fleischer-Camp (U.S.A.): The director takes more than 100 hours of family video, uploaded to YouTube, and crafts his own story. The power of editing!

God Knows Where I Am, directed by Todd and Jedd Wider (U.S.A.): When the body of a bipolar woman was found in an abandoned New Hampshire farmhouse, her journal provided a poignant window into mental illness, and her life and death.

How to Build a Time Machine, directed by Jay Cheel (Canada): Two obsessive men grapple with the construction of time machines; one a perfect Victorian-style prop, the other perhaps the real thing.

Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World, directed by Werner Herzog (U.S.A.): The man who once asked "Is there such a thing as insanity among penguins?" turns his curious mind to the question: "Does the Internet dream of itself?"

Operation Avalanche, directed by Matt Johnson (Canada): It's fiction, but it looks like a documentary, and it tells the fictional story of a documentary about a faked moon landing. Prepare to have your mind bent.

Sour Grapes, directed by Jerry Rothwell and Reuben Atlas (U.S.A., France, U.K.): A con artist floods the American wine market with fake vintages. If you ever suspected that all pricey wine was a scam, this might be your cup of tea.

Tickled, directed by David Farrier and Dylan Reeve (New Zealand): What the heck is competitive endurance tickling? Is it really a sport? And why did the directors run into such trouble when they tried to find out?

Related

Unlocking the Cage, directed by Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker (U.S.A.): Tells the story of Stephen Wise, a lawyer who is trying to have apes, cetaceans and elephants recognized as conscious beings worthy of personhood and the legal protection that comes with it.

Where Is Rocky II?, directed by Pierre Bismuth (France, Germany, Belgium, Italy): Artist Ed Ruscha left a fake rock in the middle of the rock-strewn Mojave Desert in 1979. Now someone's looking for it. Makes needle-in-a-haystack seem simple.

CTV – Canada AM – April 29, 2016

Made in America: Why is the O.J. trial still on our minds?

April 29, 2016 by: Beverly Thomson



O.J.: Made In America

April 29, 2016 by: **Host**

Interview with Gil Garcetti and director Ezra Edelman "OJ: Made in America."





Friday April 29, 2016

Why Norman Lear put America's problems on TV



Norman Lear — creator of subversive '70s sitcoms like All in the Family, Maude and The Jeffersons — looks back on the era's divisive debates (hotdocs.ca)

Listen 23:31

- Is VIEWS the masterpiece Drake fans have been waiting for?
- **Why Norman Lear put America's problems on TV**
- David Litt on writing 'edgy for a President' jokes
- q sports panel: Why we should mourn wrestler Chyna
- Plants and Animals waltz through q on album release day
- **FULL EPISODE**

Taboo-breaking TV legend **Norman Lear,** creator of subversive '70s sitcoms like *All in the Family*, *Maude* and *The Jeffersons,* looks back on the era's divisive debates about race, gender, and class in populist mainstream network TV.

"It occurred to me at some point that everything that preceded me had a message...and that message was there are no problems in America," Lear tells guest host Gill Deacon, adding, "We wrote what about what was going on in our world."

The 93 year old is still doing his part to shake up the TV landscape, he's currently working on a Latino-centred remake of *One Day at a Time* with Netflix.

Lear is the subject of a new documentary called *Just Another Version of You* — a special presentation at this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto. Lear joins guest host Gill Deacon to share his memories of challenging television conventions, and what keeps him working for change.

WEB EXTRA | Norman Lear's advice for living a long life.

> "A man should have a garment with two pockets. In the first pocket should be a piece of paper in which he's written, 'I am but dust and ashes, I don't matter that way.' In the other pocket a piece of paper on which is written, 'For me the world was created.'

TIME

MAGAZINE VIDEOS

One Woman's Holocaust Secrets Make for a Powerful Film

HISTORY MOVIES

One Woman's Holocaust Secrets Make for a Powerful Film

Jeffrey Kluger @jeffreykluger Updated: April 29, 2016 1:45 PM



Alon SchwarzAida and her boys—Izak, left, and Shep

How genealogical detective work mends a shattered family

One of the worst parts of the horror that was the Holocaust is that its echoes never cease to reverberate. You can blow up the gas chambers, you can burn down the camps, but that's all—and that's not enough. You can't ever restore the 11 million lives that were lost. Just as painful for many survivors is the loss of the familial history that was annihilated along with the victims.

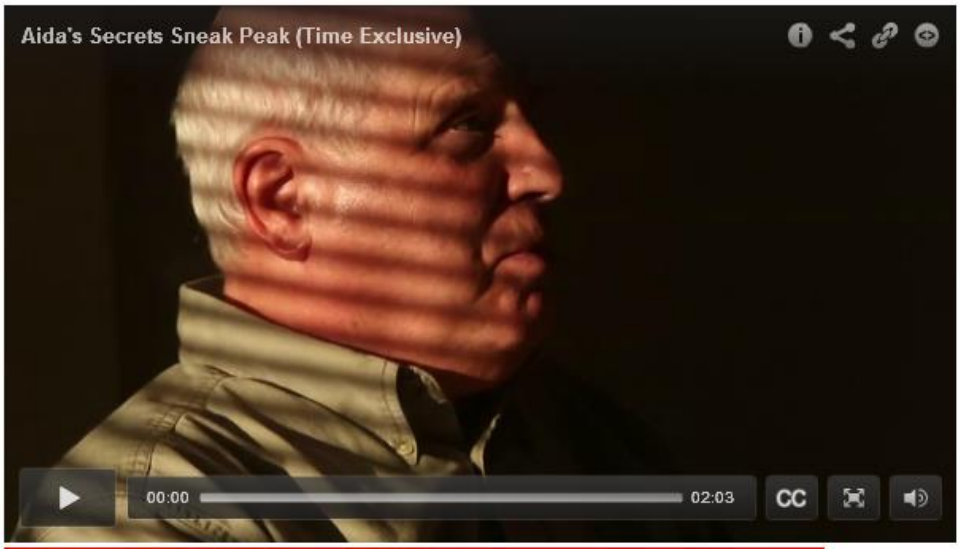
The great scattering of displaced people that followed the war years meant that parents lost track of children; wives lost track of husbands; siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents not only didn't know which of their family members had died, but also which later ones had even been born. Survivors became free electrons, too often bonded to nothing, related to no one.

That's why part of the work of Yad Vashem, the global Holocaust remembrance organization, is to help survivors and descendants reconstruct their genealogy. It's the

reason too that the new documentary *Aida's Secrets*, which follows the story of one family that was blown apart by the Holocaust, is so powerful.

Directed by Alon Schwarz and co-directed by his brother Shaul (who is also the director of TIME's Year in Space series), the film is in some ways a very small tale about some very ordinary people. There is Izak Szewelewicz, a 68-year-old gardener, now living in Israel; his brother Shep, 67, who was visually impaired from birth and blind most of his life (nearly all of which he has lived in Winnipeg, Canada); their mother Aida, 90, who lives in a Quebec nursing home; and their father, Grisza, who died in 2008. The father was Jewish, the mother was not, both were born in Poland and both found themselves in the Bergen-Belsen displaced person's camp after the war, where Izak and Shep were born. Aida gave the boys up when they were still babies.

The film's inciting moment—a deeply moving one—occurs early on, when the brothers meet again, in the seventh decade of their lives. Each had known only vaguely of the other's existence before the filmmakers brought them together. But the sweet and simple reunion is actually neither of those things—not entirely anyway. Shep and Izak may only be half brothers; Aida and Grisza might never have been married; Grisza, we learn, was something of a scoundrel, a serial womanizer who fattened his purse in the black market that took hold in the displacement camp. And Aida, who never fully explains why she surrendered her two sons, may have had a third one.



Much of the thrill of the film involves the basic gumshoe work of genealogical research, which is helped by Yad Vashem and the genealogy group MyHeritage.

Blotched and yellowed photographs are examined, onion-skin documents peeled apart and studied, and trails of both human migration and human motive are followed until they lead either to a solution or a cul de sac. At the center is Aida, who knows enough not to say too much.

She answers the questions she chooses to answer and ducks the others with a simple, "I don't remember, I don't remember." Maybe she's telling the truth; she's 90 after all. But forgetting an emigration date is one thing, forgetting whether she had two sons or three is something else. Either way, the look on her very expressive face says a lot: Aida is a woman with too many poker tells to be a good liar.

The most painful irony of the war is that the people trapped in the slaughter pen that was Europe too often emerged feeling shame for doing what they needed to do to survive. The perpetrators—the men in the dock at Nuremberg, the others who found refuge from justice overseas—remained defiant at worst and disingenuous at best, professing ignorance of the high crimes they helped perpetrate or helplessness to have done anything about them anyway. Meanwhile the victims who suffered at their hands spent a lifetime worrying that they hadn't done so nobly enough. It is a burden Aida clearly carries.

Aida's Secrets ends gratifyingly enough. Shep and Izak, strangers for nearly all of their lives, appear set to spend the rest of them as deeply bonded brothers. The paper trail indeed locates a third brother, living in Canada. But it's a big country and 36 million people call it home—and just which of them traces his line to a small woman with a complicated past is not clear. The movie will have its World premiere at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto on May 3 and both Shep and Izak will be there. They are hoping that, the currents of family and history moving as they sometimes do, their brother will hear of the screening and present himself there as well.

"Meeting him would bring everything together," says Shep. "I love him and it would be really beautiful to hold the hand of another blood relative that I didn't have the opportunity to grow up with."

The Holocaust, 70 years gone, is still not the stuff of history—not fully anyway. Some of that will change as the last of the survivors die, even if the ragged holes that the killing left in the tapestries of families can never be mended. But our species has not remotely lost the capacity to commit that kind of atrocity again. Following just one thread in the human weave that was snapped the last time is a reminder of the cost of descending into the same madness again.

John Mann, lead singer of Spirit of the West, battles Alzheimer's in documentary 'Spirit Unforgettable'

APRIL 30, 2016 by: **Chris Jancelewicz**



A new documentary chronicles the final Toronto performance of Spirit of the West at Massey Hall -- and the lead singer's concurrent struggle with Alzheimer's.

If you grew up in Canada during the '80s and '90s, then you are most likely familiar with the music of Spirit of the West, a B.C. band that infuses Scottish heritage into its songs in a way no other group had done before. Led by singer John Mann, songs like *Home for a Rest* secured the band on the local bar's playlist, and in the hearts of every Canadian.

Now Mann and his wife, Jill Daum, are facing an entirely new battle. In 2014, Mann announced that he'd been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease, and while the band continued to tour, his condition deteriorated and they had to come up with inventive methods to keep Mann performing. Daum, along with Mann's bandmates, did their best to adjust to the changing landscape and not separate Mann from his true talent and love: the music.

READ MORE: Hot Docs 2016: 13 documentaries to see this year

Hot Docs documentary *Spirit Unforgettable* follows Mann and Daum as they work their way towards Spirit of the West's final Toronto show at Massey Hall in 2015. (The band recently played some shows in Vancouver as well — officially their final bow.) It is a poignant, at times heartbreaking journey, but overall

it depicts a group of people so invested and full of love for one another they'll do whatever it takes to make Mann's life comfortable and familiar.

Global News spoke to Daum about the documentary and the band, as well as the personal toll its taken on the married couple as they face this unabating opponent. (Mann, too, was present for the interview, but was there merely as a spectator. For the record, he laughed and smiled the whole way through.)

Global News: Was this a difficult process for you, or was it therapeutic in a way?
Jill Daum: Super therapeutic. With John and I, from the start, it's been about art from adversity. Pete [McCormack, the director] is also a really good friend, so we felt very comfortable.

How have your lives and relationship changed over the last several years?
It's a slow adaptation, so everything slowly changes. Every once in a while, shock hits you in the face. You slowly go through, and then it's like "Whack!" then again slowly, then "Whack!" That's what it's like.

Many things feel like they come in waves. Is that what it's like?
It's just that you can never control when it hits you. Certainly for John. There are a lot of goodbyes. You say goodbye to a lot of things. The biggest thing is you have to put on these blinders and focus straight ahead. There's the past to the left, there's the future to the right, and you just have to think about the moment happening now, because if you think about either of those other things, it destroys you.

At times, is it hard to summon the strength?
For me, it's harder to summon the patience. [Laughs] That's harder. I think everybody in the band battles it with humour. Certainly John and I, that's our big weapon. We try to make each other laugh as much as possible.

READ MORE: *Vaxxed* filmmakers: "This is not an anti-vaccination movie"

Have you guys tried any new alternative therapies?
First of all, everybody and their dog has a cure for Alzheimer's. You start off with coconut oil and turmeric, and then you move into other kinds of things. We went to Switzerland for a really dramatic one — which is featured in the documentary — and John really wanted to try stem cells in Mexico. We went. We tried everything and there is some solace in that.

Global News – April 30, 2016 (3 of 3)

What would you have to say to Spirit of the West fans who've been so supportive?
Thank you. They've been incredible. Their support gets us through it, it really does. It's like a flashlight in a tunnel.
[Mann interjects: Yeah, thank you. It's been fantastic.]

What was it like for you watching the documentary for the first time?
Well, I was really scared at first. A lot of times when I see young footage of John… I find that really hard. I laughed a lot, though. I laughed a lot about the hairstyles, about the band. We were with a community of friends and family to watch it, so it felt like it united us.

'Spirit Unforgettable' is screening at Hot Docs on Saturday, April 30 at 9 p.m., Monday, May 2 at 3 p.m., and Sunday, May 8 at 12:30 p.m. Check the Hot Docs sitefor full ticket and location information. Hot Docs runs from April 28 – May 8 in Toronto.

There is also a fundraiser for the Alzheimer Society of Toronto, called The Spirit of John, taking place at the Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto on June 2, 2016. Canadian musicians will be there singing Mann's songs to raise funds for programs.

*(***A previous version of this article stated that the June 2 event was for Ontario Alzheimer's and that Jim Cuddy would be present. We have made the corrections and apologize for the errors.)*

New Film Goes Inside Australia's Refugee Detainment Camps

April 30, 2016 by: Jake Kivanc



Inside a refugee detention centre on Nauru Island. All photos courtesy Eva Orner

Whether you look at the disastrous US election campaign, or the European Union's debate over how to handle the Syrian refugee crisis, it's obvious that the world is struggling with a deep-seated identity crisis, one that calls into question ideas of race, religion, and nationalism. And for the most part, Western countries haven't handled this very well.

Over the last few years, the Australian government has been leaning hard into an anti-refugee plan known as "**the Pacific Solution**." Created to stop the arrival of boats filled with asylum seekers from countries like Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, the Pacific Solution is a program that reads like something out of Donald Trump's playbook: deter refugees from trying to enter your country by capturing every single one, and indefinitely locking them up in a detainment camp on a remote island. It's cruel, but as shown in the new documentary *Chasing Asylum*, it has worked with shocking effectiveness.

Through multi-million-dollar deals with Papua New Guinea, the Australian government established **two detention centres on the islands of Nauru and Manus**. Since 2013, hundreds of refugees have been kept in these camps, forced to live inside open-air tent barracks where conditions are so severe that self-harm and suicide attempts are frequent. Inside the camps are men, women, and children, many of whom have been there for months, sometimes even years, with no end in sight. The few reports that have gotten through the Australian government's iron grip on information show mass violence, sexual abuse, riots, and death—a lot of which has been at the hands of prison guards and local authorities.

In *Chasing Asylum*, Australian director Eva Orner breaks the veil of secrecy around the camps with a compilation of footage that was illegally recorded by whistleblowers and social workers inside the detention centres. VICE spoke with her in Toronto, before the film's premiere at Hot Docs, to hear more about what went into the film and the repercussions of blowing the whistle on an entire country.

VICE: Thanks for sitting down, Eva. How did the idea for this film come about?

Eva Orner: I left Australia three years after the rejection of refugees began [in 2001], which is when the **Tampa Crisis happened**. John Howard was going to lose the election, so he did something very politically shrewd and extreme: he stood up and said, "We are going to decide who comes to this country, and the nature in which they come." He broke the refugee convention, which was very shocking at that time.

But a lot of people supported it, because people were afraid of brown, Muslim people coming to our country and invading us. This happening shortly before 9/11. That political mindset carried through to when the detention centres were set up in Papua New Guinea, and the treatment has just got increasingly more severe. They used to process people slowly before letting them into Australia. Now, no one gets processed. They're forced to languish indefinitely. At the minute, most people have been there for over 1,000 days.

What inspired you to make this film?

I am first-generation Australian, but my parents were born in 1937 in Poland [to a Jewish family]. Three out of four of my grandparents were killed in the Holocaust, so I grew up in the shadow of genocide in a very idyllic and lucky way. My parents immigrated to Australia in the 1950s, and so I had all the benefits of that. I had a great, upper-middle-class upbringing. I went to private school, but because I had knowledge of all these things that have happened to my family, it really informed all the work I ended up doing—this film included.



Even as a journalist, I didn't understand the scope of this issue until I saw the film. What was it like getting access to these camps?

It was very hard, and I am very thankful for those who came forward, and those who had the courage to bring such detailed footage out. A lot of people don't know the details of what's going on, or are really confused about it. There's a lot of secrecy and there's a massive propaganda campaign in place by the Australian government, so very few people know what is actually happening inside the detention camps. I can't go into detail of how we got in, but it was a very tense process.

Are you or the whistleblowers in danger of being arrested by the Australian government now that this film is out?

As you know, since this film was finished, new legislation came out that goes after whistleblowers. That means doctors and nurses, people who witness sexual abuse of children by guards and detainees. It allows the government to put anybody who speaks out in prison, and that's a scary thought, because it makes me seriously question whether Australia is actually a democracy at this point.

I'm so proud that we've done it, but [creating the film] definitely came at a cost. I obviously don't have a lot of respect for the decisions the Australian government has been making, but I want Australian people and politicians to come and see what their policies and their taxes are doing. Hopefully common sense will win out.

The focus of having these whistleblower characters in the film rather than just telling the stories of the refugees was an interesting choice. Why did you go that route?

The asylum seekers and refugees in the film tell a huge part—if not almost all of the story—and I wanted to tell all of that aspect, but I really feel like the whistleblowers are, as always in theses situations, the heroes. Most of them are pretty damaged. Almost all of the ones I spoke to [in the film] had suffered some form of PTSD from their time at the camps. They were completely ill-equipped and had no idea what they were getting into.



Filmmaker Eva Orner: "I want Australian people and politicians to come and see what their policies and their taxes are doing."

There have been news stories about these camps before, but we haven't had that inside look until now. What shocked you the most when you first saw footage from the inside?

Well, right after I saw the footage, I had to ask refugees who had got out if this was what it really was like, and they told me that's exactly what it was. I was shocked by the tents, the confinement, the lack of privacy, the footage of the conditions small children are living in... I'm horrified my tax money is going to that. I think we should all be deeply ashamed. With that said, here in Canada, [your government] was very similar to ours until recently. Trudeau is an anomaly—I'm a bit of a fan—in a world that's becoming more and more conservative.

Does that worry you—that the world is becoming more conservative with the Donald Trumps and the Ted Cruzes of the world?

That's why I do what I do. You fight back with words, with books, with films or protesting. We're reaching a tipping point—certainly in Europe, with the millions of refugees coming into the EU. I think Angela Merkel will go down and be praised in centuries as an extraordinary woman, but right now, she's in a lot of trouble because of anti-refugee sentiment. Truly, I think the world changed after the Allies' invasion of Iraq. I think in 100 years people will look back on this as the fall of the Persian Empire.

We destabilized everything in the Middle East. Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan. It's a disaster and it's completely our fault. Australia, Canada, America, France, Britain—we have all our hands all over it, and as a result, there are all these refugees. But we don't want to help them. We created an issue, but we feel it's not ours to clean up.



There's this moment in the film where former Australian PM Malcolm Fraser is interviewed by you and talks fondly about letting in 70,000 Vietnamese refugees following the Vietnam War. Why did you include that?

After Fraser did that, our country changed. We now have this large, thriving community of Vietnamese Australians, and I defy any Aussie who doesn't eat pho once a week [laughs]. To me, that was such an amazing contribution to our country, yet now, during this crisis, our refugee intake is at the lowest it's been in a decade. People say, "What are we going to do, let everyone in? We're going to be invaded."

And they know that's not the truth—if they close the camps and start accepting refugees, they know they could fix these issues, but they also know that the boats will come again. The thing is that we live in a different world—we have to step up. We need to take responsibility for the fact that we have their blood on our hands.

What do you think's driving that xenophobia in places like Australia?

It's pretty simple: they're brown, they're Muslim, they're from countries that we consider undesirable. Since 9/11, it's been really played up, that brown people are terrorists. Say there was a war in Europe and England was invaded, and a bunch of white people went to the coast, got on boats, and came to Australia. Do you really think we'd be sending them to Manus and Nauru? I think the bias is pretty clear here, it's a racial one.

I gently invite these politicians that enforce these policies to come see the film. The beautiful thing was that, when Malcolm Fraser died, there were large crowds of Vietnamese people at his funeral. They held signs thanking him. Thanking him for taking a chance. We need to take that chance.

***Chasing Asylum* plays May 8 at the Scotiabank Theatre in Toronto.**

Metro – May 1, 2016 (1 of 2)

New doc 'Quebec My Country Mon Pays' examines exodus of English-speaking Quebecers

May 1, 2016 by: **Victoria Ahearn**



Director John Walker is shown at the Mount Royal lookout in this undated handout photo. Documentary filmmaker John Walker grew up an English-speaking Quebecer, alongside French children that didn't seem to like anglophone kids like himself. Walker charts his personal experiences and examines the exodus of anglophones in "Quebec My Country Mon Pays," which had its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Saturday. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO - John Walker Productions

TORONTO — Documentary filmmaker John Walker grew up an English-speaking Quebecer, alongside French children that didn't seem to like anglophone kids like himself.

Still, he says he was never "anti-French" and when he eventually fled the province — as an estimated 500,000 English-speaking Quebecers did in the wake of the Quiet Revolution — he quickly felt homesick.

Walker charts his personal experiences and examines the exodus of anglophones in "Quebec My Country Mon Pays," which had its world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Saturday.

Interviewees in the doc include filmmaker Denys Arcand and writer Jacques Godbout.

"This is a Canadian story that hasn't really been told from a native-born, English-speaking Quebecer's point of view," he says. "It's about this major shift that took place in Canada, within Quebec, and frankly had a big impact on Toronto.

"It's a story that a lot of Canadians are not aware of, but it's a very personal story."

Walker appears on camera as he details Quebec's cultural change during that time period as well as his family history in the province going back 250 years.

He says he was sympathetic to the independent movement in Quebec but he and many others reluctantly moved away out of fear that they wouldn't have a future as English-speaking citizens in the province.

"When I first came to Toronto, it was like coming to a foreign country," recalls Walker, who left Quebec in the 1970s and now lives in Halifax.

"I was like, 'There's nobody speaking French in the streets.' I missed the French and I realized how much the French had influenced me, Quebecois cinema, Quebecois culture, the urgency and importance of language and culture."

Walker's parents eventually followed him to Toronto in 1980 but his sister refused to move, which caused a division within the family.

A few years ago, when his father died and the family brought his body back to Quebec to bury him in his hometown, Walker grew sad and angry that his parents had to uproot themselves.

"I realized that our family had been exiled, divided, and my father's life had been turned upside down when he was 52, moving to Toronto, leaving his friends, leaving his fellow artists behind."

Walker says he wanted to make the film to show that time period in Quebec was necessary and important, that both the English and French have been influenced by each other, and that "there's no need for the two solitudes anymore."

"On some level it's a love letter to Quebec and to bridge this gap, this understanding," he says. "I'm not anti-French, I never had any anti-French in our house spoken, quite the contrary.

"So it's not about being against something, it's about understanding each other. Ironically, I think the English Quebecers are the French Quebecers' best friends, because we understand — at least in our family — understood and were sympathetic to what was going on."

Toronto Star – May 1, 2016 (1 of 3)

Finding a reason to cheer at Hot Docs

May 1, 2016 by: Linda Barnard

Cheer Up, a documentary about a sad cheerleading squad of Finnish teens has its world premiere at Hot Docs.



There was nothing cheerful about Finland's Arctic Circle Spirit Ice Queens cheerleading squad when Toronto director Christy Garland first laid eyes on the teen girls.
"When I saw this team, they really did look like the saddest team of cheerleaders I had ever seen," said Garland, who profiles some of the morose members of the awkward squad and the challenges they face in her documentary *Cheer Up*.

The movie, one of 71 Canadian and co-production Canadian films at Hot Docs, has its world premiere at the fest Sunday. Three of the film's Finnish subjects will be at Hot Docs.
Far from a zero-to-hero story, there's nothing predictable about *Cheer Up* as it examines the lives of young women in a small town on the Arctic Circle and their adult coach, Miia Norvapalo. She's a striver and has bigger dreams for them, yet has her own issues to contend with.

When Garland heard about a cheerleading squad in northern Finland that was on a permanent losing streak, she was intrigued about the potential for a deeper story, one that got beyond "this whole negative stereotype of what cheerleading was," Garland explained. "I kind of just pictured short skirts and silly smiles and sex objects."

She learned cheerleading is a global, competitive sport that has nothing to do with urging a team to victory. While editing her previous film, *The Bastard Sings the Sweetest Song*, in Demark in 2011, Garland decided to check out the bottom-dwelling cheerleading team.

Garland and Finnish cinematographer Sari Aaltonen arrived in time to shoot the Ice Queens' less-than-stellar performance at a local competition. It wasn't an isolated incident.

"You all seem depressed out there," Norvapalo tells the cheerleaders after a particularly lacklustre practice. "Try to cheer up."

"What appealed to me about (their sadness) was it kind of felt like a nice metaphor for being a young woman, where you put the cheerleading costume on and a bow on your head, and you look pretty, and you're expected to be happy and successful while on the inside you're actually dealing with real things, real life issues and private battles," Garland said.

"I always knew I wanted to turn it inside out and use the packaging of cheerleading to explore the complexity of young women's lives."

There was certainly a lot going in the lives of the two then-16-year-olds Garland focuses on: Aino Selin and Patricia (Patu) Fisk. Patu is mourning her mother, who died three years before, while dealing with the fact her father's girlfriend is pregnant.

As for conflicted Aino, "I think a lot of people see themselves in Aino," said Garland of the pensive teen, who is torn between seeking independence and the lure of partying vs. the discipline of the cheerleading squad.

What will seem strange to Canadians is that neither teens lived at home with their families, something that Garland found quite common in Finland.

The Ice Queens have reasons — both personal and cultural — for looking less high-wattage than the typical American squad of bouncy, toothy, hollering athletes.

Finns tend toward the reserved (yelling cheers is challenging) and they don't embrace the upbeat American-style can-do spirit of try, try again, Norvapalo, 33, told the Star from her home in Rovaniemi, Finland.

Norvapalo admits she had no idea about the deeper emotional struggles of Aino and Patu until she saw the final version of *Cheer Up*. But then Norvapalo — who embraced the motto "no pain, no gain" with such fervour after an eye-opening trip to a Dallas cheerleaders' convention she has it tattooed on her torso — has some challenges of her own to face.

Garland spent three years following the Ice Queens, who struggled with lifts (and the occasional bloody nose) as much as self-esteem. *Cheer Up* brings balance with light and occasionally bizarre moments, like when Patu takes her beloved cat Sissi for her regular walk — on a leash — along a snowy path.

Norvapalo knows what it takes to be cheerleader. She switched from gymnastics to cheerleading as a kid after she saw a "really old" movie, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. She's still coaching several teams. The Ice Queens are now the Ice Breakers, thanks to the addition of a male cheerleader.

As for having cameras following her and revealing some of her personal struggles, Norvapalo found it initially challenging. "But Christy really explained it to me that it's important to be in that film because people, especially women, relate to that a lot, so I hope it's an example that things work out even if it doesn't seem like it would."

Cheer Up screens Sunday, May 1 at 7 p.m. at the Scotiabank; Thursday, May 5 at 7 p.m. at the TIFF Bell Lightbox and Saturday, May 7 at 6:30 p.m. at the Lightbox. Go to[*hotdocs.ca*](hotdocs.ca) *for tickets.*

Toronto Star – May 1, 2016 (1 of 2)

Frida Kahlo's art captured through photography and film at Hot Docs

May 1, 2016 by: MARTIN KNELMAN

Japanese photographer Miyako Ishiuchi spotlighted in Hot Docs film about artist.



League of Exotique Dancers no doubt created more buzz and drew bigger crowds than *The Legacy of Frida Kahlo* on Thursday, the first night of Hot Docs. But I chose *Frida* and felt lucky to have a chance to see it on the big screen the way it was meant to be seen at TIFF Bell Lightbox.

Granted, *Exotique* was the official opening night selection and it was shown at the festival's HQ, the Bloor Hot Docs cinema. But that film is opening soon for an extended run, whereas *Frida*strikes me as the kind of gem that's hard to find once this festival is over. It's also the kind of doc you want to see on a big screen so you can savour the images with their glorious shapes and colours in precise detail.

We know from the title that it's about an artist who was brilliant, defiant, exotic and beloved — and even more esteemed now than she was during her turbulent lifetime.

What the title doesn't reveal is that this is actually a film about two artists. The second artist is the brilliant Japanese photography artist Miyako Ishiuchi, who in the film travels to Mexico to inspect the inventory of Kahlo's personal belongings, discovered 58 years after her death.

That explains why a doc about the legacy of a revered dead artist who was half Mexican and half German has been made by a Japanese director. Tadasuke Kotani, who was present Thursday at the first of the film's three Hot Docs screening, didn't know a lot about Kahlo. But he worshipped Ishiuchi and jumped at the chance to make a film about her.

As it happens, Ishiuchi is obsessed with personal possessions left over from the past and the stories they tell about the lives of fascinating people who are no longer around to speak for themselves.

In February, I saw *Postwar Shadows*, a multi-part exhibition of Ishiuchi's life work, at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. This was the award-winning photo artist's first major North American show.

To evoke the memory of her mother, Ishiuchi not only took shots of her mother's body shortly before her death in 2000 but also pictures of her mother's personal belongings, including old shoes, girdles and used lipstick.

But the most shocking images at the Getty were from Ishiuchi's Hiroshima series, featuring garments and objects that survived the explosion of the atomic bomb.

It's a natural segue from the Getty exhibit to Ishiuchi's mission to explore whatever revelations she could in Kahlo's personal effects, including costumes, embroideries, painted bras, pills and nail polish. It's a way of expressing a bond between artists of different eras.

In many ways *The Legacy of Frida Kahlo* is a chronicle not only about connecting the dots but also a tale of opposites and unlikely alliances. This mission closes the gaps between Japan and Mexico, between painting and photography, between the gender politics of Kahlo's era and the gender politics of today; and ultimately between the living and the dead.

Kahlo has become so revered both as an artist and as a feminist icon that it's easy to forget she was once known mainly as the wife of a man who had a bigger reputation in the culture world: Diego Rivera.

One theme that dominates this doc is the extent of the suffering that Kahlo endured. She not only had chronic health problems but sustained serious injuries in a bus crash.

Through the film we visit the Blue House in Mexico where Kahlo and Diego spent most of their days, and where she was often defiantly advancing her art while she suffered agonizing pain and tried to recover with the help of medication.

One of the most memorable sequences takes us to the ritual observation of Mexico's Day of the Dead.

But Kahlo's creative achievements are the opposite of morbid and depressing; they put us into a state of joy and happiness.

Even if there are interludes along the way when the pace seems too slow and the style too self-consciously artful, in the end what the film delivers is the pleasure of discovering how the combination of epic talent and determination can trump human misery in the long run.

The final screening of the film is 7 p.m. Friday at the Fox Theatre.

Book launch

In the cultural world David Goldbloom is known as the former chair of the Stratford Festival board and the current chancellor of Stratford's senate. But his profession is in the field of mental health and, despite roots in Montreal, he's made his career as one of Toronto's leading psychiatrists. Goldbloom is also a prolific writer and will be talking about his new book *How Can I Help?* at the next Ramsay Talks, May 5 at the Four Seasons Yorkville hotel. The ticket price includes a copy of the book.

mknelman@thestar.ca

CP24 – May 1, 2016





DIRECTOR OF 'MATTRESS MEN' DISCUSSES FILM

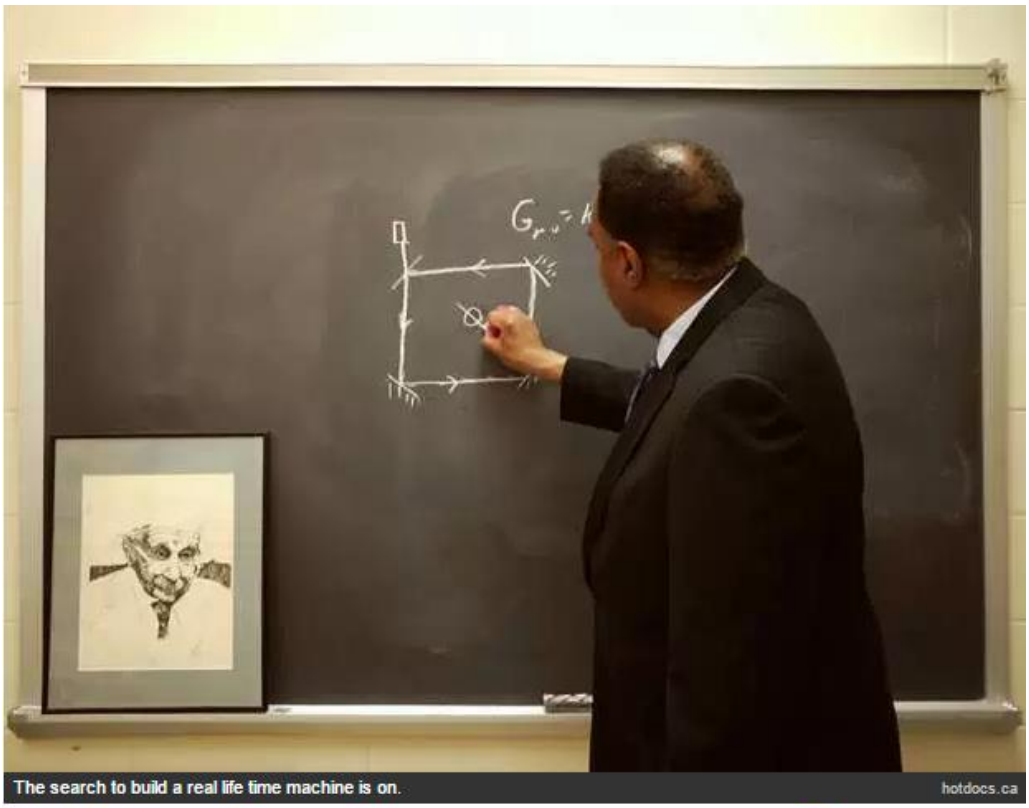
Colm Quinn, director of the documentary 'Mattress Men,' discusses the film, which is premiering at Hot Docs.

Sunday, May. 1, 2016

National Post – May 2, 2016 (1 of 3)

How H.G. Wells inspired two men to build a time machine in hopes of mending a heartbreaking past

May 2, 2016 by: CHRIS KNIGHT



Movies are time machines. All of them provide a window into the past, whether it's the 16 seconds since you made that iPhone video of your cat, or the 120 years since the Lumière brothers shot footage of a steam train entering a station.

They are also storehouses of the dead. Everyone in that 1896 film – indeed, everyone on Earth that day, all 1.6 billion of them – is gone.

So it is perhaps not surprising that some of our strongest reactions to film come about when the science and fiction of time travel collide on celluloid. In 1960, Rod Taylor starred in a filmed adaptation of H.G. Wells' The Time Machine, written in 1895. Two little boys discovered the story soon after, and have been working to duplicate the feat ever since.

How to Build a Time Machine is Canadian director Jay Cheel's look at these men's stories.

In many ways, they could not be more different. Rob Niosi is constructing a perfect replica of the machine from the movie, starting with a barber chair purchased from a Rockefeller estate auction, and adding metal rails, a rotating disc, crystal controls and flashing lights.

Ron Mallett, meanwhile, is a theoretical physicist working on the science of time travel. His device at the University of Connecticut is a stack of super-cooled ring lasers, bathed in dry ice and an unearthly, perhaps untimely green glow.



Cheel's subjects also have very different goals. Niosi hopes his beautiful Victorian device will last for generations, travelling some 200 years into the future, albeit in real time. He imagines his great-great-grandchildren puzzling over what to do with it.

Mallett is haunted by the death of his beloved father, which happened when the boy was just 10. Since then, he has dedicated his life to understanding how time travel could work, with a notion that he might somehow warn his 33-year-old dad of the impending heart attack.

Mallett will have no great-great-grandchildren; he decided to remain childless, lest his offspring love him less than he did his own father. "It's almost like a curse for him," Cheel says sadly, "though I don't know if he would see it that way."

Cheel's curiosity is more cinematic: "I had been interested in time travel in terms of storytelling," he says.

Films can compress or extrude time; an unbroken take shows real time, while a jump cut can leap over a minute or a million years. He was also entranced by location footage shot prior to 1979. “Anything filmed before I was born is immediately interesting,” he says. “It feels like you’re looking through a window.”



hotdocs.ca

But in interviewing Niosi he saw additional parallels between time and film. In the ’80s, Niosi was an animation director for Pee-wee’s Playhouse, and might spend eight hours creating 12 seconds of stop-motion footage. If a spaceship were to accelerate to 99.97 per cent of light speed, time dilation due to relativity would make 12 seconds for the traveller equal eight hours on Earth. “Cinema as a time machine,” says Cheel.

How to Build a Time Machine isn’t even Cheel’s first foray into the subject. A student film he made in 2005, Obsessed & Scientific – watchable on Vimeo and featuring a cheeky copyright date of MCMLX – shows a younger Niosi hard at work on his time machine.
Obsessed & Scientific also explored the story of John Titor, an alleged time traveler from 2036 who posted on Internet bulletin boards at the turn of the century; his predictions have since been discredited. “There’s a sincerity that would have been annihilated by this John Titor thing,” Cheel says of his decision to leave this part of the story out of How to Build a Time Machine.

He’s much more interested in the twin tales of the craftsman and the physicist. Niosi is driven by a sense of romance and adventure; when he sits in his creation, it’s as though he’s a Victorian gentleman-scientist travelling forward to our age. For Mallett, his research offers a potential solution to a personal trauma.

Hot Docs: Movies about easy conflict, hard peace Review: Documentary 'Obit' celebrates the life before the death

May 2, 2016 by: Leanne Elnicki



'New York Times' morgue manager Jeff Roth looks through a drawer of index cards. The morgue is where all of the paper's clippings, photos, microfilm, books and other archival materials are kept. (Green Fuse Films)

Death is a taboo topic. Most of us don't like to talk about our own let alone anyone else's, but for a core group of writers at the *New York Times*, death is what drives their craft. They are the people whose job it is to write about the very famous, and often barely famous who have died. They are the writers who make up one of the last fully-staffed Obits departments at any U.S. newspaper.

The new documentary film 'Obit' explores what their jobs entail. The responsibility is tremendous, and these writers feel the weight of that. What they also feel is a drive to be accurate and fair, and that means writing truthfully about a person's foibles and even their felonies. As senior obituary writer Margalit Fox puts it, "We are not friends. We are not advocates. We are certainly not any sort of grief counsellor. We are reporting the news."

But how does one condense a lifetime into 500 words? Turns out it is not that simple, and director Vanessa Gould's film allows us to gain an appreciation for not only the task at hand but also the eloquence with which this team of journalists presents a life on paper. Gould observes some of the writers as they pore over their subjects – from conducting an interview with a recently widowed woman over the phone, to the process of selecting which photos to use, to wrestling with the tone and length of their articles.

That isn't to say that every obituary is warmly received. "He told me to curl my fist into a tight ball and knock all my own teeth out," said writer William Grimes of the step-son of one of his subjects.

Much of the film is shot at the writers' desks and at meetings. Other times we hear from them in their homes, speaking directly to camera. I enjoyed these moments and felt very much like they were speaking to me. I'm new to writing about documentaries but I cannot recall many movies I have seen where this technique is employed.

Other times we are treated to rich photographic and video footage of some of the subjects of the *Times*' obits. The paper's massive catalogue of photos is staggering, as is the place where they are kept. If Gould didn't know about "the morgue" before she started filming then bully for her. It's easily my favourite part of the movie – getting to peer into this catacomb of cabinets, file cards and papers, and the lone man who staffs it, Jeff Roth, is as delightfully quirky as you would hope someone working in a place called "the morgue" would be.

Times' staffer Paul Vitello sums up the task of the obit writer this way: he must use as few words as possible to say as much as possible. I would say that in 90 minutes, Gould has been able to say so very much in a film that should appeal to many. She's shown us that an obit isn't so much about death as it is about life. Everyone has a story, and thanks to the writers at the *Times*, we're able to learn a great deal about some of the more memorable and unique people who have lived among us.
"Obit" has 4 screenings at Toronto's Hot Docs film festival.

Hot Docs: Five stories of endless war

May 2, 2016 by: Olivia Ward

Five Hot Docs movies capture the intractability — 'addiction' in the words of one director — of violence.



PAULA BRONSTEIN / GETTY IMAGES

For years, Australia has been holding would-be refugees on remote Pacific islands. Here, detained children are seen on Christmas Island in 2012.

War and peace.

The line between the two is often razor-thin. For people caught up in conflicts, war does not begin with a single shot, or end with the signing of a treaty. It is a continuum that may start with sporadic hostilities and end only after generations.

In this year's Hot Docs film festival, five films tell the stories of people in far-flung countries who are plunged into conflicts beyond their control, fight for causes against overwhelming odds, flee the savagery of war and face a lifelong struggle to repair their minds and bodies after unimaginable horrors. The films also document the heroic efforts that are needed to make peace once hatred has turned to violence.

"People become addicted to the narrative of war," says James Demo director of *The Peacemaker*, on the extraordinary efforts of Irish-American activist Padraig O'Malley to find solutions to seemingly intractable conflicts between people who are consumed by hatred for their foes. "That's why wars are so difficult to end.

"Padraig's central premise is that that narrative is an addiction like alcoholism, and there are relapses. But if people begin to acknowledge it, things can improve. He sees the possibility to reconcile, and he knows that peacemaking is not immediate, it's incremental. It takes trust, built over time."

Once begun, conflicts burn out of control, accelerated by bloodshed. In the small British-ruled province of Northern Ireland, the 30-year war known as the Troubles took more than 3,600 lives, tore Protestant and Catholic communities apart and left a dark legacy of atrocities.

Peaceful resolution did not come overnight. In the midst of armed struggle there was a parallel struggle for human rights and political change, waged through tactics of sacrifice and endurance from behind bars in Belfast's Maze prison, where Irish Republican Army members were imprisoned. It was a battle for hearts and minds as intense as the one on the streets.
Its figurehead was 27-year-old IRA officer Bobby Sands, who died of a hunger strike after being elected an MP. "No one knew the impact that would have at the time," saysBrendan Byrne, director of *Bobby Sands: 66 Days*. "It woke up North America to the need for it to be a player in making peace. That was the beginning of the peace process and the changes we see today."

In Israel, where hope for peace with the Palestinians is currently fading, Yitzhak Rabin spent his youth as a warrior, fighting Palestinians and Arab armies who were hostile to the Jewish state. Yet he dedicated his later years to making peace with his enemies, even at the risk of his political career — and eventually his life.
"He always spoke his mind no matter what the cost," says Erez Laufer, director of *Rabin in His Own Words*. "He had the conviction that land is for political solution not settlement. He believed in expunging the motivation for conflict." Since his assassination, in 1995, by a Jewish extremist, relations between Israelis and Palestinians have worsened, settlements have expanded in the Palestinian Territories and violent attacks on Jewish Israelis continue.

"Now we feel we are living more in war than in peace," says Laufer.

While Israel and the Palestinians struggle with a bitter low-level conflict, much of the Middle East has exploded, sending millions of refugees into neighbouring countries and Europe. But the lesser-known plight of the Asian refugees who sought shelter in Australia is a symbol of the growing disregard for the rights of desperate people fleeing wars to enter countries where they could find safety.
Chasing Asylum, by director Eva Orner, exposes the policy of exiling refugees to indefinite captivity in remote Pacific islands, which was embraced by Australia's main political parties as a way to stop "floods" of newcomers from arriving on its shores. But it has caused unending suffering for people already traumatized by war and terrorism, as well as international criticism. And it is a warning to other Western countries that seek to bar refugees as potential enemies.

Even for those who survive it, the claws of war reach down through decades. World War II has long ended, and newer wars have caught the world's attention. But the Korean, Chinese and Filipina victims of Japan's sexual slavery in the 1930s and 40s are still suffering its effects, and their families must come to terms with the shock of the past.
"They are living in an unending war," says Tiffany Hsiung, director of *The Apology*, about the "comfort women" still seeking justice for the sexual torture they endured at the hands of the Japanese military. "It doesn't just affect them, but also the next generation."

Rape is now recognized as a war crime that destroys the victims physically and psychologically — though they are often left without support. "It's a form of genocide," Hsiung says. "It affects women, their families, and their society. There must be accountability, and newer generations must understand the history, not be protected from it. What has happened is not just in the past."

5 Hot Doc films movies about war and peace

The Apology

Featured countries: Japan, Korea, Philippines

Director: Tiffany Hsiung

It took six years for Hsiung to understand and film the lives of former "comfort women" who are now in their last days, and some rapidly losing their memories. But memories of their terrible experiences at the hands of Japanese soldiers haunt their minds and bodies, making their quest for justice — if only a meaningful acknowledgment of their suffering as sex slaves — all the more courageous and poignant. An official apology to the South Korean government, and $8.3 million in compensation by Japan, has done little to heal their wounds.

"Whatever happens, their lives have been changed forever," says Hsiung, who followed the exhausting journey of one ailing Korean woman, "Grandma Gil," through a modern Japan which is eager to put its brutal past behind it. But the survivors' best hope, Hsiung says, is to shine a light on the infamous events that have left them isolated and shrouded in shame.

Bobby Sands: 66 Days

Featured country: Northern Ireland

Director: Brendan Byrne

Northern Ireland's history is written in the blood of Catholics and Protestants who waged a 30-year struggle that amounted to civil war. Now, 18 years after a historic power-sharing , the province has moved on, but the name of Bobby Sands is still engraved in the minds of both sides. The days of rage that led to the young IRA officer's imprisonment, jailhouse protests and eventual death from a hunger strike at the age of 27, are chronicled through Sands's diaries and archival material.

Using docudrama re-enactments and interviews with Sands's surviving cellmates, friends and historians, the film unspools his interior life, as he moves toward certain death with determination and conviction that he is playing a part in history. And Byrne reveals the political game-playing in London, Washington and Dublin that left the province on a course of conflict until the shock of Sands's death, and those of prisoners who followed him, jolted the peace process into life.

Chasing Asylum
Featured country: Australia
Director: Eva Orner

Australia is famous as a sunny land of welcoming people. But for those fleeing conflicts in Afghanistan, the Middle East and parts of Asia its doors have been slammed shut. Seized as they attempt to reach Australia by boat, exiled to some of the world's remotest islands, and living in squalid captivity in political limbo, they are forgotten castaways of the West's most hard-line refugee policy.

Australian-born director Orner used hidden cameras to reveal, for the first time on film, the appalling conditions of detention on the South Pacific island state of Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. They are closed to the media, and recent laws have criminalized Australian state employees who blow the whistle on the deprivation, repression and abuse suffered by those seeking asylum under international law. Conditions so harsh that even the aid workers have suffered post-traumatic stress. This week Papua New Guinea's supreme court ruled that the refugees' detention is illegal. The film's upcoming showings in Australia are sure to raise a political storm.

The Peacemaker
Featured country: global
Director: James Demo

Padraig O'Malley is an obsessive "freelance peacemaker" with a simple but laborious formula for reaching peace deals: bringing two sides that hate each other face to face to talk. For decades the University of Massachusetts professor — and owner of a storied bar — has done that by bringing in other conflict veterans who have already reached accords. Demo follows the little-known mediator who has worked with factions from Northern Ireland to Iraq, Israel/Palestine and South Africa while wrestling with his own alcoholism.

Unlike institutional peacemakers, who work in highly structured settings, O'Malley raises his own funds and support, but has the advantage of informality, and a round-table approach to talks among people who may have little common ground but come to understand each other's dilemmas. His approach has been called a "support group for Conflicts Anonymous." At a time of seemingly intractable conflicts, the film highlights an approach worth studying.

Rabin in His Own Words
Featured country: Israel
Director: Erez Laufer

As attitudes harden and the divide between Israelis and Palestinians becomes a yawning chasm, the peace efforts of earlier decades are fading into history — along with the influence of the Israeli peace camp. It reached its zenith under the leadership of Yitzhak Rabin, whose early life was steeped in

war, but who became the main proponent of peace with hostile neighbours Egypt and Jordan, as well as PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Lavishly documented with words and images from Rabin's past as a would-be farmer, soldier, military leader, diplomat, politician and prime minister, the film is a historical record of a man who shunned the spotlight but worked relentlessly toward his goal of securing Israel through negotiation rather than battle, even at a time of terrorism. A portrait of an often-elusive leader who roused flaring anger among Israeli extremists, and died for his unswerving vision of Israel's future.

Hot Docs runs until May 8 at various theatres in Toronto. For more information, go tohotdocs.ca

Hot Docs: Movies about easy conflict, hard peace

May 2, 2016 by: Olivia Ward

Five international movies about war and peace.



HANDOUT

"Grandma Gil," one of the "comfort women" abused by Japanese soldiers during the Second World War, seen with a controversial "peace statue" in Seoul.

The Apology
Featured countries: Japan, Korea, Philippines
Director: Tiffany Hsiung
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Bobby Sands: 66 Days



PETER MACDIARMID

A mural depicts Bobby Sands in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 1981, republican Sands died in prison after a 66-day hunger strike.

Featured country: Northern Ireland
Director: Brendan Byrne
Northern Ireland's history is written in the blood of Catholics and Protestants who waged a 30-year struggle that amounted to civil war. Now, 18 years after a historic power-sharing peace agreement, the province has moved on, but the name of Bobby Sands is still engraved in the minds of both sides. The days of rage that led to the young IRA officer's imprisonment, jailhouse protests and eventual death from a hunger strike at the age of 27, are chronicled through Sands's diaries and archival material.

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Chasing Asylum



A still from the Hot Docs movie Chasing Asylum, about refugees headed for Australia but winding up in remote island encampments.

Featured country: Australia
Director: Eva Orner

Australia is famous as a sunny land of welcoming people. But for those fleeing conflicts in Afghanistan, the Middle East and parts of Asia its doors have been slammed shut. Seized as they attempt to reach Australia by boat, exiled to some of the world's remotest islands, and living in squalid captivity in political limbo, they are forgotten castaways of the West's most hard-line refugee policy.

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The Peacemaker



A still from The Peacemaker, about "freelance peacemaker" Padraig O'Malley.

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Director: James Demo

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Rabin in His Own Words



RON EDMONDS

The famous 1993 photo of U.S. President Bill Clinton presiding over White House ceremonies marking the signing of the peace accord between Israel and the Palestinians, with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, left, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, right.

Featured country: Israel
Director: Erez Laufer

As attitudes harden and the divide between Israelis and Palestinians becomes a yawning chasm, the peace efforts of earlier decades are fading into history — along with the influence of the Israeli peace camp. It reached its zenith under the leadership of Yitzhak Rabin, whose early life was steeped in war, but who became the main proponent of peace with hostile neighbours Egypt and Jordan, as well as PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

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5 hot takes on Hot Docs 2016

May 2, 2016 by: **Ben Jamieson**



q is taking a deeper dive into some of the films at this year's Hot Docs (hotdocs.ca/Storyline Entertainment/Bell Media/CTM Docs)

Here at **q** we've been taking a deeper look at some of the amazing documentaries at this year's **Hot Docs Festival** in Toronto. Look below for some of the films featured on the program already, and for those still to come.

On q so far:

League of Exotique Dancers gives audiences an inside look at the Las Vegas burlesque scene of the 50's, 60's and 70's. Director **Rama Rau**, and **Burlesque Hall of Fame** members and subjects of the film **Camille 2000**and **Judith Stein**, join guest host Gill Deacon **to look back on the "golden years" and to look forward to future performances.**



CBC Radio – May 2, 2016 (3 of 3)

Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You is a look into the life of subversive television writer **Norman Lear**. He is the writer behind such tabbo-breaking sitcoms as All in the Family, Maude and The Jeffersons. Lear joins guest host Gill Deacon **to discuss his role in changing the television landscape and on what keeps him going strong at 93.**



Norman Lear — creator of subversive '70s sitcoms like All in the Family, Maude and The Jeffersons — looks back on the era's divisive debates (hotdocs.ca)

Spirit Unforgettable tells the story of lead singer of Canadian Celtic rock band **Spirit of the West**, John Mann's battle with early onset Alzheimer's and the band's final tour in light of the

diagnosis. In an emotional interview with guest host Gill Deacon, Mann's wife **Jill Daum** and filmmaker **Pete McCormick** **explore the idea of "making art out adversity" and the struggle of losing someone you love right before your eyes.**



CBC Radio – May 2, 2016 (3 of 3)

Strike a Pose is the story of the male dancers on Madonna's' Blond Ambition tour. While their performance on stage may have portrayed progressive stances on gay rights and sexual freedoms, off stage life was far more complicated. Former dancers **Oliver Crumes**, **Jose Gutierez** and **Kevin Stea** join guest host Gill Deacon **25 years after the tour that had such impact on their lives to look back on growing up and finding the courage to tell their truths.**



CTV – Canada AM – May 2, 2016

Angry Inuk: Documenting commercial seal hunting history

May 2, 2016 by: **Beverly Thomson**



Indiewire – May 2, 2016 (1 of 3)

Hot Docs Documentary Gets Dramatically Censored at the Last Minute

May 2, 2016 by: Chris O'Falt

An redacted version of a documentary capturing a community's fight against the development of a five-star resort will still screen tomorrow night.



It's hardly unprecedented for a documentary to encounter legal challenges based on some of its footage, but the challenge facing "The Opposition" is especially down to the wire: The filmmakers behind the new documentary received notice last Friday that they would not be able to use footage of one its four main subjects, former Papua New Guinean politician Dame Carol Kidu, at the film's world premiere at Hot Docs Festival in Toronto. The film tells the story of a residents of Port Moresby and their fight to prevent their homes from being leveled at the hands by the Paga Hill Development Company, who wanted to build a hotel and marina on the land.

Back in 2012, when filming commenced, Dame Carol Kidu was one of the leaders standing up for the human rights of the settlers. As she can be seen in this dramatic footage — which was shot as part of "The Opposition" and, according to the film's producer Rebecca Barry, was posted to YouTube by Kidu herself — Kidu was on the front lines, bravely standing up to armed policemen pleading for the demolition to stop so that residents could get their possessions out of their homes before they were bulldozed.

Since that time, Kidu has switched sides, and has been hired by the Paga Hill Development Company to help with the relocation of the residents. Five weeks ago, with the support of the development company, she brought a legal action against the filmmakers, trying to prevent them from using footage of herself, including onscreen interviews, for which Kidu signed an industry standard release form authorizing the filmmakers to publicly and commercially use the footage. Barry and director Hollie Fifer were aware that Kidu was concerned about the film, but they were caught completely off guard by the lawsuit — which was for breach of contract, not defamation.

"Not only did she sign a release form, she continued to stay engaged and allowed filming," Barry told Indiewire. "In 2014, she did a final interview with us in which she directly addresses the issues surrounding Paga Hill Development Company and her role as consultant. We also showed her a rough cut, which is extremely rare, a fine cut, we took aboard her feedback, and gave her right of reply at the end of the film in the form of text card. So for her to now say she didn't know what the film is about, and basically change her mind, sets a really dangerous precedent."



Hollie Fifer

Indiewire – May 2, 2016 (3 of 3)

When the filmmakers were discussing with Kidu about the final coda to the film, they were sideswiped by the lawsuit that claims Kidu was misled about the nature of the film. However, the judge did not rule against the use of any footage in "The Opposition," but rather that it could not be used prior to a hearing in June.

This left Fifer facing two possibilities: recut her film and present a redacted version at Hot Docs — or wait until after the matter was legally settled so that she could present the full version of the film somewhere else. As the legal battle was brewing, Fifer took the precaution of starting to get her post-production team in place and recruited actress Sarah Snook ("Steve Jobs") to provide voiceover narrative, which ultimately replaced the nine minutes of redacted footage. Then, once the judge made his ruling on April 23, she and her team worked around the clock for nine days so she could fly with a new version of the film to Toronto this weekend.



"The Opposition'

"It was a really hard decision because there's the real film and the redacted version, and I consider them two different pieces," Fifer told Indiewire. "It's heartbreaking to know the Hot Docs audience won't see the real film, but I think there's an opportunity here to have a wider discussion about freedom of speech and how hard it is for documentary filmmakers to be able to tell [our stories]. In a sense, we are just allowing the process to be transparent."

VICE – May 2, 2016 (1 of 5)

We Talked to a Director About the Cultural Obsession with Hot Murdered White Women

May 2, 2016 by: Manisha Krishnan



A few years ago, Hollywood director Kristy Guevara-Flanagan made a documentary examining the roots and legacy of Wonder Woman.

Called *Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines*, it was meant to be a celebration of feminist icons in pop culture.

"It was sort like 'rah, rah, go get 'em gal,'" Guevara-Flanagan told VICE. But afterward, she said her cynicism about how women are represented in the media and the dearth of opportunities for females in the film industry refused to wane, "so I turned to a darker perspective on it."

The result is *What Happened To Her*, a documentary about how murdered women are depicted on screen. Currently showing at Hot Docs film festival in Toronto, the movie is a montage of clips taken from films and TV shows in which a female character is killed. It's only 15 minutes long, and that's probably a good thing considering the graphic nature of the content.

"It's so hard to watch," Guevara-Flanagan said.

As the scenes roll, former actress Danyi Deats recalls her experience playing a dead girl in '80s cult classic *River's Edge*.

Guevara-Flanagan said fictional female murder victims are a trope—a symbol of the most fucked up thing that can happen to a community.

"She's the ultimate passive female figure, she has no voice, she cannot speak for herself or represent herself in any capacity."

VICE asked Guevara-Flanagan to explain her thought process behind the doc, and why she thinks society is so obsessed with attractive, dead (mostly white) women:

VICE: What drew you to this subject?

Kristy Guevara-Flanagan: It's something that has been brewing for a long time for me as a filmmaker and artist; gender has always been central to all of my work. I feel like I've been making the film in my head just by ticking off all dead bodies I've seen throughout the years. And then I started collecting the images and that was what the main bulk of the edit was, was looking for films

How did you go about putting together the montage of dead women?

I was definitely interested in the films because the whole narrative tends to revolve around this dead female body and the mystery enshrouding that death or some of the quintessential series like *Twin Peaks* and *True Detective*. There was kind of a body of films that that was the heart of the entire narrative and I really wanted to look at those closely. And then simultaneously I started scanning all the TV shows and organizing the material by the way in which they were filmed or found. So I had river bodies and earth bodies and aerial shots of very long, disturbing morgue sections. I wanted there to be a little bit of a chronology so that you build up to the morgue section which is what I always found to be probably the most disturbing aspect.


RIP Laura Palmer. Photo via Wikipedia.

One thing that struck me was how often they tend to be naked. Is there a sexual element involved?

Definitely. The women have a certain physical type, they tend to be attractive and thin and they're just given a lot of screen time whereas the male corpses are not. And in film, you never see dead men. Whether they're in clothes or not, they're always posed in a provocative way and and they're lingered on as well in a cinematic way. Even when they're horrifically violated or mutilated, I feel like there's always a sexual element to the way in which they are seen and that's really disturbing because they're all generally victims of violent crime. Particularly for films and series like *Twin Peaks* and *True Detective*, that violation symbolizes the worst thing that can happen in the community and yet there's this tension because we're glorifying their death and violation.

Do you think that's a reflection of society?

My kind of interest in this area really grew when I was an editor for the news and there were all these missing girls and they were usually white girls, at least those were the ones that got the media attention.

It's just this weird fascination and almost that interest in those kidnappings and often time something really awful had happened to them or they were killed, it regenerates that happening over and over again.

What's the worst thing someone can do, is violate a young girl? What's the worst thing that can happen to a community is their virgins are taken away and violated.

Another thing I noticed is the characters are overwhelmingly white.

It wasn't until I started watching *CSI Miami* and [*CSI] New York* that there was more diversity. It sort of harkens back to *The Birth of a Nation* where it's like the white woman, if you're going to violate the community, you violate her. Ironically, it's not about her, she's a symbol of the community but it's not about her as a human and I think that's something I was trying to get at as well. There's very few women of colour and the few that I did find I put in there.

Do you think we value white women more?

Symbolically, yes. And the message there is when a black woman is killed it's not a big deal. And I would say in terms of the real world we hear about that much less, it's less newsworthy attention.



Photo courtesy Hot Docs

Why did you choose to keep the film so short?

I wanted it to really be a very narrow reflection on how these bodies are portrayed and anything else was expanding on the argument but also letting it slip away, my first anger really about these kinds of images.

I kept getting it shorter and shorter because it's very hard to watch, I didn't want to add to the glorification and titillation of these kinds of bodies.

What were you angry about?

When you start to look at this over and over and over again and see the patterns it's really disturbing. Particularly for me in the morgue sections, there's this whole second violation of these already violated bodies. They're probing them and penetrating them and it's super graphic. And it's about how it's OK to just mutilate women's bodies for some kind of horrific narrative. I think it demonstrates our disregard for women's bodies and for women. You literally just have usually men over these bodies and playing with them.

Was Danyi Deats the only actress you ended up interviewing?

I didn't need to interview anybody else. Her experience just mirrored all that I was hoping and expecting to get. She is never alive and she's dead on screen for maybe just 35 percent of the film, her body is there, people are gathered around her as she rots naked. The thing I liked about her story too is it just mirrors a young actor's vulnerability in the industry. Not knowing what she was getting into and being asked to do more and more. She was 19 at the time, no acting experience.

Did she have any regrets?

It definitely changed her in that it made her realize she did not want to be in front of a camera. And she was sort of willfully naïve about the process and what would happen. You Google her name and all these images of her as a naked dead body come up but she has family now, she's got kids and she doesn't want them to see that.

How have people reacted to the movie?

It's really hard to watch is what they always say and that they don't want to watch it again.

This interview has been condensed for style and clarity.



Monday May 02, 2016

The unforgettable spirit of Spirit of the West

- 

John Mann, frontman for Canadian Celtic rock band Spirit of the West, is grappling with early onset of Alzheimer's at the age of 52. (Hot Docs/Bell Media)

Listen 24:14

- Can Susan Sarandon give meddling moms a better name?
- Madonna's ex-backup dancers dare to speak their truth
- **The unforgettable spirit of Spirit of the West**
- **FULL EPISODE**

How does one describe one's own dementia? For Spirit of the West frontman John Mann, it's a "numbing white fog" - or like a 'white wall - an empty white wall, nothing else.'

Mann was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease at the age of 51. A new documentary, *Spirit Unforgettable,* poignantly chronicles his struggle to process the news, and

the band's determination to keep making music together. In the course of the film, they approach their final gigs with joy in the face of misfortune.

Filmmaker **Pete McCormick** and Mann's wife **Jill Daum** join guest host Gill Deacon to discuss the documentary, the band's final tour, and what remains when the fog descends upon a person you love.

"Dementia is not the end of your life. There's a lot of living left," says McCormick.

WEB EXTRA | Spirit Unforgettable is screening at Toronto's Hot Docs Film Festival. Watch the trailer below.





Monday May 02, 2016

Madonna's ex-backup dancers dare to speak their truth



The cone bra, the simulated masturbation, the shirtless young dancers.

Madonna's famously boundary-smashing *Blonde Ambition World Tour* shocked the world in 1990. The next year an intimate film, *Madonna: Truth or Dare*, promised to take audiences behind the scenes.

Twenty-five years later, a new documentary shows there was far more going on backstage — from painful secrets to broken promises. *Strike a Pose* takes a closer and more nuanced look at Madonna's young male back-up dancers and what became of them when the wild ride was over.

CBC – q – May 2, 2016 (2 of 2)

In a warm and candid discussion, Oliver Crumes, Jose Gutierez and Kevin Stea join guest host Gill Deacon to discuss fame, friendship and everyone's need to face their own truth.

WEB EXTRA | *Strike a Pose* screens May 7 in Toronto as part of Hot Docs film festival in Toronto.



Plus, here's the trailer for *Madonna: Truth or Dare*.





25 years after Madonna: Truth or Dare, a new documentary called Strike a Pose takes a closer and more nuanced look at Madonna's male back-up dancers. (CTM Docs)

Hot Docs exclusive clip: “Sour Grapes”



1 week ago by Manori Ravindran

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Jerry Rothwell and Reuben Atlas’ *Sour Grapes* enjoys its world premiere at Hot Docs on Tuesday (May 3). The directors spoke with *realscreen* about making a film on the high stakes world of wine collecting. Check out an exclusive clip of the doc below.

They say you can’t put new wine into old bottles, but as the documentary *Sour Grapes* demonstrates, anyone building an empire on counterfeit wine has little time for proverbs.

The film – directed by *How to Change the World* helmer Jerry Rothwell (pictured below, left) and *Brothers Hypnotic* filmmaker Reuben Atlas (right) – follows the baffling case of Rudy Kurniawan (pictured above), a Chinese-Indonesian oenophile who stormed the American wine market in 2003. A keen collector with an encyclopedic knowledge of wine and a mysterious background, he became popular with exclusive tasting groups in New York and Los Angeles. In 2008, his collection was said to contain more than 50,000 bottles, and he was rumored to spend around US$1 million a month on his cellar.



Jerry Rothwell, Reuben Atlas

Over time, however, clients such as billionaire Bill Koch, who bought about 200 bottles from Kurniawan, and vigneron Laurent Ponsot of the Domaine Ponsot estate in Burgundy, France, began questioning the authenticity of the wines. When the collector's Los Angeles home was raided by FBI officials in March 2012, thousands of fake labels, rubber stamps marked with vintages and wine-making utensils were found. Kurniawan was convicted in December 2013 of mail fraud and sentenced in August 2014 to 10 years in prison, a US$20 million fine and $28 million in restitution to victims.

The two directors met at Kurniawan's trial in 2013, which was "saturated with feature doc makers," laughs Rothwell.

"Every witness that got off the stand was surrounded by people trying to make contact," he recalls. "Reuben and I always found ourselves at the back."

The pair had been working separately on projects about the case for about a year. Rothwell first heard of the story through a French producer who lived in Burgundy, and he had interviewed Ponsot ahead of the trial.

Atlas, too, was trying to make contact. Both directors say they had similar perspectives on the story and when they eventually convened in December 2013, Rothwell and Atlas' respective bases in Brighton, UK, and Brooklyn, U.S., catered to the international scope of the case.

"It's a story where it's hard to get people to talk about it, because either you've been conned and you feel foolish, or you just don't want to talk about that, or people think you're involved," says Rothwell. "It's one that's taken a long time to get people confident enough to speak about it."

Despite the initial hurdles securing access, the aptly titled *Sour Grapes* found backing relatively quickly. London-based distributor Dogwoof boarded the film at Sheffield Doc/Fest's MeetMarket in 2013, where Rothwell was pitching the film on his own. It was the first project Dogwoof had acquired at such early stages, and the first doc they financed from scratch.

The film was funded almost entirely though pre-sales (ARTE France, VPRO, DR, SVT, YLE, DBS, Medialaan among others) in collaboration with Met Film and French co-producer Faites un Voeu. Additional funding has come from EU Media, UK tax credits and CNC.



Bill Koch's wine cellar

Sour Grapes, which will have its international premiere at Sheffield Doc/Fest in June, joins the ranks of such popular wine docs as Jason Wise's *Somm* (2012), David Kennard's *A Year in Burgundy* and David Roach and Warwick Ross' *Red Obsession*. A challenge, Atlas notes, was humanizing this high-brow world, and showing that wealthy collectors were victimized by Kurniawan.

“The world of wine collectors is this ultra one-percent world. And when they’re talking about wine, if you’re a viewer just hearing about the story and you’re not into wine and don’t respect the art or collecting, it’s like, ‘Oh, these poor rich people got conned, give me a break,’ right?” says Atlas.

“But I think something that was interesting was that once we started delving into the story on a deeper kind of level, there was a sympathy and a sort of respect for the idea that these bottles could be worth $20,000, or worth as much as art that you put on the wall.

The film is comprised of interviews with the likes of Koch, who allows access into a labyrinthine cellar; as well as the detective-like Ponsot, who has spent the last five years tracking down individuals who fake his estate’s wines; and Arthur M. Sarkissian, a Hollywood producer who was friends with Kurniawan.

Some particularly impressive archival footage comes from about six hours of tape from 2002 shot by a producer pitching a wine show. Kurniawan was featured only in about four or five short segments, but he is captured, for example, joking about scamming his clients. The material was obtained by Koch as part of his case against Kurniawan.

“What was very interesting to us was at that time, that’s just when he’s, as far as we know, beginning the fake. So neither the filmmaker or the people he’s with really know what he’s up to,” says Rothwell.

“But we as the audience start to realize it, and there are these tiny little tantalizing clues where he’s kind of saying, ‘I scam people,’ and amazing, brazen things in a way where he actually says what he’s doing, but obviously says it in a joke.”



Inspecting Ponsot Clos de la Roche

Realscreen – May 2, 2016 (5 of 5)

Both directors say the making of the film went significantly faster than their previous work, due in large part to certain elements of the story. While Rothwell's *How to Change the World* took seven years from conception to finished film, the active production period on *Sour Grapes* took half the time.

"We'd both gone through the processes of grant writing and re-cutting trailers and things like that," says Atlas. "And this definitely seemed to go a lot faster, because of the con man story, and it's a crime. And true crime in the wine world? It was very sellable."

Next up for Atlas is a feature doc on the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), co-directed with Sam Pollard. The film is in mid- to late-stages of editing. Rothwell, meanwhile, is about to start the edit on a film on Indian educational researcher Sugata Mitra.

Check out an exclusive clip from Sour Grapes *below*

The film screens at Hot Docs tomorrow (May 3) as well as on Thursday (May 5) and Saturday (May 7)



Hot Docs Festival: 'The Peacemaker' Team Talks Addiction, PTSD and Recovery

Jennie Punter



Courtesy of Hot Docs
May 2, 2016 | 05:00AM PT

The concept of recovery, in both the political and personal realms, is explored in "The Peacemaker," Boston filmmaker James Demo's intimate portrait of international peace broker and author Padraig O'Malley.

The feature, which bowed earlier this month at Full Frame, had its international premiere over the weekend in Toronto at the Hot Docs festival, where it screens again this week.

Selected for the 2015 Sundance Doc Edit and Story Lab, "Peacemaker" tracks five years of the gridlock-breaking work of Dublin-born O'Malley, now 73, in major conflict zones—notably through the Forum for Cities in Transition, an annual gathering of civic leaders from divided cities in various stages of recovery initiated by the Moakley Chair of Peace and Reconciliation at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where O'Malley currently presides as the Distinguished Professor.

But the deep heart and mystery of “Peacemaker” are most keenly felt in the personal struggles of its central character, whose recovery from alcohol addiction has profoundly influenced his work.

The application of concepts typically used for individuals to entire nations—and how and if that can work—was the hot topic for the Hot Docs audience during the post-screening Q&A with O’Malley and the director.

“When it comes to post-traumatic stress disorder, people simply don’t behave like ordinary people,” said O’Malley, whose most recent book, “The Two-State Delusion: Israel and Palestine – A Tale of Two Narratives,” was published last summer. “When you look at a whole society through the prism of PTSD, it becomes difficult to interpret things, it becomes difficult to assign blame.”

Demo said O’Malley allowed the filmmaker to follow him around the world and also into deep personal territory “Padraig’s model for peacekeeping is based on the recovery model, and he gave me free rein to talk to anybody around him,” Demo said. “One of the questions in the film is, Why do some people want to change the world? It’s never a simple answer.”

Peace is not the absence of gunfire, O’Malley made clear. “In terms of conflict resolution, reconciliation is the most important thing—when the guns fall that is only just the beginning—ad reconciliation must be inter-generational,” he said.

“So very much like an alcoholic maintaining sobriety, peace will not come if both parties do not continue to work on reconciliation,” he added. “No society that doesn’t deal with its legacy of the past will ever recover.”

“The Peacemaker” was pitched at the 2013 Hot Docs Forum; the 2016 edition of the market’s marquee event opens Tuesday.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival runs through May 8.

Broadcaster – May 2, 2016

Hot Docs Announces Recipient of 2016 Don Haig Award

Hot Docs is pleased to announce that Toronto-based producer Ed Barreveld has been named this year's recipient of the Don Haig Award. The Award, now in its eleventh year, is presented by the Hot Docs Board of Directors to an outstanding Canadian independent producer with a feature-length film in competition at the Festival, and is selected by a jury of independent producers. The Award recognizes creative vision and entrepreneurship, as reflected in the recipient's body of work and Festival film, as well as a track record of mentoring emerging Canadian filmmakers. Barreveld is the producer of *League of Exotique Dancers* (D: Rama Rau), which had its world premiere as the opening night film at Hot Docs on Thursday, April 28. He will be presented with a $10,000 cash prize, courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation and Telefilm Canada, at the Hot Docs Awards Presentation on Friday, May 6.

"I'm so honoured with this recognition," said Ed Barreveld. "It's especially meaningful because Don Haig was not only a mentor—he executive produced my first film—but a dear friend."

Storyline Entertainment's Ed Barreveld is a veteran of the Canadian film and television industry who honed his filmmaking skills at the National Film Board of Canada. Post NFB, he line produced independent documentaries for various broadcasters before co-founding Storyline Entertainment in 2000 for its inaugural release Aftermath: The Remnants of War, a double Gemini Award nominee. Since 2004 he has been Storyline's sole principal, creating an international profile for the company with auteur driven social/political point of view documentaries and distinctive history programming.

In addition to developing young talent, Barreveld has worked with some of Canada's finest filmmakers and has forged partnerships with co-producers and investors in Germany, Belgium, Australia, Greece and the United States, creating a critically acclaimed body of work. Barreveld's films have sold internationally, have shown at festivals such as Tribeca, Hot Docs, IDFA, TIFF and have garnered many awards, including Gemini Awards for Shipbreakers (2005) and Tiger Spirit (2009), a Canadian Screen Award for The Real Inglorious Bastards (2014), an Emmy Award for Herman's House (2014) and an Emmy nomination for The World Before Her (2014).

He is currently producing the feature documentary Shadow Girl, a treaty co-production with Chile, the feature documentary Dolphin Man a treaty co-production with France and Greece and Take Light, Shasha Nakhai's first feature documentary.

As part of the Award, the recipient can name an emerging female documentary filmmaker to receive a $5,000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada, and professional development opportunities at the Hot Docs Festival to further her career path. Barreveld has named Toronto-based filmmaker Shasha Nakhai as recipient of this prize.

Past winners of the Don Haig Award include filmmakers Anne Pick (2015), Michael McNamara (2014), Merit Jensen Carr (2013), Mia Donovan (2012), Rama Rau (2011), Philip Lyall and Nimisha Mukerji (2010), Brett Gaylor (2009), Yung Chang (2008), Hubert Davis (2007), and Guylaine Dionne (2006).

‘The Apology’ Wows at Hot Docs Premiere

May 2, 2016 by: **Staff**



Director Tiffany Hsiung, Grandma Gil, producer Anita Lee
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.

The talk of the town this year at Hot Docs is Tiffany Hsiung’s *The Apology*. (Read the *POV* review here.) The film currently leads the rankings for the Audience Award at Hot Docs and the support comes as no surprise given the tremendous and emotional response at the film’s premiere. Here are some photos from the film’s Scotiabank Big Ideas screening where Hsiung participated in an extended Q&A with subject Gil Won-Ok (aka Grandma Gil) and Meehyang Yoon, Director of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Slavery:



Tiffany Hsiung at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.



Producer Anita Lee, Grandma Gil, Meehyang Yoon, Tiffany Hsiung
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.



View from the stage.
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.



Grandma Gil at the screening.
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.



Tiffany Hsiung at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.



Meehyang Yoon, Grandma Gil, and Tiffany Hsiung at the Scotiabank Big Ideas screening.
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.



Grandma Gil leaves the screening.
Photo: Jalani Morgan/NFB.

The Hollywood Reporter – May 3, 2016 (1 of 2)

'The Legacy of Frida Kahlo': Hot Docs Review



Courtesy of Hot Docs

This haunting cinematic essay succeeds in bringing Kahlo back to life.

Tadasuke Kotani's documentary chronicles acclaimed Japanese photographer Miyako Ishiuchi's efforts shooting the personal belongings of artist Frida Kahlo that have gone unseen for 58 years.

It's appropriate that Tadasuke Kotani's documentary is bookended by scenes depicting celebrations of Mexico's Day of the Dead. Examining the artist's past literally through the lens of acclaimed Japanese photographer Miyako Ishiuchi, *The Legacy of Frida Kahlo* hauntingly brings its subject back to life. Recently showcased at Toronto's Hot Docs festival, the film should find appreciative audiences upon a specialty release.

The doc revolves around a historical treasure trove of Kahlo's personal belongings that was discovered 58 years after her death in 1954. The items were located in the bathroom of her husband, artist Diego Rivera, who had ordered that it be sealed upon his demise and was left untouched until the death of his loyal conservator.

Ishiuchi, whose past projects include photographs of artifacts from Hiroshima, traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico, to Rivera and Kahlo's former home, the Blue House, now a museum. There she was given access to the long-hidden possessions belonging to Kahlo. The artifacts included shoes, embroideries, her wheelchair, bandages, medicine bottles and a wooden box of Vaseline, which she used to heal her bedsores. There was even a prosthetic leg, and corsets upon which had been painted such symbols as a hammer and sickle.

The intimacy of the objects adds an eeriness to their unveiling, never more so than when Ishiuchi photographs a pair of Kahlo's stockings, seen swaying from the breeze through an open window as if haunted.

Not that there aren't also welcome doses of humor, such as when Ishiuchi, adjusting a flowerpot to get a better angle, mutters to herself, "Let's move this, without permission."

The film does seem a bit padded and unfocused at times, digressing with scenes such as Ishiuchi's visit to the ruins of Teotihuacan that feels like a vacation video and another in which she tearfully breaks down during a phone call when she learns that a close friend committed suicide. And while such attempts to add context to the proceedings as an interview with a contemporary embroiderer are laudable, they go on far too long.

But it's all worth it just to see the finished product, namely Ishiuchi's photographs displayed at a Paris exhibition to great enthusiasm. The poignant images reveal as much about the talented photographer as the legendary artist she's celebrating.

Venue: Hot Docs
Production: Nondelaico
Director-director of photography: Tadasuke Kotani
Producer: Kazuo Osawa
Editor: Takeshi Hata
Composer: Shinichi Isohata

Not rated, 89 minutes

Hot Docs ’16: Taking viewers “Southwest of Salem”

May 3, 2016 by: Daniele Alcinii



In the summer of 1994 and at the height of what was then called “the Satanic panic”, four lesbian women in San Antonio, Texas were wrongfully accused and convicted of sexually assaulting two girls, aged seven and nine.

As reports on the case spread throughout the media detailing the physical and sexual abuse in the context of occult rituals suffered by the under-aged girls, the four women – Anna Vasquez, Cassandra Rivera, Kristie Mayhugh and the girls’ aunt Elizabeth Ramirez – maintained their innocence.

Though prosecutors lacked hard and conventional evidence against the women, all four were subsequently convicted and sentenced to prison. The charges against three of the women would see them spend the next 15 years behind bars, while Ramirez – four months pregnant when accused - would be handed a sentence of 37 years and six months for her role as ringleader in the gang rape.



Southwest of Salem: The San Antonio Four director Deborah S. Esquenazi

In Deborah S. Esquenazi's (pictured, left) feature-length debut *Southwest of Salem: The Story of the San Antonio Four* – which has its international premiere at Hot Docs on Wednesday night (May 4) – the Texas-based director blends the women's home video footage prior to incarceration with recent vérité footage and exclusive interviews to explore each woman's personal narrative and their search for exculpatory evidence to help in their criminal trials.

While the film investigates the role of homophobia and mythology in the women's trials, it also captures one of the accusers – now 25 years old – recanting her testimony and coming to terms with what she regards as a process of being manipulated into falsifying testimony 15 years earlier.

Wednesday's screening, meanwhile, will feature a Skype Q&A with the San Antonio Four, who have each been released and have had their convictions vacated, but are still waiting to have their appeal for full legal exoneration heard. Also taking part will be Esquenazi, producer Sam Tabet and Innocence Project of Texas director Mike Ware. The women, who were cleared by the State of Texas to travel to Toronto, were, according to Esquenazi, denied entry by the Canadian Border Services Agency.

"It was really disappointing to be honest," says the director. "They can't travel because they haven't been exonerated, which is why exoneration is such a big deal."

Ahead of Wednesday's screening, the *Southwest of Salem* director talked to *realscreen* about gaining access to the accused, finding creative solutions when working with a small team, and her approach to funding.

How were you able to gain such intimate access to the women and was it difficult gaining their trust?

One of the things that actually helped was that I was in the process of coming out and I actually came out to the women before I came out to my family. I was able to gain trust because I think they could tell that I really cared about their case. I just tried to be really present with them, and was always really persistent with them – it's not like I came in and I was suddenly gone. I would write them letters and keep up with the relationship just like any friendship.

***Southwest of Salem* is similar to *Serial* and HBO's *The Jinx* in that it featured new evidence in the case. The difference is that you allowed news crews access to the recantation footage before completing production on the film. What was the decision behind that?**



Southwest of Salem: The San Antonio Four

It was a really hard decision and one in which I really toiled over. It was typical… to withhold those surprises for the end product. But I'm an indie filmmaker, I don't have a lot of power and there were all these things looping through my head like, 'What if I never have the funding to finish it?'

The biggest thing was that I felt morally implicated in the story [because] I had this precious information, which ultimately may not help legally, but certainly could help create buzz about a story. [The recantation footage] became the reason to bring it back into the news – there was something new.

Is it fair to say that it was the moral implication rather than the potential interest in funding that made you release the footage?

Absolutely, yes. I got funding after the recantation when I submitted that [footage] as a new grant submission to Sundance – they were my first funder who believed in the film, even though they rejected me the first time. They had written me a letter, which I knew had weight because they don't send you a letter unless they mean it, but it said, 'Please reapply' and so I did. The more footage I was gathering, the stronger the story was becoming. Part of any great doc is a series of conflicts, and the footage to me represented a new twist and a new conflict – it's something that triggers a reason for the film to exist in the first place.

So the recantation footage helped bring more funders on board the project?

I think it helped, it certainly didn't hurt – it absolutely helped to be collecting more material. My first two funders were Sundance and then Chicken & Egg, which was huge because I got a lot of rejections along the way.

What were some of the production challenges you encountered throughout the project?

Occasionally I had my wife working sound – she is not a filmmaker but I would tell her to push this button and point that microphone. Sometimes I would grab friends because I needed somebody to come with me and run sound, but most of the time it was just me.

I did distribute cameras and recorders to some of the family members [of the incarcerated]. Some of the most beautiful moments in the film are recorded by the family because I didn't want to be there when the families were reuniting. I found the value in finding creative solutions [when] not being a big team.

Did you try to get additional courtroom or archival footage from the time of the trials, or did you know you were going to primarily be using interviews with the women in the present day?

I definitely tried to get archive – there was nothing. News bureaus around that time, as I understand it, had reused a lot of their Beta tapes, or recorded over trial footage. Truthfully though, I knew I wanted to tell the story from the perspective of the four women and there was 20 years to tell it. In the end, the intimacy of their own home video became so much more potent than I think archival material would have been anyway.

Have you been in talks with distribution houses since the world premiere at Tribeca?

Yes, I have a sales team led by Submarine and Preferred Content. *Southwest of Salem* is their first collaboration, so that is really neat because they're two powerhouse sales teams and there's definitely a plan to release it widely. In terms of if we have a deal right now, we do not, but it's definitely in the works because I'm hearing something is brewing.

Realscreen – May 3, 2016

Hot Docs ’16: Cinephil takes “City 40,” “Thousand Cuts”

May 3, 2016 by: Daniele Alcinii



Tel Aviv-based distributor Cinephil has acquired the sales rights to two documentaries making their world premieres at Hot Docs: Samira Goetschel’s *City 40* and Juan Mejia Botero and Jake Kheel’s *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (pictured).

Cinephil will handle the worldwide rights to Goetschel’s film, which exposes the human and environmental concerns surrounding labor prisoners in a forbidden Soviet-era city in Russia. The doc hosted its world premiere at the 23rd edition of Hot Docs on April 28. It will next screen on May 6 at 6:30 p.m. EST at Toronto’s Innis Town Hall.

The Israeli sales agent will also handle the international rights (excluding North America) to Botero and Kheel’s *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, which investigates the fight for natural resources between the Dominican Republic and Haiti on the island of Hispaniola. The film will have its world premiere at the Toronto-based festival on Tuesday (May 3) at 6:15 p.m. EST at the TIFF Bell Lightbox 3.

Cinephil’s Philippa Kowarsky and director-producer Samira Goetschel negotiated the deal for *City 40*, while the agreement for *Death by a Thousand Cuts* was brokered between Kowarsky and Participant Media’s Rob Williams.

At Hot Docs, Cinephil is also representing the Canadian premiere of Ester Gould and Reijer Zwaan’s *Strike a Pose*, catching up with Madonna’s dancers 25 years after her Blonde Ambition Tour, and the international premiere of Jessica Dimmock and Christopher Lamarca’s *The Pearl*, following four middle-aged transgender women as they struggle to find acceptance.

CBC – q – May 3, 2016

Obit explores the delicate art of obituary writing



Imagine taking someone's whole life into your hands, as paperwork. How would you turn their file into a powerful final testament? (Green Fuse Films)

Listen 21:00

How do you sum up an entire life, separate fact from spin, and write a definitive, engrossing account of a recently deceased human being?

New York Times journalist **Bruce Weber** joins Shad to discuss the nerve-wracking business of obituary writing for the newspaper of record. The subtle art is explored in *Obit*, a new documentary film about the desk writers who deal in life and death.

WEB EXTRA | Watch the teaser trailer for Obit and tell us: can you think of the most powerful obituary you've ever read? What about it moved you?

CP24 – May 3, 2016





ACTRESS LORI SINGER ON FILM 'GOD KNOWS WHERE I AM'

Actress Lori Singer discusses the film 'God Knows Where I Am,' which is screening at Hot Docs.

Tuesday, May. 3, 2016

Doc explores bond between the homeless and their pets



TORONTO -- It was the sight of what appeared to be a homeless man in medical distress that caught filmmaker Helene Choquette's attention.

But it was his frantic dog that held her gaze -- the dog "freaked out" as onlookers walked passed without stopping, Choquette recalls.

Then city workers came and took the animal away, even before an ambulance could arrive.

"I was thinking about this for many days, of how this young boy would feel when he would wake up and not have his dog at his side," says Choquette.

The incident inspired her to begin working on her new documentary, "A Dog's Life," which explores the emotional support and inspiration homeless people receive from pets.

"Most of them have addictions to drugs or have mental (health) issues and the dog is what makes them (persevere)," says Choquette from her home just outside Montreal.

"They know they have to take care of themselves because of the dog. Because the dog reminds them of their basic needs."

The documentary profiles several people and pets, including Dan, who credits his pooch with giving him self-confidence and the strength to curtail his drug habit. Genevieve declares that animals are the best therapists in the world because they don't judge you: "I'd rather have my dog than a home," she says in the documentary.

Unfortunately for many, it's often a choice between one or the other, says Choquette.

Animals are generally banned from shelters, and it's often much harder to find long-term accommodation for low-income pet owners.

Choquette says she met many people who wouldn't even take advantage of small social services -- the opportunity for a hot shower or a chance to meet a social worker -- because it would force them to leave their dog alone on the street.

It's an issue Danielle Ashby knows well.

The program manager at Toronto's Fred Victor Bethlehem United Shelter says they get about 25 calls a day for pet owners needing help.

Her facility is billed as the only one in Toronto that permits pets. She says there's clearly demand for more.

"It's pretty in your face. If you go in the core there's a lot of homeless people that are on the streets, laying down on the sidewalk and they have their pet with them," says Ashby.

"That's something that probably needs to be looked at and assessed."

Many pets at the facility are considered emotional support animals, guide dogs or specially trained service animals for conditions such as post-traumatic stress, she said.

The shelter -- a joint project between the charitable organization Fred Victor, Bethlehem United Church (Apostolic) and the City of Toronto -- has room for 70 residents and 15 animals, but often goes over capacity.

"People seem to think, 'Why do homeless people have pets if they can't even take care of themselves?' But there's a lot of times when people come to us where they've just lost everything, the sheriff has put the lock on their door. Are you going to part with your pet? No," says Ashby, whose facility also offers access to cheaper veterinary care and vaccinations.

Just because a person is homeless it doesn't mean they can't take good care of a pet, adds Tegan Buckingham of the Toronto Humane Society.

"A lot of them will put their pets first before themselves," says Buckingham.

"A millionaire could treat their pet far worse than people without a home. Money and financial (means) is a not a way that we distinguish how people are treating their pets."

The Humane Society offers low-cost services for vaccines, spaying and neutering, and runs a pet food bank that functions much the same way the human ones do.

But sad stories abound.

If someone is forced into hospital or jailed, they often must surrender their pet for possible adoption, says Buckingham.

Such cases are evaluated individually, but the society can't provide short-term care for an owner unable to hold onto their pet, she says.

In some cases, the society will consider admitting the pet as a stray, which permits a five-day holding period before the animal is put up for adoption.

Choquette says she'd like to see more services for down-on-their-luck animal lovers.

"When you're homeless and you get into problems and you go to jail, you need to know the dog is somewhere (safe). It's very important," says Choquette.

"I've been told a lot of stories of people who went to jail and when they have the permission to phone they call the person who is in charge of the dog and they talk to the animal on the phone."

"A Dog's Life" screens Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday at the Hot Docs film festival in Toronto. A French-language version, "Chienne de Vie," will be broadcast on Radio-Canada on May 28.

Hot Docs ’16: Putting virtual reality on trial

May 4, 2016 by: Daniele Alcinii



During the “VR on Trial” session at Hot Docs in Toronto on Tuesday (May 3), VR Google principal filmmaker Jessica Brillhart (pictured) and the Canadian Film Centre’s (CFC) chief digital officer Ana Serrano focused their spirited debate on the advantages and disadvantages inherent within the fledgling virtual reality experience.

Forming the viewpoint of the opposition was Serrano, who argued the medium provides users with the privileges of location and place while masquerading presence in a computer generated environment as truth. The space, she said, ignores the documentary filmmaking principles of seeking out and reflecting on truths.

“Presence is not the same as truth,” the CFC exec stated during the panel, which was moderated by Richard Lachman, director of Transmedia Zone and associate professor at the RTA School of Media at Ryerson University. “Literally putting yourself in someone else’s shoes does not create empathy, but for some bizarre reason, this notion that if you do it virtually… it somehow creates empathy and intimacy. We know that’s not true literally, so why do we think that’s true virtually?”

Though Brillhart saw Serrano's point regarding empathy, she maintained that the budding technology provided users with depth through not only visual stereoscopics, but through emotion.

"There's a huge difference between film and VR fundamentally," the Google filmmaker said. "With film, you're an objective viewer – there's a window. [With] VR you're present, you're there and that has ramifications in ways we haven't even tapped into yet. Positive things."

While story can be used as a framework to work around a technology still experiencing its infancy, the best way to unlock beneficial outcomes is through experimentation, seeing the end result of that experimentation, learning from it and making adjustments until an effective formula is in place, she maintained.

"But to promise that the end result will be story feels a little premature," Brillhart said. "There are other things that are really important like the platforms, the fidelity of the content and how to monetize it."

Virtual reality, Serrano contested, is entrenched in "an economic infrastructure" that relies strictly on gathering sensitive information from consumers worldwide and turning those data points into profit for the few.

While retailers have managed to transform browsing habits into dollars, firms experimenting in VR have developed new devices sophisticated enough to collect "granular parts of data" capable of tracking such biofeedback as eye movements, heart rate, biorhythms and brainwave activity in order to anticipate what the consumer wants before he or she even realizes they want it themselves.

"If you think this is too sci-fi and out there, you just have to look at what Oculus Rift's terms and conditions are," Serrano said.

She noted that three of those terms and conditions note that Oculus collects data on how operators use its Rift headset; that third parties collect information about users through Oculus' consent; and that anything that can be created on its platform by a user can be used in myriad ways by the company.

"The future of VR is in final simulation where one will no longer be able to tell what is real or what is virtual," Serrano said. "Where does documentary play a role in a medium that's trying to recreate reality?"

Although both fundamentally agree that virtual reality is what's in store for documentary in the foreseeable future, the two noted the difficulties producers encounter when attempting to acquire funding for VR projects.

Currently, virtual reality manufacturers are the only outfits granting money through various contests such as the Oculus Mobile VR Jam, which last year granted a total prize pool of more than US$1 million split between two tracks – one for VR games, and the other for VR experiences and apps. Traditional funders like the National Film Board of Canada or the Canada Media Fund may also be interested in VR-related projects, but nothing is guaranteed and there's no financing model currently in place, Serrano explained.

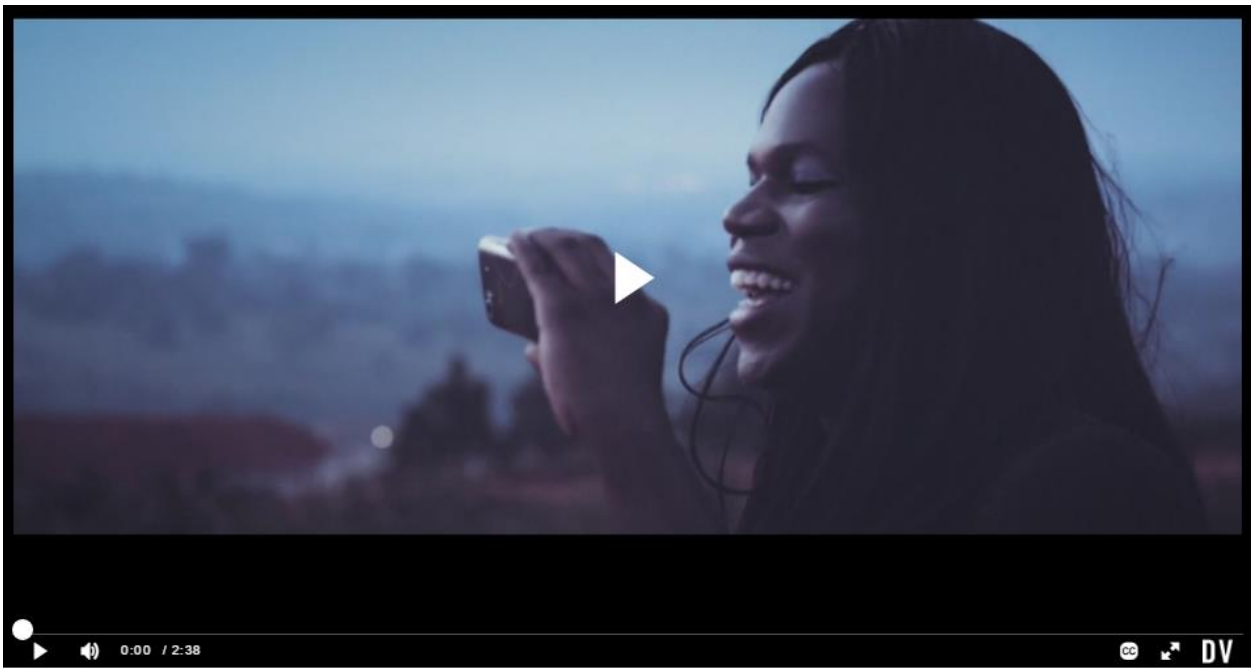
And while Google may not have a technological fund for VR projects, the Silicon Valley tech giant scours sister company YouTube for compelling virtual reality content to feature on its home page and may offer additional support or partnerships further down the road.

(Photo by Adriano Trapani, courtesy of Hot Docs)

VICE – May 4, 2016

WE MEET A TRANSGENDER WOMAN FORCED TO FLEE HER HOME IN UGANDA

May 4, 2016 by: **Natalie Alcoba & Tomas Urbina**



Cleopatra Kambugu was outed on the front page of a popular tabloid newspaper in Uganda in 2014 after the government announced draconian anti-gay laws. Fearing violence, she and her partner went into hiding and fled the country, but their love persevered. Their story is told in the new documentary, The Pearl of Africa, premiering at Hot Docs.

The 2016 Hot Docs Forum Report, part one

May 4, 2016 by: **Manori Ravindran**



In the first installment of its three-part report, *realscreen* provides in-depth coverage of the 17th edition of the Hot Docs Forum and the 19 Canadian and international projects presented.

This year's batch of docs was selected from 200 submissions, and represents 16 different countries. The group include 11 female directors and 26 female producers.

Projects discussed in this installment include David Alvarado and Jason Sussberg's much-anticipated doc on scientist Bill Nye; Lefteris Charitos' portrait of French free-diver Jacques Mayol, subject of the 1988 biopic *Le Grand Bleu*; Emil Langballe and Lukasz Konopa's *The Accidental King*, which straddles Denmark and Ghana; Alexandra Sollogoub's *Dozdh, It's Raining on Moscow*, an examination of an indie Russian news channel; and Thor Neureiter's *Disaster Capitalism*, inspired by the book of the same name.

This year's Forum also welcomes Brianna Little, a development executive with Amazon Studios, to the table, along with Discovery's Ryan Harrington, who joined the U.S. net late last year. Returning faces include representatives from the BBC, DR, PBS, the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute and *The New York Times'* 'Op-Docs' arm, among others.

Realscreen – May 4, 2016 (2 of 8)

Realscreen is covering both days of the Hot Docs Forum (May 3 and 4). Watch this space for the second and third parts of our report.

OBJECTIVE: CHANGE THE WORLD

Production Company: Structure Films (USA)

Directors: David Alvarado, Jason Sussberg

Production budget: $1,196,986 (Some financing secured from Kickstarter)

Still needed: $337,561

Logline: Bill Nye is on a journey to reinvent himself. Once the host of a popular children's show, he now advocates for the importance of science at a time when it's under attack.

Filmmakers David Alvarado and Jason Sussberg made Kickstarter history last summer when their doc on scientist Bill Nye broke funding records, raising $859,425 from 16,850 backers. Although that record has now been surpassed by Alex Winter's *Who The F@*% is Frank Zappa?*, which last month raised $1,126,036 from 8,688 backers, the team was at Hot Docs to find the remaining $337,561 needed to complete the film.



Presenting with producer Kate McLean, Alvarado and Sussberg told the Forum audience that all three grew up watching Nye, and became science storytellers because of his influence. The doc, they said, will detail elements of the TV presenter's personal life – "The man behind the bow tie" – that are as yet not revealed, including a family medical condition. A trailer of the filmshowed the 60-year-old Nye discussing his reasons for not getting married and frustrations with climate change deniers. Production on the doc is 75% complete after 18 months of shooting, and the team is beginning the edit. McLean said *Objective* needs completion funding, and is also looking for "the best way to bring it into the world in 2017." Discovery's Ryan Harrington – who is marking his first turn at the Hot Docs Forum representing the U.S. net – kicked off the feedback, noting that the doc will ideally be "looking forward rather than looking back." The commissioner and his doc team oversees Discovery Channel as well as Animal Planet, Science Channel and TLC.

Jane Jankovic, executive producer for documentaries at Canada's TVO – which broadcast Nye's iconic program *Bill Nye The Science Guy* – agreed with Harrington. "I'm more interested in what's driving him to continue to be the Science Guy and what's meaningful to him in terms of science, instead of looking back." Elsewhere, Bruce Cowley of Canada's documentary channel added that he wanted to see more of Nye's motivations, and the personal stakes involved. Someone who "respectfully disagreed" was Marie Nelson, PBS VP of news and public affairs, who said the U.S. pubcaster's viewers would be fascinated by the backstory. "How do you become this dogged defender of science, and dedicate your professional and personal life to this endeavor?"

Meanwhile, Brianna Little from Amazon Studios said the platform was "most interested in docs that can sustain meaningful theatrical release." She said their doc initiative fits into Amazon's larger creative mandate which is "prestigious films, Academy Award caliber." While Little liked the *Objective* promo, she felt other platforms with built-in audiences might be intuitively more appropriate.

On the international tip, Nick Fraser, series editor for BBC's 'Storyville' doc strand, said he didn't find Nye's motivations as important, but advised that if the film goes overseas, it "needs lots about how pissed off he is" and a spotlight on his interactions with climate change deniers. Bilaal Hossein, head of film acquisitions for the Qatar-based Al Jazeera English said the film won't work for their audiences, adding that, "If his original show didn't reach our audiences before, it's difficult to make a connection."

DOLPHIN MAN

Production Companies: Anemon Productions, Storyline Entertainment, Les Films du Balibari (Greece, Canada, France)

Director: Lefteris Charitos

Production budget: $644,355 (Some financing secured from ARTE, Media Development Grant/European Union, CNC, Greek Film Centre, federal and provincial tax credits, ERT)

Still needed: $336,753

Logline: The extraordinary legacy and complex life story of Jacques Mayol, the first free-diver to reach 100 metres below the sea.

Dolphin Man, a commission by ARTE, tells the story of free-diver Jacques Mayol, who was first introduced to the world in Luc Besson's 1988 film *Le Grand Bleu*. He was born in Shanghai to French parents and taught to dive by Japanese fishermen. A passion for the sea developed in the 1950s until Mayol took up free-diving at 40. The doc tracks the diver's career but also examines the inner conflicts that led to his passing in 2001. Mayol is quoted as telling Besson: "The difficult part in free-diving is not going down but finding a good reason to return to the surface."

Director Lefteris Charitos said he is fascinated by Mayol's larger-than-life personality, and especially because he was the first person to combine Western science with Eastern zen yoga and Buddhist philosophy to support a theory that humans have aquatic origins.

Ed Barreveld, Storyline co-founder and this year's recipient of the Don Haig Award, said 60% of the film has been shot, and the team will be editing the film in Toronto with delivery expected in 2017.

Harrington once again started the round of feedback, asking how overt the environmental message in the film is, and questioning the takeaway for the audience. "You really need a specific message for audiences to take action," he said.

Meanwhile, Takahiro Hamano, a senior producer with the programming department at Japan's NHK, said Mayol was so popular in Japan that the broadcaster did a special program on him after his death. "I'd need to know why we need to do it now and what is the environmental message now."

Meanwhile, Kathleen Lingo, series producer and curator of *The New York Times'* 'Op-Docs' arm, said the outlet last month published its first virtual reality film, *The Click Effect*, which centers on free-diving researchers. "The issue is definitely in the zeitgeist right now," said Lingo, adding that perhaps a doc short could be crafted on one of Mayol's dives.

Elsewhere, Guy Lavie, channel manager for Israel's yesDocu, asked how prominent Mayol's dark side would be, while Amy Hobby, VP of artist programs for the Tribeca Film Institute, wondered about the direction of the doc, and what kind of audience the team hoped to reach.

THE ACCIDENTAL KING

Production Company: Made in Copenhagen (Denmark)
Directors: Emil Langballe, Lukasz Konopa
Production budget: $435,000 (Some funding secured from DR, CPH:DOX LAB, Danish Film Directors Union, FAF)
Still needed: $395,000

Logline: Is it better to be a king in Ghana or a worker in Denmark? A look into a Ghanaian immigrant's journey from living humbly in Denmark to inheriting a kingdom.

The Accidental King, which gave the Forum one of its most spirited discussions, follows Eddugle as he moves from his home of five years in Copenhagen, Denmark, back to Ghana, where he becomes the new king following the death of his father, the ruler of 14 rural villages. Eddugle brings his Danish friend-turned-adviser Jon for the journey, and the doc – billed as the story of a man torn between two worlds – captures the pair trying to merge their plans to "revolutionize village life" with the local traditions.

Shooting began in November 2015 and is ongoing. The team will return to Ghana this October to film Eddugle's coronation, and will then follow him for a year. The Danish Film Institute has boarded the film, and 25% of the budget has been secured. A delivery is slated for summer of 2018.

The feedback kicked off with the BBC's Nick Fraser remarking that he immediately wanted to see the rest of the film, and Tribeca's Amy Hobby saying the doc was "right up [her] alley" and felt like a narrative film, before encouraging the team to apply for the TFI Documentary Fund.

Bruni Burres, a senior consultant with the Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program, noted the doc told a small story that could be extrapolated, but added that she expected the film to be a long-term project, with the bulk of the story taking place well after Eddugle's coronation.

The New York Times' Lingo suggested, then, that the team could produce a short in the meantime, to get the story out there.
The conversation then shifted to issues around representation in the doc, with Noland Walker – senior content director and 'Independent Lens' co-curator, for ITVS – saying he liked the humor but to be careful about the film's point-of-view.

"Even if you were with your Ghanaian king, it still feels very 'outside in,' and you need to figure out a way to tell it 'inside out,'" he said. "He's a stronger [character] in Denmark but not when he's in Ghana. The film's gaze doesn't shift and that's a cautionary piece."

PBS' Marie Nelson agreed, saying, "Make sure he's inside the joke and not outside the joke. As you explore these cultural phenomena, it's not that the film needs to be earnest, but it needs to be authentic. These people own that authentic reality and I felt at times that they were the subject of the joke."

Al Jazeera English's Bilaal Hossein added, "When you're looking at cultural nuances you have to deal with it respectfully."

DOZHD, IT'S RAINING ON MOSCOW

Production Company: Petit à Petit Production (France)
Director: Alexandra Sollogoub
Production budget: $301,789 (Some financing secured from ARTE France, Petit à Petit Production, CNC)
Still needed: $107,490

Logline: In Putin's Russia, following the life of leading independent news channel Dozhd, this film questions how it is possible to resist and disseminate alternative information in an authoritarian state.

Director Alexandra Sollogoub told the Forum audience that her family was strongly linked to those who worked at Russian indie news channel Dozhd, which strives to report the truth on Vladimir Putin's increasingly authoritarian regime. The film follows three characters who work at Dozhd, including Natalia Sindeeva, who runs the channel, and a couple of editorial staff.

"The path of my three characters is as complex as the situation in the country," she said. "How do you do your job with so many pressures? If you stay, how do you survive? I'll be there, in and out of the newsroom following the professional and personal choices and sharing with them what it means to live under an authoritarian regime."

The film – which has a 52-minute runtime – is currently in production. Two shoots have been completed, with three more coming up. Editing is to take place in October and delivery is expected by the end of April 2017. ARTE France and ARTE Distribution are both "deeply involved," but the team is still looking for funds, pre-sales and coproduction opportunities.

The BBC's Nick Fraser immediately asked the team why the film isn't longer. "There's a way you can tell what's happening in Russia through the journalistic medium, but it will take longer than 52 minutes," he said, later noting, "You have to put quite a lot in the film on how the Putin media system works. The characters and footage are great but you need an underpinning."

Meanwhile, Justine Nagan, head of American Documentary for PBS, said context becomes really important in a film such as this. "How do every-day Russians feel about this net? What is its value and what is its audience? The fact that it's character-based for us makes it a really possibility."

The Sundance Institute's Bruni Burres agreed that the film could be longer than 52 minutes, and should also have multiple layers so it doesn't become another piece of journalism about opposition journalism. *Dozdh* could also travel well overseas, she said.

Bruce Cowley, from CBC digital channel documentary, was perhaps the most enthusiastic of all. "Here's a thought: let's talk. I'm in," he beamed.

Similarly, Arno Becker, commissioner for Germany's RTL Television, said the project has the right ingredients, combining such important topics as the circumstances in Russia today, and censorship. Chris Hastings, commissioner for WGBH's Boston-based World Channel, also said the doc could work for them as an acquisition.

"I try to bring in stories from other countries that give Americans some insight into what our contemporaries are dealing with every day and political systems that are different than ours," he said.

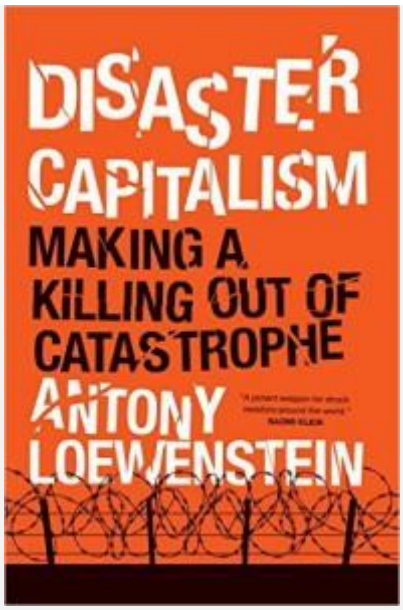
Realscreen – May 4, 2016 (7 of 8)

DISASTER CAPITALISM

Production Company: Media Stockade Pty Ltd (Australia)

Director: Thor Neureiter
Production budget: $350,000 (Some financing secured from Bertha Foundation, Kickstarter, Screen Australia Producer Equity Program Grant)
Still needed: $226,000

Logline: When aid and politics meets business, who really gains from the global giving industry?



Anthony Loewenstein's book *Disaster Capitalism*

In a documentary inspired by journalist Antony Loewenstein's titular book, the writer teams with director Thor Neureiter to question the ways in which "aid and the corporate dollar collide" and the challenges in changing this relationship in Haiti, Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea. "Who is getting the money? How connected are international aid groups with the people they're claiming to help? This is topical and controversial, far removed from the comforting story of Western benevolence that viewers see on the nightly news," reads a synopsis of *Disaster Capitalism*. Filmed over five years, the doc aims to reveal how globalized development and aid are "shaping" these countries, and whether locals are benefiting.

The Bertha Foundation has supported the project since 2014, and the filmmaker is at work on a rough cut of the feature-length doc. About 95% of principal photography is complete, and final filming will take place in Washington DC next week. They are looking for broadcast pre-sales.

Naomi Boxer, programmer for docs at TVO, said the film could be a "great fit" for the Canadian broadcaster because of its current affairs focus.

"One thing is you're covering a very broad, complex subject matter, from war to multiple players with agendas, so I'm curious how you will disentangle the complexities," she said. "I'm looking for a possible articulate or dissenting, critical voice to add some depth to your passionate [point-of-view]."

Mark Edwards, commissioner for ARTE France, said he'd be more interested in the individual story from Afghanistan. He also had some issues with how much screen-time Loewenstein has in the film, and how much on-screen dialogue there is. The journalist responded that he's not in every shot, and that the team is open to breaking up the doc for a broadcaster.

Elsewhere, Mette Hoffmann Meyer, head of docs and copros for Denmark's DR, thought it was "misleading" to call aid 'disaster capitalism,' while ITVS' Nolan Walker said the doc felt very compressed and questioned what the common denominator was. "This could benefit from someone to push on your [point-of-view]," he said, adding that the topic might be difficult to digest for audiences who are new to the underlying concepts behind 'disaster capitalism.'

Read more: **http://realscreen.com/2016/05/04/the-2016-hot-docs-forum-report-part-one/#ixzz48BDCY2dP**

Hot Docs, Blue Ice, NYT Op-Docs team on doc shorts fund


1 week ago by Daniele Alcinii



Read more: http://realscreen.com/2016/05/02/hot-docs-nyt-ops-docs-team-on-african-doc-shorts-fund/#ixzz48MwpZqux

Canadian festival Hot Docs and financier Blue Ice Group have partnered with *The New York Times*' 'Op-Docs' to commission a series of documentary shorts from African filmmakers to be showcased on the newspaper's Emmy-awarded digital forum.

The organizations will select five to eight projects over the next year from the films already submitted to the Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Documentary Fund and Fund Alumni, as well as from those received in the 2017 round of disbursements.

Realscreen – May 4, 2015 (2 of 3)

“Even though we’re announcing our collaboration today, we’ve already started talking about different potential projects that would come through it so it’s something we’d be rolling out within the several months to come,” Hot Docs industry programs director Elizabeth Radshaw (pictured) told *realscreen*.

Selected filmmakers will be commissioned to develop new documentary shorts inspired by the themes of their feature film, which will then be posted via the ‘Op-Docs’ website.

“[The partnership] addresses two really critical points: form and audience. We’re really celebrating the short form and helping to facilitate funding for short films and distribution in different ways,” said Radshaw. “*The New York Times’* ‘Op-Docs’ works within the short form, but it also addresses audience. It’s incomparable to look at any other platform that is featuring shorts to the size of an audience that *The New York Times* has.

“For these voices and filmmakers and stories that are supported by the Hot Docs-Blue Ice Fund, distribution and dissemination are critical issues and seeking audience within the continent and also outside is very important, so we really feel that it’s a great partnership,” she continued.

Launched in 2011, *The New York Times’* ‘Op-Docs’ division is the news organization’s forum for original short documentaries produced “with wide creative latitude and a range of artistic styles” broaching the current affairs, contemporary life and historical spaces.

The $1 million Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Documentary Fund, which recently received an additional $1.25 million from the Blue Ice Group, was founded in 2011. It looks to provide backing to Africa-based filmmakers by sharing their stories and contributing to the professional development of the next generation of African documentarians.

To date, the fund has presented grants to 40 projects from 15 African countries amounting to CAD$626,000 (US$499,600). In January, the trust granted a total of $125,000 to eight winning projects selected from a pool of 94 submissions from across 25 African nations.

Grant recipients also receive support to attend the Hot Docs Festival where they will participate in a creative filmmakers’ lab, attend screenings, conference sessions, the Hot Docs Forum and various networking events, as well as a year-round, peer-to-peer mentorship program.

Past recipients have included Riaan Hendricks‘ *The Devil’s Lair*, a 2013 official selection at Hot Docs and IDFA; Nadine Salib’s IDFA-awarded *Mother of the Unborn*; Jihan El-Tahri’s TIFF-selected *Nasser*; Ryley Grunenwald‘s Hot Docs-selected *The Shore Break*; and Rama Thiaw’s Berlinale-selected *The Revolution Won’t Be Televised*; and *Whose Country?* (pictured), which enjoys its world premiere at Hot Docs 2016.

"One of the goals of [*The New York Times'* Op-Docs] is to spark conversations, and one of the most important ways we can do that is by bringing in a global, diverse group of filmmakers to contribute to 'Op-Docs,'" said Kathleen Lingo, commissioning editor for opinion video at *The New York Times*. "The Hot Docs-Blue Ice Documentary Fund is an important collaborator and it really feels like a necessary partnership so we can increase our pool of talented filmmakers we can work with.

"Nothing is more crucial to our series than to include voices from around the globe."

Elsewhere, the Toronto-based documentary festival has collaborated with the Panicaro Foundation to launch a new strand within its CrossCurrents Doc Fund.

The new CrossCurrents Doc Fund theatrical strand will look to provide financial support to one or multiple feature-length documentaries annually with grants of up to $30,000 per project up for grabs. The strand will also look to provide professional development opportunities for selected recipients.

While the theatrical strand is broad in scope, it will also seek to prioritize filmmakers aged 35 and younger within underrepresented and marginalized communities. Additionally, the fund will support filmmakers whose access to resources has limitations and whose films seek to make a disruptive impact.

"We want to support documentary films in all of their forms and expressions, and adding on a theatrical stream addressed filmmakers who had a desire to create in the theatrical form," Radshaw explained. "We don't think that that's dead just because we're supporting lots of shorts as well – the more funding that we can bring to different forms of documentary filmmaking, that's our mission."

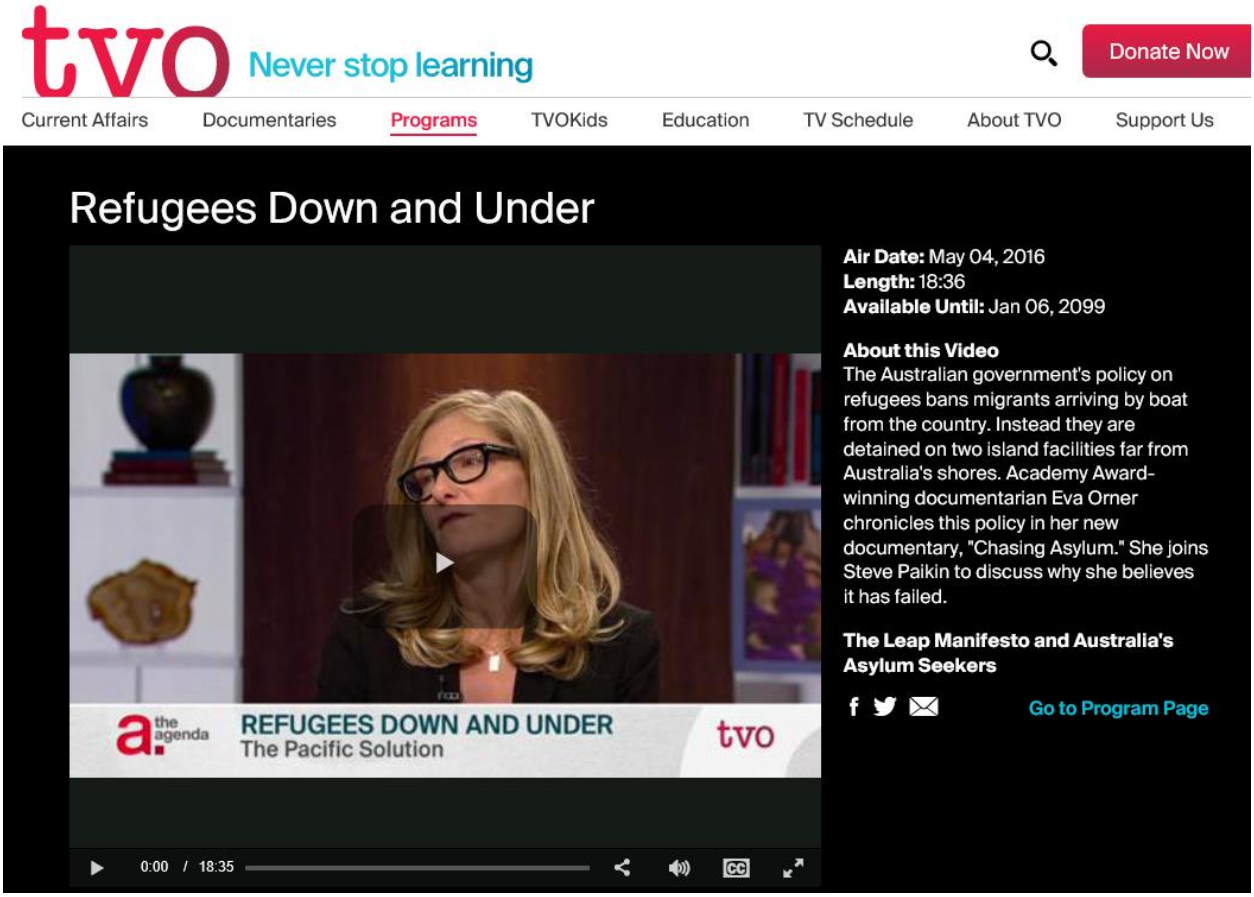
The recipients will be chosen by a selection committee made up of representatives from the Panicaro Foundation, Hot Docs and the documentary production community the fund aims to serve.

Grantees will receive similar support as that seen by Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Documentary Fund recipients. However, CrossCurrents Doc Fund theatrical grantees will not receive access to the Hot Docs-Blue Ice Group Filmmakers Lab, the Durban International Film Festival or the Durban FilmMart.

Applications will open in June 2016.

The original CrossCurrents Doc Fund, which was founded by R&M Lang Foundation in 2013, aims to foster short- and mid-length documentary filmmaking by emerging directors from within such communities, and encourage understanding of unheard voices among broad audiences. It has awarded $10,000 to one successful global applicant per year.

TVO – The Agenda – May 4, 2016



Why the director of Hot Docs film 'Off the Rails' was 'not trying to make a balanced film'

May 5, 2016 by: **Leanne Elnicki,**



Darius McCollum dressed as a New York City transit worker.

Adam Irving can credit a chance encounter on Wikipedia in 2012 with leading him home this week to the Hot Docs Film Festival where his first feature length documentary "Off the Rails" is having its international debut.

"I was just blown away by the first line," the Toronto-native Irving said. "It read something like ‘Darius McCollum has spent half his adult life in prison for his crimes’ but he’d never actually hurt anyone."

The film follows the ongoing saga of McCollum who has been incarcerated 32 times for posing as a New York City transit worker and commandeering MTA subway trains and buses. His train-obsession is fuelled by his Asperger’s Syndrome – a form of autism punctuated by difficulty in emotional and social interactions.



Adam Irving, the Toronto-born director of 'Off the Rails' is seen in this undated photo.

Irving, 34, began the journey towards making the film by first contacting Jude Domski – a playwright whose stage production "Boy Steals Train" led her into a friendship with McCollum.

"She was pretty protective of him," Irving recalled. "She told me I was the 28th filmmaker to approach Darius, but I knew there would not be a 29th because I was going to do this film."

After earning Domski’s trust, Irving entered into a relationship of his own with McCollum, who at the time was imprisoned at Rikers Island for his most recent impersonation attempt. The pair would exchange more than 100 letters and phone calls over six months before Irving travelled to New York to finally meet him in person and seal the deal.

Train-obsessed

Much of the film sees McCollum narrating his life story to camera – a process Irving said took a mere three days once Darius was freed from prison at the end of 2013. In addition to that, Irving spent time with Darius wandering around the city, visiting some of his old transit haunts including MTA yards and infrastructure he's come to know like the back of his hand.

We learn in the film that McCollum's train fascination began at an early age and was rewarded by MTA staff who allowed him to hang out and do odd jobs for them. The first time he drove a train by himself he was 15.

Telling these kinds of stories from the past can be difficult for a director to do without the video or photos to support the narrative, so Irving turned to re-enactments in order to do Darius' history justice. Not surprisingly, he also turned to his old hometown, and the now-famous Lower Bay station on the TTC line.

"There are some purists who say you can't tell a backstory this way but I think that's bull," Irving said. "I thought how great would it be to shoot here and have that pass for New York?"

Irving even used a film-aging technique to give these scenes the appearance of looking older.

"My editor was most insecure about these," Irving said. "He thought they'd look tacky and cheesy but we've had a lot of compliments on how they turned out so I'm glad I decided to go for it."

Understanding Asperger's

Irving also utilizes Asperger's experts, various counsellors who had worked with Darius, and even his own, now-ailing mother in the film in order to gain a more intimate knowledge of the man and his seemingly never-ending battle with his obsession. For anyone who knows very little about the disorder it can be hard to understand why McCollum just doesn't stop what he's doing. Irving said he hopes his film can shed some light on that.

"(Darius) thinks he is doing something good, like a helpful volunteer. He doesn't see the harm," said Irving.

And without a single day of therapy in prison it's hard to conclude why McCollum would ever be made to feel otherwise. Many perceive McCollum's crimes as victimless while others argue he's put many lives at risk. Perhaps the one thing both sides can agree on is that repeatedly jailing the now 52-year-old has not had the desired effect.

What "Off the Rails" does best is advocate for McCollum and for other people on the Autism spectrum who have committed crimes – something Irving said some critics have knocked him for, but he's unapologetic.

"I'm not trying to make a balanced film. It's a film that portrays Darius in a sympathetic light… that exposes an injustice in the criminal justice system," Irving said.

"There needs to be legislation that recognizes that not all criminals are foaming at the mouth, but because they're on the spectrum they're truly addicted and truly cannot control themselves and don't really realize the consequences of their actions."

"Off the Rails" has three more screenings at Hot Docs.

In new documentary Check It, black LGBT youth form a gang to protect themselves

D.C. youths' story is gripping, but film is short on social context



Amanda Parris · CBC Arts May 5, 2016



Tray, one of the young gang members profiled in the documentary Check It. (Hot Docs)

Check It, a new documentary whose international premiere I caught at Toronto's Hot Docs festival on Sunday, follows four members of the only documented African American gang in the United States made up of gay and trans individuals.

In the Q&A following the screening, with American filmmakers Dana Flor and Toby Oppenheimer (*The Nine Lives of Marion Barry*) as well as some of the film's subjects, a member of the audience asked about ethical issues that emerged while making the film. Specifically, she

was interested in a series of interviews conducted with an individual who identified as a sex worker but was only 15 years old.

The story was shaped by what the filmmakers left out: links between the stories of the members and the larger context that shapes their realities

The word "ethics" stuck in my mind. What ethical considerations come into play when you choose to be the vehicle for sharing the stories of communities that are rarely invited to do so? How is that task complicated by the fact that these individuals may be vulnerable subjects?

Although inner-city gangs are not a new subject in the doc world, the twist of a gang made up of primarily gay men and trans people makes *Check It* a unique and untold story. The title of the film, whose executive producers include *Boardwalk Empire*'s Steve Buscemi, is borrowed from the name of the gang. Originally formed in 2005 as a means of protection against bullying and hate crimes (a rationale also cited when examining the formation of numerous 20th mid-century street gangs), Check It has since grown to include over 200 members.

The film follows four gang members as they navigate the complex realities of growing up with limited resources and numerous barriers in Washington D.C., where discrimination is rife. According to 2014 FBI Hate Crime Statistics in the city, 41 per cent of attacks were motivated by the victim's sexual orientation, 21 per cent were motivated by the victim's gender identity and 19 per cent were motivated by the victim's race.



Alton, a member of the Washington D.C. gang Check It. (Hot Docs)

Structured as a character-driven film, we are introduced to four members of Check It — Skittles, Tray, Day Day and Alton.

They are joined in the film by several older mentors who support and encourage them to craft different avenues for themselves: former convict turned community worker Ron "Mo" Moten; a former boxer turned gym owner named Duke; and Jarmal Harris, who runs a program teaching young people about the fashion industry.

What filmmakers choose to include and exclude from a film defines the kind of story an audience is left to grapple with. This illustrates the incredible power dynamic between the filmmaker and the subjects they are portraying. The subjects, too, can choose what information to share with filmmakers, the parts of their life that they are willing to open up and the personae they construct when the cameras turn on.

In one scene, Day Day goes to visit his mother in a half-way house. While sharing stories of their past struggles, she becomes emotional. Day Day immediately takes off the mic and demands that they stop the interview, in an effort to protect his mother from the space of emotional vulnerability he sees her entering. Another scene following an attack on two of the members zeroes in on the rage that seemingly overtakes one member, while the others attempt to calm him. It's a powerful scene, but it left me thinking about the impact of the cameras in that moment and the way their presence may have raised the stakes of an already volatile situation.

In the Q&A, the filmmakers described the challenging journey of getting the young members of Check It to trust them. They spent months in their neighborhoods before bringing cameras in. Their successful Indiegogo campaign funding the movie allocated 10 per cent of all money raised to the budding fashion enterprise being created by members of Check It, and at the screening, both Moten and Tray were there to answer questions. Clearly, the filmmakers have exercised a considerable degree of care for the Check It members.



Dana Flor (left) and Toby Oppenheimer, directors of the documentary Check It. (Hot Docs)

Again, however, the story was largely shaped by what the filmmakers left out — namely, linkages between the individual stories of the members and the larger context that shapes their realities. The poverty of the members was evident, but the reasons for that poverty were not explored in the film. Several of the members had parents who were suffering from addictions, but the larger illustration of how systemic this issue is in their communities was not drawn.

None of the main characters seemed to be in school, but little information was given on why that was the case. In the talk back following the film, Moten explained that poorly-handled public-school closures in the neighbourhoods featured in the film had created a crisis, where the high-school dropout rate in the area spiked to historic levels. The fact that this hugely important event was excluded from the story on the screen left me perplexed.

Instead, the film constantly emphasized the importance of individual responsibility. From Skittles, the naturally talented boxer who seemingly lacked the motivation and discipline to stick with his training, to Alton, who spent much of his time in the fashion program making jokes rather than focusing on the opportunities at hand, each character was shown grappling with the choices available to them. In focusing so heavily on the individual responsibility of the gang members, the filmmakers seemed to present an almost libertarian perspective on the way the subjects' options are shaped and mediated by their political and social realities.

What this absence enabled was a story heavily rooted in respectability politics; in the film, well-meaning mentors encouraged the members to leave their attitudes at the door and to act professionally, dismissing their anger as behavioral defects. This left little room to explore how trauma — from drug and alcohol addiction to abuse — is passed down through generations. There was no engagement with how the education system that closed its doors, and the prison system that welcomed them with open arms, left these young people with limited options. As a result, the film teetered dangerously close to a portrayal steeped in stereotypes, and devoid of historical or political context.

As an audience member, I watched the film thinking about the young people that I worked with in my capacity as a former activist and community worker, and as an academic studying political science, gender studies and sociology. I reflected on the power of individual motivation, and also the limitations of it; dreams and aspirations are often shaped by your social realities. I've seen people choose to study social work instead of architecture because even though the latter option fit their skill sets, their social situation made it seem so far out of reach.



Skittles appears in the doc Check It, screening at Hot Docs 2016. (Hot Docs)

I watched *Check It* while reflecting on the studies I did around ethics in research and considering the missing political, historical and social realities that I know play a role in the lives of Tray, Day Day, Alton and Skittles. I sat during the Q&A looking at the white filmmakers who were behind the camera and the black subjects who were in front of it, and wondered whether those dynamics had filtered into the finished product.

I don't believe that only black people should tell stories about black people. I don't think that an academic essay on the sociological realities of the Check It members would have made an enticing documentary. And I don't think that the individual decisions of the Check It members are unimportant. But *Check It* left me thinking about the responsibilities of the documentary filmmaker, and how they shouldn't be taken lightly.

Check It. Directed by Dana Flor and Toby Oppenheimer. (14A). 91 mins. Screens in Toronto as part of the Hot Docs Film Festival Fri, May 6. Scotiabank Theatre 14, 259 Richmond W., Toronto. 6pm. $15.04.

Ahead of Olympics, doc explores mysterious disappearances of Rio residents

By Lauren La Rose, The Canadian Press May 5, 2016



"In the Shadow of the Hill" director Dan Jackson is seen in this undated handout photo. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO

TORONTO - As Rio de Janeiro prepares to welcome the world for the Summer Olympics, a new documentary is looking beyond the glitz of the Games to cast light on the dark side of Brazil's second largest city.

"In the Shadow of the Hill," which screens Friday at the HotDocs festival in Toronto, turns its lens on the residents of Rocinha, the largest slum or "favela" in Brazil.

The densely populated community is estimated to be home to anywhere between 70,000 and 300,000 people, and is located on a mountainside between two of Rio's wealthiest neighbourhoods.

Ahead of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, the Brazilian government introduced a series of "pacification" programs designed to reclaim territories controlled by armed drug traffickers.

Australian filmmaker Dan Jackson arrived in Rocinha in 2012 and started documenting the lives of the residents. The third time he returned to the favela was the same day tragedy occurred: Amarildo de Souza disappeared.

The local bricklayer had last been seen on June 14, 2013, being picked up by police for questioning. Police maintained he left the station alive. His family believed he had been tortured and killed by law enforcement.

"Before the case of Amarildo, there were 22 cases that we officially know of in Rocinha about the police torturing residents to obtain information," said Jackson in an interview.

"They went in front of the courtroom, in front of a judge, and the judge threw it out because they're poor black favela residents."

The mysterious circumstances surrounding de Souza's disappearance soon gained attention beyond Brazil's borders. "In The Shadow of the Hill" also examines the relationship between favela residents and the police, and shows the efforts of community members and activists to maintain hope and seek justice.

According to the film, about 38,000 people have disappeared in Rio between 2007 and 2013, the vast majority being black males from the favelas. The documentary also includes interviews with de Souza's family members, community residents and lawyer and human rights activist Joao Tancredo. According to Tancredo, in the last decade, about 10,000 forced disappearances in Rio alone are under suspicion of police involvement.

"If you look at a map of all the pacified communities in Rio, they have an inherent link to either the World Cup or the Olympics in terms of infrastructure they planned on building, in terms of public access highways," said Jackson. "In my mind, there is an absolutely indelible link between the two."

Since the outcry over de Souza's case, Tancredo said there are countless more people coming forward with "chillingly similar stories," noted Jackson.

"In his view, those people have always been there. But something that this particular case has done with the family coming forward, and the movement that broke out around it, is that people are feeling emboldened and braver," said Jackson.

"They're coming out and telling their stories rather than receding into the shadows and just keeping their mouths shut out of fear."

Broadcaster – May 5, 2016

Hot Docs Forum and Deal Maker Wraps Successful 2016 Edition

The Hot Docs Forum, Hot Docs' key international co-financing market event, and Hot Docs Deal Maker, Hot Docs' curated one-on-one pitch meeting program, wrapped after two days of brisk pitching, networking and deal-making. At the Hot Docs Forum, 20 projects – with 12 female directors and 27 female producers attached – representing 17 countries were presented to a room of over 300 key funders and other decision makers, while at Hot Docs Deal Maker, 70 projects were pitched to 65 buyers at approximately 625 meetings.

"We were overwhelmingly impressed by the stature of the projects that pitched and excited for the enthusiastic responses from the decision makers around the table," says Hot Docs industry programmer and Forum producer Dorota Lech.

Over $10,000 in cash prizes were awarded to projects at this year's Hot Docs Forum.

The Corus-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize (formerly Shaw Media-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize) was awarded to Nomad Film's *Showgirls of Pakistan*, which looks at the difficult lives of dancers in the Punjab's smut theatres and strip shows through the perspective of the brave women. Disbursed from the Corus-Hot Docs Funds, the $10,000 CDN cash prize is awarded to the best Canadian pitch at the Forum as voted on by attending international buyers. Corus' Andrew Johnson and Hot Docs' Dorota Lech presented the award to pitch team members Saad Khan, Anam Abbas and Mark Johnston.

The Cuban Hat Award, which offers "real cash, no strings attached" support for powerful and unique projects, was presented to *Happy Winter* (Indyca, Zenit Arti Audiovisive), directed by Giovanni Totaro and pitched by Simone Catania. Established in 2009 in an impromptu display of collegial support, the Cuban Hat Award is decided from ballots collected from Hot Docs Forum Observers, and the cash prize is raised by passing the hat. This year's collection brought in $611.75 CDN, which was matched dollar-for-dollar by Hot Docs, bringing the total cash prize to $1,223.50 CDN. The prize also includes two 2017 Hot Docs industry passes, one IDFA accreditation, two passes to Dok Leipzig, as well as consulting sessions with various industry experts. The Cuban hat in which the prize money was collected was presented to Marie Nelson of PBS, named favourite commissioning editor also by Observer ballot. The founders of the Cuban Hat Award, Diego Briceno (Cuibafilms/Pimiento, Montreal) and Giulia Frati (Zelectra Productions, Montreal) announced the winner at the Hot Docs Forum's closing reception.

The Hollywood Reporter – May 6, 2016

Hot Docs: Norway's 'Brothers' Doc Diary Takes Top Jury Prize

May 6, 2016 by: **Etan Vlessing**



'Brothers'

The special jury prize went to American directors Todd and Jedd Wider's 'God Knows Where I Am.'

Norway director Aslaug Holm's *Brothers* took the top jury prize on Friday night at the 2016 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival.

Holm's film — seemingly a documentary version of Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*, about two brothers, Lukas and Markus, whose growth over eight years from toddlers to teenagers is captured by their filmmaker mother — earned the fest's best international feature documentary prize and $10,000.

Hot Docs gave its special jury prize for an international feature documentary to the American doc *God Knows Where I Am*, by directors Todd and Jedd Wider. The film reveals a troubling account of mental illness through the mysterious death of a woman in a New Hampshire farmhouse.

Elsewhere, the best emerging foreign filmmaker award went to Mike Day for his U.K.-Denmark co-production *The Islands and the Whales*. And the best mid-length documentary prize was awarded to another Norwegian film, *The Button*, a doc by Paul S. Refsdal about two al-Qaeda suicide bombers in Syria.

Hot Docs also handed out prizes to local films, with the best Canadian feature doc prize going to Nettie Wild's *Koneline*, while the special jury prize for a Canadian doc went to *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*, Brett Story's Canada-U.S. co-production about the American prison industry.

Highlights of Hot Docs this year included genre-defying films like Matt Johnson's Apollo 11 hoax thriller *Operation Avalanche*, which combined fact and fiction to reveal a CIA conspiracy to fake the moon landing, and Oscar-winning screenwriter Pierre Bismuth's docu/fiction hybrid, *Where Is Rocky II?*

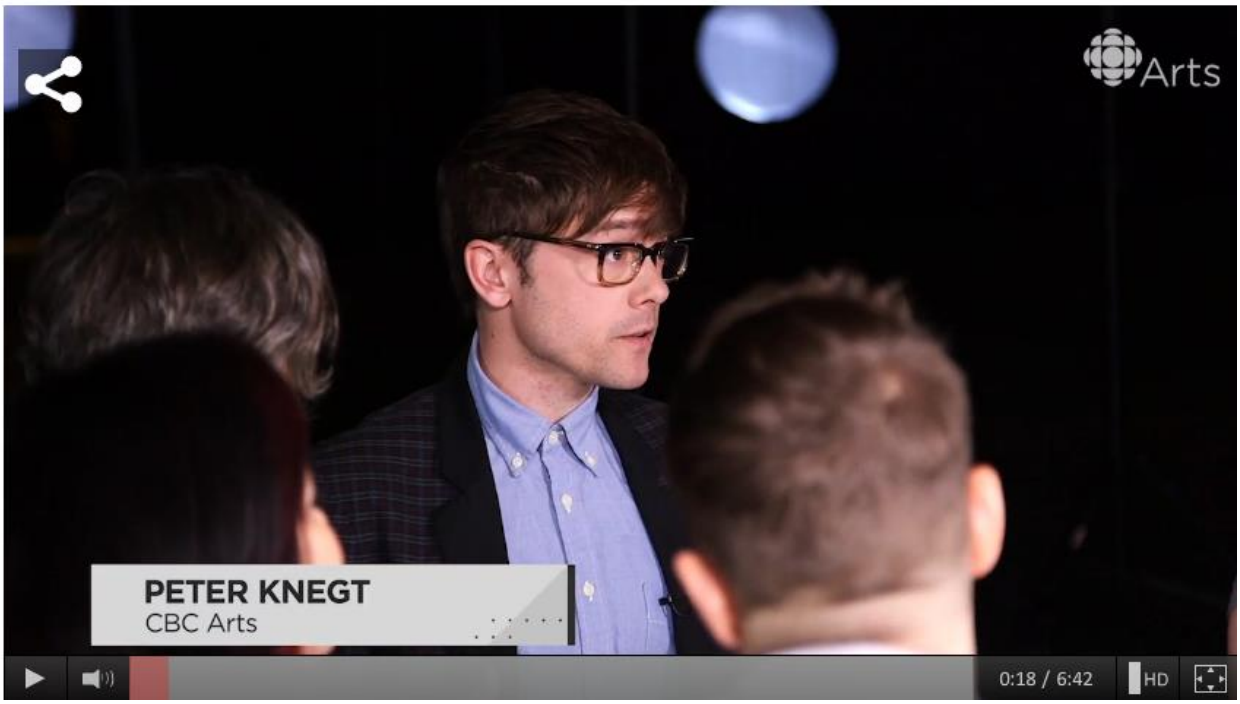
Bismuth told *the Hollywood Reporter* his mystery thriller about the hunt for a fake rock reportedly placed among real ones in a California desert by famed artist Ed Ruscha is a new genre, fake fiction. "Everything is true, but it looks fake," he said.

Hot Docs, North America's largest documentary festival, wraps Sunday in Toronto. In all, the event will have screened 232 documentaries from 51 countries during its April 28-May 8 run.

We asked six Hot Docs filmmakers, Why do documentaries matter?

May 6, 2016 by: **Peter Knegt**

Directors at Toronto doc festival sat down with CBC Arts to discuss their work



Hot Docs — the largest documentary film festival in North America — wraps up in Toronto this weekend, and CBC Arts took the opportunity to bring together an eclectic mix of Canada's filmmaking community for the first edition of our Artists Talk roundtable.

Tiffany Hsiung (*The Apology*), Darby Wheeler *(Hip-Hop Evolution*), Matt Johnson (*Operation Avalanche*), Nettie Wild (*Koneline: Our Land Beautiful*), Rama Rau (*League of Exotique Dancers*) and Chase Joynt (*Between You and Me*) each came to Hot Docs — and our roundtable — with varying degrees of experience and very different, though equally fascinating projects.

Joynt's *Between You and Me* follows a young woman preparing for a visit with her father, a former pastor serving a 29-year sentence in a California prison for 20 counts of child sexual abuse. It's Joynt's fourth short film, though he is the only filmmaker on the panel who has yet to make a feature length documentary. (That'll surely change soon.)

First-time feature filmmaker Hsiung's *The Apology* depicts three so-called "comfort women," the term used to describe the more than 200,000 women and girls across Asia who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II. The film follows them as they forcefully fight the Japanese government for recognition of what happened to them.



The Apology (NFB)

Another freshman filmmaker, Wheeler's *Hip-Hop Evolution*follows Canadian rapper (and CBC Radio host) Shad as he heads to Harlem and the Bronx to help trace the evolution of hip hop from an underground culture to a global phenomenon via some of its originators and stars, including Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa.

Operation Avalanche stands out thanks to the fact that it's not technically a documentary. Director Johnson (who has one previous film to his credit) infiltrated NASA, saying he and his team were shooting a documentary about the Apollo program in the 1960s. The footage they shot as a result was mixed with archival materials to create a mockumentary that audiences have been raving about since it debuted at Sundance earlier this year.

Rau returns to Hot Docs a year after her *No Place To Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story* won much acclaim. *League of Exotique Dancers,*which opened this year's the festival, offers a dazzling cast of characters in vintage burlesque dancers reminiscing on their outrageous lives as they prepare for a rare performance for the "Legends of Burlesque Hall of Fame" weekend.

Finally, award-winning veteran Wild comes to the table with *Koneline: Our Land Beautiful.* Shot in eye-popping Cinemascope, the film is a stunning cinematic poem to the Tahltan First Nations people, who have lived for thousands of years in remote northwestern British Columbia.

Watch all six of them discuss their projects with CBC Arts producer and host Peter Knegt in the above video, and look for their films at festivals and in theaters as they make their way across the country.

Variety – May 6, 2016 (1 of 2)

Review: ‘Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest’

May 6, 2016 by: ***Dennis Harvey***



A foreign writer's lifelong fascination with an isolated Laplander race is preserved this delightful doc.

“Enchanting” is indeed the operative word for “Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest.” This documentary about a foreign visitor’s lifelong fascination with an isolated Laplander race, their mythologies and one storytelling matriarch in particular feels itself like an artifact from some remote, slightly fantastical culture. The result is as much like a Guy Maddin movie as an anthropological dig, with a goldmine of archival materials complemented by beautiful animated sequences illustrating Skolt legends. While the subject matter may be esoteric, Katja Gauriloff’s second feature is easily delightful and distinctive enough to attract specialized exposure beyond the fest circuit.

Robert Crottet had already had a somewhat stormy life — his mother died giving birth to him, he was raised by a grandmother after clashing with his new stepmum, then had to flee the Russian Revolution — when he was stricken with tuberculosis as a young man in the 1930s. His condition forced him to pause a successful playwriting career for a long-term sanitarium stay. There, with little hope of recovery, he experienced vivid dreams of a remote people whom he decided (after consulting an Arctic explorer) might well be the real-life Skolt Sami, an indigenous ethnic group whose lifestyle had scarcely changed over centuries.

Far from assimilating with the Finnish, Russian or Norwegian societies whose borders they lived near, they maintained their own language, and a semi-nomadic seasonal existence. They only truly lived together in a “winter village” during the harshest part of the year; the rest of the calendar the 30 or so families dwelt on their separate land plots, fishing and herding reindeer.

Crottet found himself instantly welcomed by the community and was especially taken by a woman named Kaisa, who'd learned Russian while working for a monastery in her youth. After he had a curious, friendly encounter by a purported "king of the reindeer," she announced he'd been "chosen by the forest," and could now be told all the stories and legends of her people. He found her a hypnotic storyteller who "played the roles of animals even better than humans." He later compiled much of this material into a book called "The Enchanted Forest," published when he found himself stranded in London during WWII. He also used the connections he'd made there to help the Skolts get back on their feet after the war robbed them of ancestral land and homes. (Sadly, however, their resettled postwar life ended many age-old traditions.)

Kaisa's peculiar, whimsical, richly metaphorical way of speaking (her actual voice is heard here in recordings made during the 1950s) and Crottet's sense that "you are in a sort of lost world" with the Skolts shapes the tenor of what's largely a collage documentary, composed of various archival materials plus some discreetly slipped-in reenactment bits. The meandering, sometimes macabre story she tells that's woven throughout the narrative (and which ultimately turns out to "explain" how the northern lights came to exist) is charmingly animated by Veronika Bessedina in a manner suggestive of lush vintage children's book illustrations.

Crottet remained in touch with Kaisa to the end of her life in 1980 (he died a few years later). The photographs he shot, and film shot by his life partner/collaborator Enrique Mendez, show a woman with an impish humor and childlike nature (he called her "the happiest, sweetest and most beautiful child I've ever known") despite a life whose many hardships included the premature deaths of nearly all her children.

There's a willfully anachronistic, out-of-time flavor to "Kaisa's Enchanted Forest" that lends a beguiling message-in-a-bottle feel. That very much extends to its finely tuned packaging elements, including a gradual late shift to color after primarily B&W content. The only false note is sounded briefly by some hammy voice actor contributions in a sequence about the British public's debate over whether to help the Skolt Sami when they'd suffered so much loss themselves; however, principal voice actors (David Mauffret reading Crottet's writings, Sirkka Sanila occasionally filling in for Kaisa) are fine

NOW Magazine – May 6, 2016 (1 of 2)

BROTHERS IN THE KITCHEN SERVES UP MOVING STORIES AT HOT DOCS

May 6, 2016 by: ***RADHEYAN SIMONPILLAI***

Interactive Hot Docs Festival show puts the Tamil immigrant experience on the menu



Elyse Bouvier

Sasi Bala (Sister in the Kitchen), Mirabella Sundar Singh and Gabriella Sundar Singh

Former Toronto Star columnist Corey Mintz called Tamil migrants the "backbone of Toronto restaurants." He isn't alone in that observation. On Wednesday night, **Hot Docs** unveiled Brothers In The Kitchen, a live documentary about the long, perilous journey of Tamil refugees from Sri Lankan civil war zones to the back of your favourite souvlaki spots.

The performance at the **Centre for Social Innovation** had two women standing in a kitchen preparing payasam, a Tamil dessert similar to rice pudding, for a limited audience of about 70. At the intimate and interactive gathering, speakers shared traumatic memories, with support from video installations, a live band and dancers whose fluid Bharatanatyam movements channelled the show's poetry, and on occasion, horror.

A few technical glitches during the experimental production were welcomed as part of the collaborative process, and the audience was sometimes called on to read archival newspaper clippings aloud.

The CBC's Manjula Selvarajah hid at a bar until it was her turn to grab the mic and tearily offer a heartbreaking childhood memory of rioters trying to break into her house during Black July, the anti-Tamil pogrom that killed thousands and displaced many more.

Author Amarnath Amarasingam remembered the strangers who'd aggressively knock on his door in Toronto, collecting money for the Tamil Tigers from Tamil families weighed down by guilt over what they'd left behind.

Former Toronto mayor Barbara Hall described how the Tamil community grew from a few men crowding mattresses in small apartments to the hundreds of thousands in Canada today. And former premiere Bob Rae gave a sad account of how the community has still been denied the ability to heal.

Ironically, the titular “brothers in the kitchen” were not on hand, because performance director Cyrus Sundar Singh couldn’t get them “out of the kitchen.” You can’t really pull a line cook from his job on a Wednesday night.

The sheer breadth and depth of the show was astounding. It offered an immersive history on Tamil migration, the memories, music and art all informing a search for what the Tamil-Canadian identity has become, or is becoming. A couple of dancers were part of a new generation, born and bred in Canada but still holding their mother culture dear.

According to Singh, the young generation of Tamil Canadians is what made this project possible. A multimedia artist also known for writing music, Singh wanted to make a documentary on the Tamil journey more than a decade ago, but had to put it on hold because the conversation was far more guarded, touchy and misunderstood at the time.

Today, Tamils are represented in politics and have writers like Amarasingam shedding light on the community’s identity while simultaneously shaping it. Singh also found the forum and support to experiment with telling these stories at Ryerson’s documentary MFA program. Brothers In The Kitchen is just the first stage in a long-term project that should lead to a documentary film.

It was by pure coincidence that the show debuted the night before **NOW’s I Am Tamil cover story**. Neither of us knew what the other was working on until a couple of weeks ago. Singh sees that serendipitous collision as a sign of how much Canada has changed since Justin Trudeau took over from Stephen Harper.

“What helped me to tell this story, and helped people listen to it, is when the Syrians arrived,” says Singh. “All of a sudden, the idea of a refugee became something to collectively embrace. When the prime minister goes to the airport and welcomes them, the narrative changes.”

The 2016 Hot Docs Forum Report, part two

May 6, 2016 by: **Manori Ravindran**

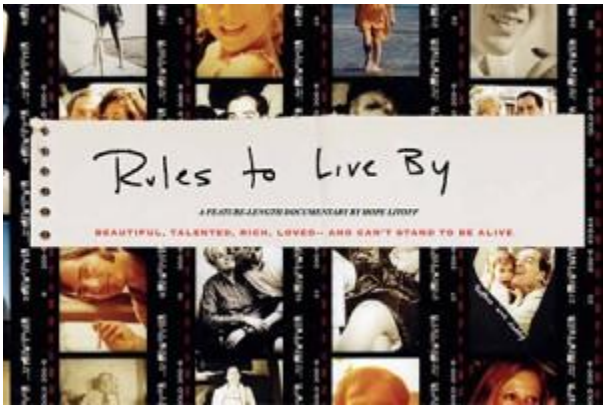


Women took center stage at the round-table as directors, producers and subjects in several of the remaining projects on day one (May 3) of the Hot Docs Forum.

Hope Litoff pitched a deeply personal portrait of her late sister Ruth in *Rules to Live By*; Marta Prus presented her study of the competition between two Russian gymnasts in *Over the Limit*; and Minji Ma turned the lens on her parents in *Family in the Bubble*. Anna Thomson and co-director David Baksh, meanwhile, pitched their film on the workers at a Catalan yoghurt company, *Yoghurt Utopia*.

Themes of mental illness and family dysfunction were a common thread running through many of the projects, which were all, on balance, well-received by commissioners who were both compassionate and welcoming of personal stories that also reflected larger societal problems.

Please note that coverage of one pitch, from filmmakers Daniel Sivan and Alon Sahar for *The Patriot*, has been withheld due to concerns by producers and Forum organizers over the sensitive nature of the project.
The first part of this report can be found here. Look for the third and final installment of our report on Monday (May 9).



RULES TO LIVE BY

Production Company: Little Darkroom Films, LLC (USA)

Director: Hope Litoff

Production budget: $799,189 (Some financing secured from Impact Partners, Little Darkroom Films, HBO, Chicken & Egg Pictures)

Still needed: $399,189

Logline: She's beautiful, artistic, loved and can't stand to be alive. *Rules to Live By* traces my efforts to piece together the life, mental illness and suicide of my sister Ruth.

There was little preamble ahead of the trailer for *Rules to Live By*, Hope Litoff's moving portrait of her sister, the artist Ruth Litoff, who committed suicide in 2008. The New York-based editor-turned-director told the Forum that she is looking to "get to know [her] sister in death in a way she couldn't in life," and an elegant trailer detailed the story of the two sisters, focusing on Ruth's artwork and effervescence in life, as well as the mental illness that led to her death. The artist kept diligent records of her successes and memories, and Hope is delving into these belongings to tell her sister's story. *Rules* will be comprised of vérité scenes, animation and journal entries, culminating in the realization of a photo exhibit Ruth had planned months before her death. "The film will be a work of art," said Litoff.

Rules is two-thirds of the way through production, and simultaneously in post-production. The team is aiming for an early 2017 festival premiere, with plans for a "robust global outreach strategy" to further efforts in fighting misconceptions surrounding mental illness. *Rules* is looking for production and post-production funds through foundations or international pre-sales or copros. The team is also looking for potential outreach partners and funding for that strategy.

HBO is backing the film and Jesse Weinraub, director of HBO Documentary Films, sat briefly at the round-table to tell the Forum that the broadcaster has been "driving the project" for a year, and has a first-look deal with Litoff. "We've long been interested in issues related to mental illness," he said, commending the director's "intimate visual approach to exploring suicide."

Elsewhere, Chris White, executive producer for PBS doc strand 'POV,' said he was a friend of Litoff's, and got some laughs after admitting he was "bereft" about HBO's first-look deal "but looking forward to them making a mistake and letting it go." Addressing Litoff, he added: "I'm interested to see how your dark and sometimes edgy but very funny personality comes through in a very personal and grieving exploration."
Later on, Noland Walker – senior content director and 'Independent Lens' co-curator, for ITVS – asked what rights are available (answer: all of them), and Bruce Cowley of Canada's documentary channel asked if the film would offer any sense of hope.

Litoff cheekily responded, "I am very funny," but went on to explain that Ruth's journal entries would offer some "edgy comedy" and the photo exhibit would be an uplifting note to end on for the doc.

Nick Fraser, series editor for BBC's 'Storyville' doc strand, called the project "very brave and very terrific," adding that, "It's the realities, and texture of the film that matters – the observation – and that's so beautifully apparent in your trailer."

OVER THE LIMIT
Production Companies: Telemark, Ventana-Film GmbH. (Poland, Germany)
Director: Marta Prus
Production budget: $452,731 (Some financing secured from the Polish Film Institute, Telemark, Ventana-Film GmbH)
Still needed: $242,731

Logline: What can you sacrifice to fulfill a dream? A film about a top Russian rhythmic gymnast on her way to gold in Rio 2016.

Over the Limit follows a critical year in the life of Russian gymnast Margarita Mamun, who is working towards a chance to represent her team and country in this year's summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Mamun competes alongside two teammates – whom she lives and trains with – for two coveted spots, and must also overcome a nervous breakdown. Director Marta Prus, a gymnast herself, said it took her more than two years to gain access. She began shooting in September 2015 and expects to complete filming this October.



Marta Prus, from Polish Docs

Producer Maciej Kubicki added that they have an agreement with the Russian Federation of Gymnastics and the International Federation of Gymnastics to film all the events the protagonists take part in. A 52-minute and feature-length version of the film will be made. A rough cut is expected early next year.

PBS' Chris White said the Olympic run featured in the doc was an obvious benefit, as well as the performances of the girls, but what would be interesting is how deeply the team could mine the relationships.

Arno Becker, commissioner for Germany's RTL Television, said he liked the access and the different layers to the doc (Russian culture, the emotions behind the sport, etc.), but suggested that audiences should also feel the pain of the competition.

Marie Nelson, PBS VP of news and public affairs, pointed out the "incredible beauty and power of the sport," and said the team should continue to push its cinematography in how they're shooting the gymnastics matches. "I think this is one of those stories that transcends nationality, and it's something I'd love to see at PBS."

Margje de Koning, commissioner of docs for the Netherlands' EO and IKONdocs, bravely raised the issue of the scandals sometimes associated with Russian gymnastics, to which Prus replied there has not been a doping affair so far. "I think [the girls] are smart and they know what they're doing, and the Olympic Games are the most important and they are very safe about this."

Asking what might happen after the Olympics was Guy Lavie, channel manager for Israel's yesDocu. There is a large Russian community in Israel, he said, and a great interest in gymnastics. The director said she wants to shoot after the event, but that could potentially be another film.

YOGHURT UTOPIA

Production Companies: Chimerica Media, Massa D'or Produccions (UK, Spain)

Directors: David Baksh, Anna Thomson

Production budget: $234,450 (Some financing secured from Chimerica Media, TV3 Televisao de Catalunya, Sundance Institute, DR)

Still needed: $139,950

Logline: This film is about a yoghurt factory in a forest called La Fageda in Catalunya, Spain, where all 300 of the workers are patients at a hospital for people with mental illnesses.

Bruni Burres, a senior consultant with the Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program, introduced the pitch, noting that when the program received the application, they were "thrilled and alert with anticipation" and hoped the team would come back to them with a proposal for production.

The film follows a Catalan psychiatrist called Cristobal Colon (which translates in English to Christopher Columbus) who oversees a number of mentally and physically challenged patients in a psychiatric hospital. When he resigns, he takes a bus-load of patients with him and starts a yoghurt company called La Fageda, where he employs his former patients. "The film is about how La Fageda can inspire a more enlightened attitude and more practical approach towards mental illness," reads a synopsis for the doc.

Yoghurt Utopia's first act will detail the history of the company, while its second will find the group in present day, faced with Colon's retirement. The final act will glimpse the future of La Fageda.



La Fageda yoghurt company

Mark Edwards, commissioner for ARTE France, said the broader issue of finding alternative venues for medicalized psychiatric treatment in Europe is important, and should be emphasized in the film. “I think the larger issue is a huge one, and I’d be interested in knowing more about Columbus’ philosophy, where his ideas came from and how hard it is to be a maverick in [this] system.”

Representing Vice Canada was development executive John Turner, who clarified the brand’s programming strategy. “I think one of the things that is most misunderstood about Vice actually is [the conception] that we’re only interested in telling stories about young people.”

Youthful qualities in a subject and topic, however, still seemed to be an important component of a selected project.

Despite Colon being of retiring age, the exec said he had a “beautiful, youthful energy” and a renegade approach that would still resonate with the Vice audience. He added: “When I started to see some of the younger characters within the factory I got really excited because I think the more youthful face of mental illness is something we don’t see as much of.”

Elsewhere, Brianna Little, a development executive with Amazon Studios, said she loved the trailer and the directors’ unique point-of-view in the film, adding that Amazon looks to shift the status quo. “It’s very much in the Amazon philosophy that we challenge the status quo, for better or worse.”

FAMILY IN THE BUBBLE

Production Companies: Documoon, Shangma Pictures, napafilms ltd. (South Korea, Finland)

Director: Minji Ma

Production budget: $174,300 (Some financing secured from Shangma Pictures, Docs Port Incheon)
Still needed: $111,274

Logline: An acid portrait of a family in Gangnam, South Korea, that dreams of winning the jackpot through real estate involvement.

Minji Ma's *Family in the Bubble* is a personal story touching on issues around class, wealth and barriers to upward mobility. Ma's parents were successful real estate developers and dealers in the 1980s but lost everything 15 years ago during the Asian financial crisis. Fixated by real estate as a means to accumulate wealth, the couple continues to speculate about the next real estate boom, despite poor finances and a forthcoming move from their rented home.

The project is pursuing a copro with Finland, and producer Liisa Juntunen was also on hand for the pitch. "Global recession and real estate has affected us deeply in Europe, too, and apparently there is a new real estate bubble, at least in Finland," said the Helsinki-based producer. "We want to bring to Western audiences this intimate story about global economy flavored with black humor."

Family is currently in production and 70% of the film has been shot. The team is looking for financing partners and distribution out of Korea and Finland. The film will be complete in 2017.

Marie Nelson of PBS kicked off the feedback by remarking on the doc's universal theme. "Many of us in North America and the U.S. can relate to what it was like after the bubble burst, and I think that having the opportunity to see this in another context and also brought down to the microcosm level of the family would be very effective for us."

The BBC's Nick Fraser, meanwhile, commented that the tone was "pitch perfect" and the images were fantastic, while PBS' Chris White said he also liked what he saw and was interested in seeing more. "This is a very sad story and you enter into it in a light way, and in the trailer it is balanced well."

Murray Battle, director of original content and brand for Canada's Knowledge Network, said the British Columbia-based net sees itself as a Pacific broadcaster and the project could make for a great pairing with a film in the works with *Haida Gwaii: On the Edge of the World* helmer Charles Wilkinson. That film, entitled *Vancouver: No Fixed Address*, is "a portrait of the city from the point of view of the people who can't afford to live there," said Battle.

Finally, when asked by the moderator if Japan's public broadcaster would be interested, Yoko Imai, a senior producer for international copro and acquisitions with NHK, said that while she saw a lot of similarities and universal themes, on a macro level there are differences in how the two countries developed. Because the broadcaster has an in-house production team and has also covered Korea extensively, Imai said she needed further explanation of the differences and what kind of conclusion would be drawn in the film.

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Hot Docs ’16: Conde Nast, C4 share tips on making shorts


5 days ago by Kevin Ritchie



The growing market for online short-form content serves a variety of purposes for filmmakers.
For emerging directors, producing an online short is a chance to get a commission with an established broadcaster or online brand. Meanwhile, established directors often produce shorts to keep busy and earn extra income while developing and rustling up financing for feature projects.

For content platforms, shorts provide a way to build a mobile-friendly catalog, as well as a way to build community around subject matter and hot-button topics of the day.
This year’s Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival has shone a brighter spotlight on doc shorts – both in the Toronto-based fest’s programming and on the industry side.

On Wednesday (May 4), Hot Docs and Toronto International Film Festival shorts programmer Kathleen McInnis convened a panel of short film commissioners and programmers to give an audience of mostly nascent filmmakers a sense of the market for online shorts.

The panel, entitled “Bell Media Kickstart: You Think You Want to Make a Feature But You Should Make a Short,” included Sarah Lash, acquisitions consultant for Condé Nast Entertainment; Lesley Birchard (pictured, right), executive in charge of programming for CBC Docs; Adam Gee (left), commissioner for multi-platform and online video (factual) at Channel 4; and Sharon Badal, VP of filmmaker relations and shorts programming at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Topics included how much filmmakers can expect to get paid, the best way to pitch and social media. Here are five takeaways from the discussion:

Pacing is everything
Run times for shorts vary depending on the outlet. CBC prefers doc shorts under 30 minutes but "ideally under 10," while Channel 4 tends to commission three- to five-minute shorts in series of six episodes to maximize web traffic. Condé Nast commissions shorts in a range of formats for a variety of media brands that include *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *The New Yorker* and Epicurious.com. Its run times range from two to 20 minutes and encompass one-offs, series, lifestyle how-tos and scripted.

Regardless of format or length, all the panelists emphasized pacing. The first 15 seconds of a short is just as important as the first 15 minutes of a feature when it comes to hooking a viewer – especially as they are likely watching on a mobile device and can easily click or swipe away.

"I've seen five-minute films that feel like five hours and 20-minute films that seem breezy quick," said Lash.
Other things directors should bear in mind is "title title title," said Lash. In the competitive world of online viewing, a title needs to immediately tell viewers what they are about to watch. When creating graphics and title cards, bear in mind that a viewer might be watching on a mobile device.

However, Gee noted that C4 has noticed an uptick in audiences watching online shorts on big screens via home-viewing devices such as Google Chromecast. He also noted that mobile viewers typically use headphones so "audio quality has to be better than on TV."

Payment tends to be on the low-end of the scale
CBC and Channel 4 are both pubcasters but Condé Nast relies on ad sales for revenue. As such, its rates for short filmmakers reflect a current reality that finds most ad dollars being spent on TV.

Lash expects the tide to turn from TV to digital in about five years. In the meantime, she pays in the area of four figures for shorts by emerging directors. Condé Nast will pay five figures, but usually in cases when an established director comes in with a coveted project.

Channel 4 pays a set fee of £1,500 (US$1,035) per minute so a series of six shorts can result in a pay range between $30,000 or $60,000 depending on run time. Birchard did not spell out CBC's rates but said directors will enter into contract negotiations with the pubcaster's business and rights team and that directors should build their own fee into a budget. "And if they forget to, we will remind them because it's important."

In addition to programming for Tribeca, Badal programs the festival's in-flight shorts channel on United Airlines. While the license fees may be small, she says the upside is a million eyeballs on seven flights a day.

Prepare footage for your pitch
Unless you're a director with a release track-record, awards and an easily identifiable style, outlets will likely require footage in addition to a paper pitch. Although all the panelists actively seek out directors at work events and festivals such as Hot Docs, they are extremely open to pitches, as long as emerging directors are prepared to show some sort of footage.

At Condé Nast, Lash also needs to ensure a project will be a right fit for her wide array of brand channels. She advised directors to familiarize themselves with the brands and only pitch her directly if they have a clear idea of where their content will fit in her network.

Birchard requires footage, and especially if the doc is character-driven. "We want to see the characters," she said. "I want to see a proper pitch."

Channel 4's Gee first requires that pitchers pen a couple of paragraphs so he can determine whether or not a topic has already been done. If he is interested, he requires a treatment and teaser footage, which can be shot on a cellphone if need be.

Social media is a consideration – but not always
The panelists were split on how active a role a director should take in promoting their film on social media. CBC's Birchard said a social strategy is part of what she wants to hear in a pitch, namely the channels a director will use and possible social influencers who can help build buzz.

"That's putting an awful lot of onus on the filmmaker," countered Gee. "I would rather them be out making films. This sort of 'tariff' is a big ask."

Similarly, Condé Nast has robust marketing and social media departments that oversee social strategy once a director delivers their short. "It's not an expectation but it's nice to have," she said.
More broadly, McInnis noted that building audiences online can be a smart strategy that will help a filmmaker down the line.

Not enough filmmakers are making shorts
On the festival level, programmers are having trouble finding worthy shorts as filmmakers opt to go the one-hour broadcast route instead of producing a film that runs a festival-friendly 40 minutes or less (the criteria for Oscar qualification).

"There is a shortage of shorts on the festival circuit," said Tribeca's Badal. "Filmmakers are not making short docs."
She also cautioned filmmakers to tread carefully when tackling heavy subject matter, noting she could have easily programmed a death-themed shorts program at this year's Tribeca if she wanted to. "There's a huge difference between being dramatic and being depressing," she noted.

Playback – May 6, 2016

Showgirls of Pakistan wins Corus-Hot Docs Forum prize

May 6, 2016 by: Regan Reid

The doc from Toronto's Nomad Films took home the $10,000 cash prize.



Showgirls of Pakistan from Toronto's Nomad Films has been awarded the 2016 Corus-Hot Docs Forum Pitch Prize, the festival announced today.

The $10,000 award (formerly known as Shaw Media-Hot Docs Pitch Prize) is awarded to the best Canadian pitch at Hot Docs Forum, the Toronto doc festival's international co-financing market, as voted by attending international buyers.

The doc, which was pitched by Saad Khan, Anam Abbas and Mark Johnston, looks at the difficult lives of dancers in Pakistan.

In total, 20 projects from 17 countries were presented at the Hot Docs Forum, with 12 female directors and 27 female producers attached to those projects.

At Hot Docs Deal Maker, the festival's one-on-one pitch program, which took place May 3 to 5, 70 projects were pitched to 65 buyers at roughly 625 meetings over the course of the two days.

The Cuban Hat Award was presented to *Happy Winter* from Italian prodcos Indyca and Zenit Arti Audiovisive and directed by Giovanni Totaro. The recipient of the "real cash, no strings attached" award is decided by ballots collected by Forum observers, and the award itself is funded through donations collected by passing the hat. This year, exactly $611.75 was collected in the hat and matched by Hot Docs for a grand total cash prize of $1,223.50.

The prize also includes two 2017 Hot Docs industry passes, one IDFA accreditation, two passes to Dok Leipzig and consulting sessions with industry experts. Cuban Hat Award founders Diego Briceno (of Montreal-based Cuibafilms and Pimiento) and Guilia Frati (of Montreal's Zelectra Productions) announced the winner at the Hot Docs Forum's closing reception.

Documentary 'Angry Inuk' at Hot Docs fest shows role of Inuit in seal hunt



Victoria Ahearn, The Canadian Press
Published Saturday, May 7, 2016 8:26AM EDT

TORONTO -- Growing up in Iqaluit, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril went seal hunting with her family and learned how to use the entire mammal for food, clothing and other needs.

She was raised to respect the seal and was saddened when she realized animal welfare groups were portraying the hunt as evil and greedy, creating campaigns that crushed their industry.

Arnaquq-Baril is hoping to clear up misconceptions about the seal hunt and raise awareness about the Inuit role in it in the new documentary "Angry Inuk."



"Mainly what I'm hoping is that when people see this film, they'll recognize that Inuit are not only an important part of the commercial seal skin market," she says, "but that the majority of commercial seal hunters are Inuit who eat the meat and share the meat with their friends and

family and really depend on those seal skin sales in order to buy more fuel and ammunition to continue hunting.

"It's a food security issue for us. Seven in 10 Inuit children go to school hungry and I think these anti-seal-hunt campaigns are a factor in the state of poverty and hunger that exists all across the North today."

"Angry Inuk" is making its world premiere at Toronto's Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, which runs through Sunday.

According to the doc, anti-sealing campaigns almost entirely depict the spring hunt around Newfoundland and Labrador, making it seem as if most seal skins come from there. But what many don't realize is that most seal hunters are actually Inuit and hunt around the Canadian Arctic as well as Alaska, Greenland and Russia, Arnaquq-Baril says.

The film also posits that fighting seal hunting is an important part of fundraising campaigns for animal rights groups.

"You see a couple of seal hunts in the film, so people can see for themselves and decide for themselves whether they think it's inhumane or not," says Arnaquq-Baril.

"But historically Inuit haven't been challenged a whole lot on how we kill seals and I think largely because when people see it, they see Inuit respect the animal and use all of the meat and the skin.... Our problem is even just being heard when we say, 'We sell seal skins and we are part of the commercial market,' and when dozens of countries pass legal bans on seal products, that affects us and it affects us more than anyone."

'Koneline: our land beautiful' wins top Canadian feature at HotDocs



A still image from 'Koneline: our land beautiful' is shown in this handout photo. A film documenting the Tahltan First Nation in remote northwestern British Columbia took home one of the top honours at the HotDocs Awards on Friday night. (THE CANADIAN PRESS / HO)

The Canadian Press
Published Saturday, May 7, 2016 10:35AM EDT

TORONTO -- A film documenting the Tahltan First Nation in remote northwestern British Columbia took home one of the top honours at the HotDocs Awards on Friday night.

"Koneline: our land beautiful" received the best Canadian feature documentary award and a $10,000 cash prize at a ceremony held at the Isabel Bader Theatre in Toronto.

The Norwegian film "Brothers," which follows two brothers from childhood to their teens, was named best international feature and also received a $10,000 cash prize.

Special jury prizes were awarded to "The Prison in Twelve Landscapes" for Canadian feature documentary, and "God Knows Where I Am" for international feature documentary. Each film was awarded a $5,000 cash prize.

Directors Sebastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Levesque ("Living with Giants") were named recipients of the emerging Canadian filmmaker award and a $3,000 cash prize. The jury acknowledged Ali Kazimi's "Random Acts of Legacy" with an honourable mention.

The emerging international filmmaker award was presented to director Mike Day for "The Islands and the Whales." Day also received a $3,000 cash prize.

Best mid-length documentary was president to Norway's "Dugma: The Button," with an honourable mention for "La Laguna."

"The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere" received the prize for best short documentary, with an honourable mention for "What Happened to Her."

Michael Chen received the Lindalee Tracey Award, which honours an emerging Canadian filmmaker with a passionate point of view, a strong sense of social justice and a sense of humour. The award includes a $5,000 cash prize.

Toronto-based producer Ed Barreveld was presented with the Don Haig Award and a $10,000 cash prize for the honour, which recognizes an outstanding independent Canadian producer with a film in the festival.

Steve James was the recipient of the outstanding achievement award.

The Vimeo On Demand Audience Award, audience top 10 favourite films, and the Canadian documentary promotion award will be announced on Monday.

Transgender Prince George teen subject of film at Hot Docs

May 7, 2016 by: **Liam Britten**

Handsome and Majestic received its premiere this week in Toronto



Milan appears in a still from Handsome and Majestic. The short documentary, about the severe bullying of the transgender teen, debuted in Toronto at Hot Docs. (hotdocs.ca)

A transgender teen in Prince George, B.C., who struggled to grow up in safety is the subject of a documentary film that has been screened all this week at the **Hot Docs film festival in Toronto**.

Handsome and Majestic tells the story of Milan, who was born female and transitioned to male and experienced severe hardships in his hometown as he did so.

"The filmmakers approached us, and we had to think long and hard about outing Milan further in the public," Milan's mother, Lynnell Halikowski, told ***Radio West*** host Audrey McKinnon.

"As a family we discussed what had been happening for him in terms of school and really severe bullying, and that somebody needed to know that the life for trans kids is tough and that school districts aren't doing enough."

Milan's bullying has included death threats, and Halikowski says her son was out of school for a year a year and a half at one point. She says Milan, now in Grade 8, has again been out of school for the past two months because of the bullying.

She says the documentary about Milan is getting a "powerful" response from audiences.

"People are outraged for what happened to Milan at school … the outcry is amazing," she said. "So that's hopeful. When people get upset, hopefully they turn that into something positive around education and moving forward."

Still, she says watching the adversity her son has faced on a big screen is "gut-wrenching."

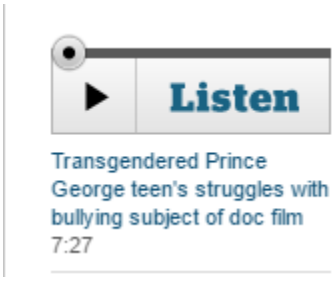
"When you find yourself in trauma, you just kind of put your head down and keep going forward. That's kind of where we've been the last two months," she said. "The film kind of brought back some of that past pain."

Still, she says her son has been brave through the ordeal.

"Milan has always [said] … 'I need to tell people. People need to know," she said.

With files from CBC Radio One's ***Radio West***

To hear the full story, click the audio labelled: Transgender Prince George teen's struggles with bullying subject of doc film



Toronto Sun – May 7, 2016



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VIDEO / SEARCH RESULTS FOR "ALL"



Strike A Pose documentary

jane Stevenson of the Toronto Sun checks out Strike A Pose documentary (about Madonna's True or Dare dancers) co-director Ester Gould and 3 dancers (José Gutierrez, Kevin Stea and Oliver Crumes)

MAY 7, 2016 12:30 FROM TORONTO SUN

25 years after Madonna's Truth or Dare, dancers open up in new doc

BY JANE STEVENSON, POSTMEDIA NETWORK

FIRST POSTED: SATURDAY, MAY 07, 2016 12:22 PM EDT | UPDATED: SATURDAY, MAY 07, 2016 12:29 PM EDT



Ladies with an attitude

Fellows that were in

the mood

Don't just stand there,

let's get to it

Strike a pose, there's

nothing to it

Vogue, vogue

Toronto Sun – May 7, 2016 (2 of 3)

It was just over a quarter century ago that The Material Girl shocked the world with her 1990 Blonde Ambition tour that saw her simulate masturbation on stage, which led to police threatening an arrest at the Toronto stop. Madonna's refusal to cut the scene from her performance caused an international brouhaha. The 'plot point' even made the subsequent behind-the-scenes documentary Truth or Dare in a climatic denouement.

The not-so-supporting players were her seven buff male dancers who were plucked from near obscurity to perform alongside her both on tour and in Truth or Dare as the film debuted at a crucial time in the fight against AIDS, gay rights and the expression of sexual freedom.

"I was a little heartbroken that we didn't get arrested [in Toronto]," jokes dancer Kevin Stea now. "I thought it would be such a bigger statement if we had."

In the new documentary, Strike A Pose, which just had its Canadian premiere at Hot Docs in Toronto, we find out what happened to Madonna's dance troupe when the cameras stopped filming. (One dancer, Gabriel Trupin, died of AIDS in 1995.)

24 Hours sat down with Dutch co-director Ester Gould, Stea and fellow dancers José Gutierrez and Oliver Crumes III so they could express themselves.

Whose idea was this film?

Gould: It was [my co-director Reijer Zwaan] idea. He saw Truth or Dare when he was eleven. I was 17. After that, he watched it hundreds of times. He always wondered what happened to these guys. We also found out was that there were so many people out there thanking them for what they meant to gay culture, to pop culture.

Was it tough opening up about your personal issues?

Stea: [No,] I said yes before they finished the first sentence. I was looking for a reason to finally share [my] story. [Gould and Zwaan] came with such a beautifully enquiring mind and wanted to know about who we were instantly.

Gutierrez: I was a bit hesitant. I didn't want it to be just about Madonna. I didn't want it to be just a story about her. It took me a minute to sign on board, but then I met with [Gould and Zwaan], and their energy and vibe [was reassuring]. I'm very spiritual so I go by what I feel. I'm a dancer. I met them and I felt their energy. And I said, "You know what? I'm going to do it."

Crumes: Right when I met them, I was on board. [My wife and I] looked at each other and said, 'Yeah." She looked at me and went, "Baby, you should do it"'

In hindsight, did Madonna owe you guys anything after the project was over?

Gutierrez: To an extent. I think we were too young to be left on our own, especially at that age. [After the tour,] I signed on to her record label and worked on my music in the record studio. She was focused on her acting at the time. She didn't really focus on the project that she had [me and Luis] sign on to do with her label. And I think the fact that we were kids, not to put it all on her, it's like leaving kids by themselves [in a candy store].

Stea: There were consequences, repercussions, positive things that came out of the tour that we weren't ready to handle alone.

Any pushback from Madonna given there are some Truth or Dare clips in the movie?

Gould: She didn't stop us from making this film – and that's a good sign. We didn't expect her to but obviously the financiers and the commissioning editors, everyone was a bit worried also.

What's the movie's message?

Stea: Be yourself, you are loved, and that love is forever.

Gutierrez: Everyone is someone no matter of colour, race, and sexuality. There's no discrimination. Love doesn't discriminate.

Would you guys perform together again – especially if the doc is a big hit?

Stea: I'd love to dance with these boys again. Oh my God.

Gutierrez: Oh, it will. We have something in the works.

TOUGHEST CRITIC: What will Madonna think of the new doc?

So what will Madonna make of Strike A Pose?

Apparently, the Material Girl was only given a copy of the film about a week ago.

"She's aware of it now," said co-director Ester Gould. "For a long time, we didn't want her to find out about it, to be very honest. We were very cautious in this spreading. It was a delicate process to make sure nothing got in the way. And we filmed individually with all of them and then we brought them all together. We just didn't want to take any risk of something disturbing what we were doing. We kept it quiet because we didn't want anyone to steal what we were doing, especially [legally]."

And, of course, Madge's opinion of the film does matter.

"I'd like to know what she thinks," said dancer Kevin Stea. "I have tons of friends that just got off tour with her so I definitely ran into one the other day and said, 'I need the lowdown.' But I'll put out my feelers to see if they talked about it."

Added dancer José Gutierrez: "It does matter in the sense we would like her to see what we're still doing. She is our connection. And I think that she would love to see how we kept on. Her babies grew up."

The dancers are also quick to point out that this isn't a bitter film.

"Even now, without seeing the movie, people already assume it's some scandal about Madonna, or that we're just gossiping," said Stea.

Added Gutierrez: "Or we're bitter. I've seen that on Facebook. It isn't that we're bitter."

'God Knows Where I Am': Why The Documentary Shot on Film To Capture The Subject's Mental Illness

May 8, 2016 by: Jedd Wider and Todd Wider

The award winning directors explain how they used different formats to tell the amazing story of Linda Bishop.



"God Knows Where I Am"

[Editor's Note: One of the principal reasons documentary film is currently experiencing such recent rebirth is directly attributable to the advent of digital cameras. Not having to be precious about burning expensive film, nonfiction filmmakers are free in a way they never were in the first hundred years of cinema. Which is why, when a rare doc like "God Knows Where I Am" chooses to shoot in 16mm and 35mm, it tends to stick out.

"God Knows Where I Am" is a feature-length documentary film about Linda Bishop, a well-educated mother suffering from severe bipolar disorder, who became homeless and was eventually committed to the New Hampshire State psychiatric hospital for three years. After refusing treatment and wandering ten miles away from the hospital, Bishop broke into an abandoned historical farmhouse where she lived off rainwater and apples she picked from a nearby orchard during one of the coldest winters on record in New Hampshire. When they found her dead, they also discovered a diary she kept daily during her four month stay at the farmhouse that documents her loss of sanity but also her insight, humor and spirituality.

Indiewire – May 8, 2016 (2 of 6)

Indiewire asked the award-winning directors Jedd and Todd Wider what it was about Bishop's journey that called for a return to celluloid and using a variety of cameras that ranged from a 1939 Eyemo to the modern Arri Alexa.]



"God Know Where I Am"

Depicting Mental Illness

In tackling the subject matter, we focused on the important social justice issues of the film through an intimate and artistic exploration. How does one depict insanity? How does one depict the interior landscape of a person who is imprisoned by the mind? How do we, as filmmakers, build empathy for a person who is no longer alive? The film is told from a variety of perspectives, including Linda's own, through recollection and first person narrative. It unfolds in a way that echoes films like "Rashomon," where the audience sees different versions of an event. Here, the audience is presented with different views of the unraveling of a human being, including her own view. Which view do you trust? We wanted to create a unique documentary that pushes the boundaries of the medium artistically and, at the same time, questions our societal norms for dealing with the mentally ill.

In creating the film, we, together with our cinematographer Gerardo Puglia, were very conscious of exploring the visual medium in a purposeful manner. We chose to use film as well as digital video. As Linda was an art history major before her break with sanity, the aesthetic and visual nature of telling the story was explored in ways that reference both film history and art history. The work of specific painters such as Hammershoi, Wyeth and Magritte, and filmmakers such as Tarkovsky and Malick influenced the palate of the film. Subtle reference to religious iconography was also made because Linda's diary becomes increasingly spiritual as it moves towards the end of Linda's life.



"God Knows Where I Am"

Shooting in Film: Using Historical Cameras

The depiction of Linda's conscious state was shot in film, using 35mm, 16mm, and Super 16mm for different reasons. We employed a variety of cameras, including a 1939 Bell & Howell Eyemo (a camera used in WWII war photography) and a 1980s Aaton XTR Prod, each for thematic reasons to underline notions of dreamscapes, personal nostalgia and commercial memory. We tried to elevate the visual quality of the film as a way to honor Linda, who was an extremely insightful and visual person.

Shooting in Film: Super 16MM

Linda hid in an attic in the farmhouse, trying to avoid being seen by neighbors, where she found magazines from the 1970s, many of which depicted advertisements for food. Those ads had a certain patina and do not feel like ads from today. We tried to echo the nostalgia of the ads and when we turned to capturing the numerous recipes and food segments in the diary Linda wrote about, we felt it was appropriate to shoot those scenes in Super 16mm.



"God Knows Where I Am"

When Linda writes about how hungry she is while she is starving and how she is dreaming of a Thanksgiving dinner, we wanted to present the imagery of food in both an enticing and dreamy way. We wanted the audience to feel hunger but also feel they were seeing a dream. Many of the food shots were shot in Super 16mm with an Aaton XTR to capture a sense of nostalgia, but also a sense of unease as further enhanced by the graininess of the film. These were images that represented, to a certain extent, a distorted reality of a mentally ill woman yearning for and imagining food, but yearning for food as she imagined it from food commercials she had seen years before when she was more lucid.

When we turned to depicting what Linda may have seen looking outside the window of the farmhouse over the four month period she was there, or within the room that she died, we did not want to use a medium that felt too immediate or hypertransient, so we chose 35mm film, which requires patience and deliberation to compose shots. While in the farmhouse, in a metaphoric sense, Linda lived in a world of film, a world not completely rooted in modernity. There was no electricity or heat, and she spent her time writing in a diary, collecting apples and dreaming, not surfing on the internet. 35mm film image also has an extremely beautiful quality to it, and much of what Linda was looking at outside including rolling fields, an historic barn, lilac branches, a rambling brook, deer and birds, etc. was extremely beautiful. The 1939 Eyemo was used to help map the internal landscapes of the house as well as evoke a sense of memory. One of our Eyemos was also spring-wound which gave the images a sense of uneasiness in its inconsistent exposure uniformity and flicker quality.

When Linda was released from the state psychiatric hospital, she wandered through various paths in the forest feeling a sense of freedom until she arrived ultimately at the farmhouse. We shot these scenes with a 16mm 1966 Bolex and a 16mm 1972 Canon Scoopic. 16mm was ideal to capture the vigor and agitation of her journey from the hospital which was helped by the grain of the film. We wanted to free these shoots from any sense of formalism and we openly embraced the streaks of light, soft grainy over-exposed images and lens flares that naturally came with shooting in 16mm. We freed the camera without even looking through the viewfinder. In these 16mm scenes, the viewer does not merely see but actually experiences the act of Linda walking vigorously from the hospital, away out of town and through the forest towards the farmhouse.

Indiewire – May 8, 2016 (6 of 6)



"God Knows Where I Am"

Shooting in Digital Video

We conducted many of the interviews in the actual farmhouse where Linda lived and ultimately died. These interviews were shot in digital video with a Canon C300 to capture the truth of those who came to know Linda over the years and to create a feel of those interviewees being truly present or immediate.

We used an Arriflex Alexa in most of the nature shots in the film. Linda lived through one of the worst winters in New Hampshire history. The fall and winter months play a prominent role in the film as Linda struggles through a frozen landscape to attempt to survive longer as she runs out of apples and water. Her desperation in running out of food is mirrored in the desolation of the physical surroundings around her. As she slowly approaches death so does the farmhouse and nature under the weight of winter. The Alexa was stunningly effective in helping us to search for nature's soul in the sun, clouds, snowstorms, icicles hanging from the farmhouse windows and frozen hills throughout this desperate New Hampshire winter. We used the Alexa for the eye-of-God shots.

Broadcaster

Hot Docs Announce Winners of Awards Presentation

May 9, 2016

Hot Docs is pleased to announce this year's award-winning Festival films and filmmakers. The Hot Docs Awards Presentation, hosted by Garvia Bailey, host of Good Morning Toronto! on Jazz.FM91, took place on Friday, May 6, at the Isabel Bader Theatre, Toronto. Twelve awards and $67,000 in cash and prizes were presented to Canadian and international filmmakers, including awards for Festival films in competition and those recognizing emerging and established filmmakers.

The Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award was presented to *KONELĪNE: our land beautiful* (D: Nettie Wild; P: Betsy Carson; Canada), a breathtaking look at the Tahltan First Nation who've inhabited remote northwestern British Columbia for thousands of years, and whose land attracts mining and hunting interests. Sponsored by the Documentary Organization of Canada, the award includes a $10,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs. Jury statement: "*KONELĪNE: our land beautiful* is a visually arresting tone poem of a film. The jury was impressed with the way it balanced political fair mindedness with a clear sense of the importance of the social issue at stake. Every member of the jury noted technical mastery in elements such as sound design, cinematography and editing. *KONELĪNE* was paced with maturity and sophistication and demonstrated substantial faith in and respect for its audience." *KONELĪNE: our land beautiful* screens again on Saturday, May 7, at Hart House Theatre.

The Special Jury Prize – Canadian Feature Documentary was presented to *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* (D&P: Brett Story; Canada, USA), a look at the communities and industries that have grown alongside the American prison complex. Sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada and DGC Ontario, the award includes a $5,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs. Jury statement: "Elegant, haunting and vividly affecting, *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* travels some familiar ground but with fresh eyes, nuance and a love for its subjects that was compelling and impossible to resist. It is beautifully executed and demonstrates a high level of craft. We await with great anticipation this filmmaker's future work." *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* screens again on Saturday, May 7, at the Scotiabank Theatre Toronto.

The Emerging Canadian Filmmaker Award, sponsored by Jameson First Shot, is given to a first or second-time Canadian filmmaker with a feature film in the Canadian Spectrum program.

The award includes a $3,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs and was presented to directors Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque for *Living with Giants* (Canada), which looks at the story of a young Inuk hunter in remote Inukjuak and his community that must unite to heal after a violent incident. Jury statement: "*Living with Giants* is a gut-wrenching and intimate portrait of a life and a community. Gorgeously shot, it is attentive to the way the ordinary details of day-to day-life accumulate in ways both beautiful and tragic. These filmmakers have shown remarkable skill and patience with the material. We look forward to seeing what comes next for this remarkable team." *Living with Giants* screens again on Saturday, May 7, at the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

The jury also acknowledged the film *Random Acts of Legacy* (D&P: Ali Kazimi; Canada) with an honourable mention. Jury Statement: "We felt we could not end our deliberations without acknowledging *Random Acts of Legacy*. The legacies in question in this masterfully crafted film are personal, cultural and technological. The filmmaker skillfully pulls a surprisingly rich and textured story from a relatively small cache of found footage. It causes us to pause and consider the ephemeral means by which we record and capture our most important moments and reminds us of the power of good, old-fashioned celluloid film." *Random Acts of Legacy* screens again on Sunday, May 8, at Innis Town Hall.

The Best International Feature Documentary Award was presented to *Brothers* (D: Aslaug Holm; P: Tore Buvarp; Norway), a look at two brothers who grow from toddlers to teenagers as captured by their filmmaker mother. Sponsored by Panicaro Foundation, the award includes a $10,000 cash prize courtesy of Panicaro Foundation. Jury statement: "The jury awards the Best International Feature Documentary prize to *Brothers* for its lyrical understanding of the passage of time, strong development of character and the deep emotional resonance of its story. Through her unique ability to skillfully navigate the challenging course between motherhood and filmmaker, Aslaug Holm demonstrates a rare degree of artistic achievement and makes a profound contribution to the art of documentary."

The Special Jury Prize – International Feature Documentary was presented to *God Knows Where I Am* (D: Todd Wider, Jedd Wider; P: Brian Ariotti, Todd Wider, Jedd Wider; USA), an intimate and deeply troubling account of mental illness revealed through the mysterious death of a woman in a New Hampshire farmhouse. Sponsored by A&E, the award includes a $5,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs. Jury statement: "A film of great beauty and tenderness that gradually reveals a confounding mental illness, this film is a human story at its heart. Ultimately, it illuminates a hidden problem of vast proportion with an epic yet intimate cinematic vision." *God Knows Where I Am* screens again on Saturday, May 7, at the Scotiabank Theatre Toronto.

The Emerging International Filmmaker Award was presented to director Mike Day for *The Islands and the Whales* (UK, Denmark), a look at the lives of Faroe Islanders who have long hunted pilot whales for subsistence, but whose traditions are now threatened. The award includes a $3,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs. Jury statement: "It became clear to the jury that over the course of filmmaking that the director penetrated the lives of his subjects with greater and greater intimacy as time passed. By resisting the temptation to fall back on cliché or stereotype, the director subtly and sensitively presents a culture facing wrenching decisions about its future while maintaining strong ties to its past."

The award for Best Mid-Length Documentary was presented to *Dugma: The Button* (D: Paul S. Refsdal; P: Ingvil Giske; Norway), which captures the heart-stopping stories of two "martyrdom seekers" in an al-Qaeda unit on the front lines of the Syrian Civil War who are about to embark on a suicide bombing. The award includes a $3,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs. Jury statement: "The filmmaker took great personal risk and achieved incredible access to present a very humanizing portrait. This film challenges our perceptions of what it means to be a martyr; the perceived enemy of the Western world." *Dugma: The Button* screens again on Sunday, May 8, at the Scotiabank Theatre Toronto.

In the Best Mid-Length Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged the film *La Laguna* (D&P: Aaron Schock; USA, Mexico) with an honourable mention. Jury statement: "*La Laguna* is a timeless piece of poetry on the changes and challenges we each must face in our lives through other-worldly cinematography and emotional resonance." *La Laguna* screens again on Sunday, May 8, at the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

The Best Short Documentary Award was presented to *The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere* (D: Mickey Duzyj; P: Mona Panchal; USA), the fascinating little-known story of racehorse Haru Urara, an underdog that inspired Japan during its economic depression in 2003 and recalibrated its value system. The award includes a $3,000 cash prize courtesy of Hot Docs. Jury statement: "*The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere* is a moving and revealing window into a culture that sometimes is quiet and remote. A potent portrait of the power of never giving up, we acknowledge the ambition and creativity of the filmmaking." *The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere* screens again on Sunday, May 8, at the Scotiabank Theatre Toronto.

Hot Docs is an Academy Award qualifying festival for short documentaries and, as winner of the Best Short Documentary Award, *The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere* will qualify for consideration in the Documentary Short Subject category of the annual Academy Awards without the standard theatrical run, provided it complies with Academy rules.

In the Best Short Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged the film *What Happened to Her* (D&P: Kristy Guevara-Flanagan; USA) with an honourable mention. Jury statement: "A well-crafted and edited film, while uncomfortable to watch, *What Happened to Her* reveals a truth about our desensitization of violence towards women in media." *What Happened to Her* screens again on Saturday, May 7, at the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

The Lindalee Tracey Award, which honours an emerging Canadian filmmaker with a passionate point of view, a strong sense of social justice and a sense of humour, was presented to Michael Chen. The recipient received a $5000 cash prize courtesy of the Lindalee Tracey Fund, $5000 in post-production services from Technicolor, and a beautiful hand-blown glass sculpture by Andrew Kuntz, specially commissioned to honour Lindalee.

The Hot Docs Board of Directors acknowledged Steve James as the recipient of the 2016 Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award.

Toronto-based producer Ed Barreveld was presented with the Don Haig Award, which is given to an outstanding independent Canadian producer with a film in the festival in recognition of his/her creative vision, entrepreneurship and track record for nurturing emerging talent. The

award came with a $10,000 cash prize courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation and Telefilm Canada. As part of the award, the recipient can name an emerging female documentary filmmaker to receive a $5,000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada, and professional development opportunities at the Hot Docs Festival to further her career path. Barreveld named Toronto-based filmmaker Shasha Nakhai as recipient of the Don Haig Award Pay It Forward Prize.

Earlier in the week, Iikka Vehkalahti, former commissioning editor for YLE and current executive producer of IV Films Ltd, Rough Cut Service and Dare to Dream Asia, received the 2016 Doc Mogul Award at a special luncheon.

The 2016 awards for films in competition were determined by four juries.

The Canadian Feature Documentary Jury: Abigail Disney, CEO and President of Fork Films; Richard Abramowitz, innovative leader in independent film distribution and marketing; Vijay Vaidyanathan, CEO of Optimal Asset Management.

The International Feature Documentary Jury: Irene Taylor Brodsky, Oscar-nominated and Emmy and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker; Ken Jacobson, Director of Educational Programs and Strategic Partnerships at the International Documentary Association; Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami, director of *Sonita*.

The Mid-Length Jury: Tom Oyer, Awards Manager at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; Marie Nelson, Vice President, News, Public Affairs and Independent Film for PBS; Rosie Dransfeld, director and 2016 Focus On honouree.

The Shorts Jury: Sarah Lash, Acquisitions Consultant for Condé Nast Entertainment; Nimisha Mukerji, director of *Tempest Storm*; Fred Joubaud, Director of International Sales and Digital Acquisitions at Tricon Films & Television.

The Vimeo On Demand Audience Award and audience top ten favourite films of the 2016 Festival, determined by audience ballot, will be announced on Monday, May 9. Also announced on that day is the Canadian Documentary Promotion Award, awarded to the independently-produced feature-length Canadian documentary with a Canadian director that receives the highest rating in the audience poll. A $25,000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada, will be awarded to support the marketing and promotion of the film to new Canadian and international audiences.

'Angry Inuk' wins audience award and $25K prize at Hot Docs festival

May 9, 2016 by: **Staff**

'I am in total shock and really, really excited for the whole team,' says director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril



Alethea Arnaquq-Baril says it was amazing to see audiences at the Hot Docs Festival give her film Angry Inuk a standing ovation in every screening. (Kieran Oudshoorn/CBC)

Angry Inuk, a film about Inuit and the sealing industry, received the most viewer ballots to take home the Vimeo on Demand Audience Award and a $25,000 cash prize at the Hot Docs Festival in Toronto.

Directed by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, the feature-length documentary follows Aaju Peter, the titular 'angry Inuk,' who has spent decades fighting the negative portrayal of the sealing industry perpetuated by animal rights activists.

The Vimeo On Demand award is determined by audience ballot. For getting the highest rating for an independent Canadian film in the audience poll, the film also won the first Canadian Documentary Promotion Award, a $25,000 cash prize from Telefilm Canada to support the marketing and promotion of the film.

"I expected at least some blowback from animal rights activists," said Arnaquq-Baril. "I thought maybe we'd get some protesters or people arguing that they're still against sealing."

The reality was quite the opposite.

"It's so rewarding to have rooms of hundreds of people standing up and thanking us and understanding how we see the world," said Arnaquq-Baril. "I never thought I'd be able to be in the South in a room full of non-Inuit and be able to feel understood."

'Not alone anymore'

All three of the Hot Docs screenings ended in standing ovations, she said. Audience reactions varied widely from cringing when seals were butchered to cooing at images of Arnaquq-Baril's baby eating bites of fresh seal to crying at some of the more emotional moments.



Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, is at the centre of Angry Inuk, a documentary about Inuit and their relationship with the sealing industry. (Angry Inuk film)

"One woman, as she was walking by me, reached out and touched my arm and said, 'you're not alone anymore,'" she said. "To me, that said it all."

The film, which was completed mere days before its first Hot Docs screening, has never been shown in Nunavut.

Arnaquq-Baril hopes it will be "sooner, rather than later," but first she wants it to get a wide audience at national and international festivals.

"Larger, more prestigious prefer to screen films that haven't been seen very much elsewhere," she explains. "So, in order to make the most impact and to change the minds of Europeans and Americans who effect our sealskin prices, I want to screen it at the most major festivals that I can."

Changing minds

Arnaquq-Baril says it's been "amazing" and "powerful" to see such a positive response in Toronto audiences.

For some, she's even noticed the effect outside of the theatre.

View image on Twitter

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ANGRY INUK wins Vimeo On Demand Audience Award & $25,000 Canadian Documentary Promotion Award!#HotDocs16

3:07 PM - 9 May 2016

"I spend a lot of time on Twitter and Facebook talking to anti-sealers. It's been something I've been doing for years now and I'm so used to saying the same thing over and over again, clearing up misinformation over and over again."

The last time, she didn't have to: "I got a really nasty comment from an anti-sealer and someone else — a non-Inuk who has never been North — stepped in."

Arnaquq-Baril says this film could never have happened without the support of all the strong Inuit leaders who have advocated on this issue.

"We speak out all the time on this, but Inuit tend to be very polite when we speak out against things. So, I don't think the world really realizes how upsetting these anti-seal campaigns are."

While she couldn't say which festivals have shown interest in *Angry Inuk*so far, Arnaquq-Baril says she has already heard from about a dozen different groups.

Corrections

- A previous version of this story incorrectly said Angry Inuk had won the $25,000 Vimeo On Demand Audience Award. In fact, the film won the Vimeo On Demand Audience Award and the $25,000 Canadian Documentary Promotion prize.

Realscreen – May 9, 2016 (1 of 2)

Hot Docs ’16: “Angry Inuk” wins audience award

May 9, 2016 by: Manori Ravindran



Alethea Arnaquq-Baril’s *Angry Inuk* has won the Vimeo On Demand Audience Award at Hot Docs.

The Canadian doc, which enjoyed its world premiere at the Toronto-set fest, follows a new generation of Inuit who confront assorted animal rights activist groups and defend their traditional hunting practices through tech-savvy strategies.

Angry Inuk also took home the Canadian Documentary Promotion Award, which comes with a Telefilm Canada-sponsored CAD$25,000 (US$19,270) cash prize for marketing and promotional purposes in Canada and abroad. The Audience Award runner-up is another Canadian documentary, Tiffany Hsiung’s *The Apology*, in which three former “comfort women” break the silence around their sexual slavery during the Second World War and demand a formal apology from the Japanese government. The film is backed by the National Film Board of Canada.
Placing third in the audience poll was Pete McCormack’s *Spirit Unforgettable*, another Canadian entry that centers on John Mann, frontman for Canadian Celtic rock band Spirit of the West, and his battle with early onset Alzheimer’s. The doc received a completion grant from the Shaw Media-Hot Docs Funds last September.

The 23rd edition of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival ran from April 28 to May 8. The 11-day event featured 462 public screenings of 232 films on 15 screens across Toronto.

Realscreen – May 9, 2016 (2 of 2)

The top 20 audience favorites as determined by audience vote follows below:

1. *Angry Inuk* (Alethea Arnaquq-Baril; Canada)
2. *The Apology* (Tiffany Hsiung; Canada)
3. *Spirit Unforgettable* (Pete McCormack; Canada)
4. *Hip-Hop Evolution* (Darby Wheeler; Canada)
5. *When Two Worlds Collide* (Heidi Brandenburg, Mathew Orzel; Peru)
6. *Life, Animated* (Roger Ross Williams; USA)
7. *Gleason* (Clay Tweel; USA)
8. *Mully* (Scott Haze; USA, Kenya)
9. *Migrant Dreams* (Min Sook Lee; Canada)
10. *Aida's Secrets* (Alon Schwarz, Shaul Schwarz; Israel, USA, Germany, Canada)
11. *Strike a Pose* (Ester Gould, Reijer Zwaan; Netherlands, Belgium)
12. *Mr. Gaga* (Tomer Heymann; Israel, Sweden, Netherlands, Germany)
13. *Wizard Mode* (Nathan Drillot, Jeff Lee Petry; Canada)
14. *Tickled*(David Farrier, Dylan Reeve; New Zealand)
15. *Tempest Storm* (Nimisha Mukerji; Canada, Germany, France)
16. *Off the Rails* (Adam Irving; Canada, USA)
17. *Suited* (Jason Benjamin; USA)
18. *Gun Runners* (Anjali Nayar; Canada)
19. *Zimbelism* (Matt Zimbel, Jean-François Gratton; Canada)
20. *Sonita* (Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami; Iran, Germany, Switzerland)

The Filmmaker Fighting Against the Animal Rights War on Seal Hunting



Inuit people are fighting back against misconceptions of the seal hunt. All photos courtesy of Qajaaq Ellsworth

For decades, images of bloodied and battered seals have flooded pop culture as animal rights activists have furiously fought a PR war against the Canadian seal hunt—which occurs from March to May—and the government's condonement of it.

While critics call it a brutal practice and a contributor to accelerating environmental damage, Inuit activists like Tanya Tagaq have fought back against that perception and pushed for a new conversation around the hunt. Now, one film is tackling that very issue.

Angry Inuk—a documentary from Inuit filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril—premiered at Toronto's Hot Docs festival last week with the goal of reinvigorating the debate around the seal hunt. It tells the story of Inuit communities across Canada that are actively involved in the sealing industry, and it does so from the ground level. Viewers see how Inuit children in schools learn about the value of a life, how hunters track their prey, and how entire communities rely on what amount of useable meat is brought back. It's

honest, raw, and shot from the perspective of actual Inuit people living off the sale and consumption of seal products.

Arnaque-Baril, who has spent the last eight years filming in the Arctic and in Newfoundland and Labrador, has desperately tried to chase down animal rights groups for a response to the film and the Inuit people's belief that the seal hunt is necessary to their survival. Through it, she has experienced constant harassment, threats, and serious depression. Now that the film—what she calls an "homage to her life and community"—is out for the world to see, VICE spoke to her about what eight years of studying and shooting the seal has revealed to her.

VICE: This film's been in the works for a long time now. Can you tell me a little bit about how you came about making it?
Alethea Arnaquq-Baril: I'm Inuit, so I grew up in the Arctic. I grew up hunting and eating seal meat with my family, and as an Inuk, you just grow up hearing people complain [about] and criticize seal hunters. It's just kind of always been an issue for me, and I knew that when I became a filmmaker that I was eventually going to have to cover this issue.

This film is clearly a personal journey and a documentary—did having that personal involvement shape the direction of the film in any way?
It was a hard line to walk—knowing when to be personal and when to be informational—and when you're telling a story of your own community and culture, and you're coming from a remote place that people don't know a lot about, it's hard to tell what people are [already aware of]. I'm really glad I had a great team, honestly. My DP was from the north. He's an Inuk, too, and my editor is from Montreal and has never been north, so it was really valuable to have perspectives from the Inuit team and the non-Inuit team on the film. I think that was really important to balance when it was time to be personal, and when it was time to be [a documentarian].

Was it tough for you to make the film compared to other projects, being that it was so personal?
It was. I became part of the story, too. I'm just a filmmaker, I'm also one of the activists in the film, and when you put yourself out there and challenge animal rights activists, you kind of get attacked. That was kind of a tough thing to handle.



The film looks at a lot of the misconceptions outsiders have of the seal hunt. What are some of the main things that you think people get wrong about it?
I think when people see posters and ad campaigns that say, "Save the seals," and they see things that make comparisons of seal skin to elephant ivory and rhino horns—these are really deliberate tactics that animal rights groups use to imply that seals are endangered, and they're nowhere near endangered. There's between eight and ten million harp seals in the Atlantic Ocean, and [activists] will use language and semantics that make it seem like [seals] are on their way to extinction. They'll talk about climate change and the ice receding and how they could possibly endanger seals, but that's just not true.

Critics often counter anti-seal hunt rhetoric by pointing out that Inuit communities can't simply go to the grocery store and buy food. It's a hunting-based diet by necessity. How do you feel about that?
Sometimes I've heard people say, "Why don't you just buy groceries at the store?" Which is absurd, because if you're trying to protect animals and the environment in the Arctic, it's better to source locally than to fly avocados in from six thousand kilometers [three thousand seven hundred miles]. It just makes no sense. We have local, wild, ethically sourced food—why wouldn't we eat that? People tend to think of seals as exotic, majestic beautiful things—different from what we eat as "Canadians"—but Inuit are Canadians, too, and seal, narwhal, walrus—all those foods are normal, everyday food for us.

There seems to be a lot of intersection between animal rights groups and progressiveness for indigenous rights.

Do you feel people are blind to how they're hurting Inuit communities with anti-seal hunt dialogue?
It's kind of ironic that we've been marginalized and silenced on the issue of seal hunting because it's actually Inuit seal hunters [speaking out] when it comes to [climate change] in the Arctic. A while ago, one of the very few voices on the voices on the planet speaking up about the issue was Sheila Watt-Cloutier—an Inuit woman.

She was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize beside Al Gore. When nobody was talking about climate change, an Inuit was talking about climate change. It just makes sense for these types of groups to be working with us, but instead, for the last fifty, sixty years, they've been working against us. I think it's just a matter of being heard. I think we've never had the chance to do that before.

What are some of the issues that you ran into making the film? Was there anything you didn't expect?
My family worried about me. We saw animal rights protests for a long time on TV, and a lot of the time they were very aggressive and loud and outwardly angry. Inuit tend to express anger a little more softly and quietly, even when you're really pissed off about something. It's a principle to stay calm under fire—I think it's a survival tactic we have—and it's just a matter of being respectful. I think we see losing your temper as a sign of a guilty conscience, and we are misunderstood a lot when we say, "This isn't right." We know this place. We figure if we say, "This is wrong," people will listen. My family was very worried about the backlash I'd receive from animal rights activists, and it has been very hard on me. It's part of the reason the film took so long to finish.

Do you think animal rights activists have been any more receptive to the concerns you've raised in this film?
[These groups] have been aware of these issues for years. Inuit leaders have spoken to Greenpeace, spoken out publicly, spoken to journalists. These groups are very aware how they've affected us, how they've contributed to hunger and poverty in our communities for a long time. So, I want to say no, they haven't been receptive to hearing our voice. However, I think there's hope. Canadians are starting to learn more about Indigenous history and are starting to care more about us having a shot at life like everybody else. I think there's a new generation coming up within these organizations that are trying to hold their [leaders] accountable. What I'm really looking forward to is their jobs being taken over by a generation that actually gives a crap about people like me.

VARIETY

Hot Docs Film Review: 'Fraud'



Catherine Bray



Courtesy of Memory
May 9, 2016 | 11:45AM PT

Dean Fleischer-Camp's expert riff on self-documentation holds a funhouse mirror up to the American family's consumerist impulses.

Found-footage sourced from YouTube documents the escalating exploits of an apparently typical lower-middle-class family in Dean Fleischer-Camp's subversive constructed narrative "Fraud." Previously best known for his award-winning stop-motion short "Marcel the Shell With Shoes On," Fleischer-Camp here stakes a claim in conceptually sophisticated documentary territory with a film that, despite frenetic cutting and a lean runtime, rewards contemplation and patience. The audience will be smaller and more specialized than the approximately 40 million views collectively accrued by the three "Marcel" shorts, but festival programmers looking to shake things up would be wise to fall for this "Fraud."

Gary, like millions of Americans, loves to document his family life. Whether his wife and two kids are unboxing a new iPhone, visiting the mall or taking a trip to the Big Apple, his camera is ever-present, capturing the daily trials and tribulations, the myriad tiny moments of joy and all the ennui in between that comprise a reasonably representative existence for someone his age, nationality and income bracket. To begin with, it appears as if this might be all this film is interested in showing — it's not a bad subject, after all. But soon, and with an exquisite sense of narrative control, Fleischer-Camp and Rippon begin to sketch a different portrait: first of a family in over its head financially (those iPhones don't come cheap, after all), and subsequently of an audacious attempt to wipe the slate clean.

While the mounting debts of an everyman might seem like the starting point for a classic film noir, Gary's original camerawork has a hectic, vividly restless quality to it that verges on nausea-inducing, making this a difficult watch on the big screen; its natural home is probably VOD. This is the understandable result of the fact that the footage was genuinely intended simply for Gary's family's YouTube account: Between 2008 and 2015, Gary uploaded over a hundred hours of home movies to the dominant user-generated content platform. Enter Fleischer-Camp, who stumbled upon Gary's account and apparently spent some years mulling over how to turn it into a documentary before arriving at the premise for "Fraud."

The result feels deceptively raw yet elegant: In constructing a fictional narrative from genuine footage, Fleischer-Camp arrives at something that, like this year's Sundance hit "Operation Avalanche," pushes the boundaries of documentary, gesturing at larger truths. Where some documentaries aim to objectively reflect a subject, "Fraud" recognizes that the notion is a fallacy. Any camera lens can only ever be a funhouse mirror, incorporating the distortions that the filmmaker's choices (framing, editing, what to show, what not to show) bring to the table.

Fleischer-Camp and editor Jonathan Rippon's subtle recontextualizations illuminate the family's attempt to live their lives as outlined in omnipresent commercials as both illogical and understandable — this is not a film intent on hanging its subjects out to dry. The impulse to earn happiness through acquisition is followed to its logical conclusion, with only the narrative's more outré elements requiring footage from other YouTube sources. The only rule is that no footage is staged.

Rippon, the helmer's regular collaborator, must share credit for the project's success. The immediate connections and juxtapositions he forges between sections of footage from Gary's archive, which in reality were shot years apart, feel almost supernaturally intuitive — it's hard to spot the joins. Like a good act of sleight-of-hand magic, it's the fluidity of the project on a technical level that makes it persuasive, allowing the themes to breathe: It would be hard to focus on the picture's implicit consumerist commentary if we were constantly trying to spot the rabbit up the magician's sleeve.

At Toronto's Hot Docs festival, the film world-premiered to considerable controversy, with its director called a "con artist" and "liar" during post-screening Q&As by audience members presumably secure in their adherence to more traditional definitions of documentary. Festival programmers pursuing a reputation for risk-taking and innovation would be wise to check it out. Beyond festivals, the film's commercial prospects seem uncertain, although it's easy to foresee a future retrospective of Flesicher-Camp's work in which "Fraud" features as a rediscovered early-career gem — likely seen by too few at the time.

Globe and Mail – May 10, 2016

Scientology film gives a welcome push to the boundaries of religious freedom

May 10, 2016 by: LORNA DUECK

I wouldn't be surprised if actor Tom Cruise's control and tenacity comes from his indoctrination in the Church of Scientology. Religion can transform people from the inside out. Mr. Cruise's confidence embodies the forbearance training a millionaire can purchase in the Scientology cult.

There are at least eight (expensive) levels of "thetan" presence that Scientology implants into its devotees, and the result is a forceful presence which allows you a "tone 40" command or possibly more. I am usually mesmerized by Mr. Cruise on screen, I think he's got at least a "tone 40," and now I can speculate from whence it came.

This revelation is thanks to the Canadian premiere of *My Scientology Movie*, by director John Dower and Louis Theroux, which screened at Toronto's Hot Docs festival on Sunday. The film is captivating, hilarious and frightening as it pushes how far the boundaries for religious freedom can go.
The documentary embeds Mr. Theroux into a recreation of Scientology techniques with a former inspector general of the faith, Marty Rathbun. Over his 27 years as a Scientology devotee, Mr. Rathbun held the highest rank of ecclesiology, unsuccessfully tried to reform the belief, and now writes and counsels on exiting the faith.

Mr. Theroux is a British celebrity journalist whose sweetly invasive style feigns a curious soul trying to figure out how the secretive leader of Scientology, David Miscavige, operates. For me, the documentary evoked the ancient words about Jesus in Matthew 9, where people curious for a better life had swarmed the rabbi: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

I have no problem with Mr. Cruise employing mind-control techniques for his own uses, but Scientology, wrapped in the guise of a religiously structured church, is a system accountable to scrutiny.

If more filmmakers turned their camera on religion, like *My Scientology Movie* has done, we'd have a better world. The Oscar-winning best picture*Spotlight*, recounting the sins of the Christian church's pedophilia scandal, spoke up for the helpless in a profound way. Open storytelling which examines the beliefs that shape Islamic State will be part of the future to peace. As Mr. Theroux intones in his documentary, "It may be every religion carries its own DNA for its destruction."
Harassed and helpless, that timeless phrase which describes people's search for health and wholeness, requires not less religion, but better understanding of what is in the DNA of our religions. Charles Taylor, writing in *A Secular Age*, documents how we've reinvented our spiritual search and advises, "We are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee."
Maybe the ways of Mr. Miscavige and his disciples are exactly that, fruit of the new age, people out on a path to belong somewhere with a hope to improve their lives? To make sense of it means we need to do the deliberate personal work of religious education. Schools and places of worship should be strengthened for the search, not shuttered. Book clubs, family discussions, media, all of it needs to engage the spiritual.

A solid education, an open education, is a good thing for what is ultimately a most private connection between people and God.

NOW Magazine – May 10, 2016 (1 of 2)

HOT DOCS 2016: AND THE WINNERS ARE...

May 10, 2016 by: NORMAN WILNER

Four Canadians documentaries topped the audience poll at this year's festival



Angry Inuk

Four Canadian films topped the audience poll at the 2016 Hot Docs festival, with Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's **Angry Inuk** winning the Vimeo On Demand Audience Award, it was announced yesterday.

Arnaquq-Baril's look at the generational shift in Inuit activism also won the Canadian Documentary Promotion Award, a $25,000 cash prize presented to the Audience Award winner by Telefilm Canada.

Tiffany Hsiung's **The Apology** took second place in the audience poll; Pete McCormack's **Spirit Unforgettable** came third and Darby Wheeler's **Hop-Hop Evolution** was fourth. Canadian productions accounted for 11 of the titles in the poll's top 20: also charting were **Migrant Dreams** (9th), **Aida's Secrets** (10th), **Wizard Mode** (13th), **Tempest Storm** (15th), **Off The Rails**(16th), **Gun Runners** (18th) and **Zimbelism** (19th).

A number of major awards were announced earlier in the festival. Nettie Wild's **KONELINE: our land beautiful** won the $10,000 Best Canadian Feature Documentary prize, and Brett Story's**The Prison In Twelve Landscapes** awarded the $5,000 Special Jury Prize in that category.

Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque shared the $3,000 Emerging Canadian Filmmaker Award for their film **Living With Giants**, while Ali Kazimi received an honourable mention for**Random Acts Of Legacy**.

Aslaug Holm's **Brothers** won the $10,000 Best International Feature Documentary Award, while Todd Wider and Jedd Wider's **God Knows Where I Am** took the $5,000 Special Jury Prize in that category. Mike Day won the $3,000 Emerging International Filmmaker Award for **The Islands And The Whales**.

Paul S. Refsdal's **Dugma: The Button** won the $3,000 Best Mid-Length Documentary Award, with Aaron Schock's **La Laguna** receiving an honourable mention. The $3,000 Best Short Documentary Award went to Mickey Duzyj's **The Shining Star Of Losers Everwhere**, with the jury also acknowledging Kristy Guevara-Flanagan's **What Happened To Her**.

The festival estimated a record audience of 211,000 people attending 462 public screenings of 232 films on 15 screens across the city. For more information, including the top 20 audience poll, click **here**.

normw@nowtoronto.com | @normwilner

The Hollywood Reporter – May 10, 2016 (1 of 2)

'Credit for Murder': Hot Docs Review

8:53 AM PDT 5/10/2016 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs

Scarier and more engrossing than most Hollywood thrillers. TWITTER

In his harrowing documentary, Israeli filmmaker Vladi Antonevicz infiltrates Russian neo-Nazi organizations to investigate a horrific double murder.

Is a documentary less believable if it doesn't look like one? That's among the questions raised by Israeli filmmaker Vladi Antonevicz's harrowing account of his undercover investigation of Russian neo-Nazi groups suspected of a horrific double murder. Unspooling like a thriller crime procedural, *Credit for Murder* is riveting viewing even as it tests the boundaries of nonfiction filmmaking. The documentary was recently showcased at Toronto's Hot Docs festival.

The filmmaker embarked on his perilous quest after becoming intrigued by a video that had gone viral on YouTube. It depicted in graphic detail the murder by white supremacists of two men in a wooded area, one of them beheaded, with a Nazi flag flying overhead. The Russian police declined to investigate, claiming that the video was a hoax. But eventually a Muslim immigrant living in a rural area saw the video and identified one of the victims as his son.

This was the impetus for Antonevicz to travel to Russia and, with the help of his local friend Shuravi, investigate the crime by pretending to be a neo-Nazi himself. Needless to say, it was an audacious tactic for an Israeli Jew, and his friend tried to talk him out of it.

"An unsolved murder is always unsolved for a reason," Shuravi says with ominous solemnity.

As the story unfolds, with rival neo-Nazi organizations and numerous leaders jockeying for power, the mystery becomes ever more complicated, especially when Antonevicz figures out that the video was doctored to change the gruesome events' timeline. Meanwhile, he manages to ingratiate himself with the repellant figures he's investigating, to the degree that they willingly talk on camera about their nefarious exploits. That doesn't mean that they don't subject him to a series of tests, including shooting at him at point-blank range while he's wearing a bulletproof vest.

Despite the predominant grimness and scariness of the material, the film does include moments of black humor, such as a scene of the neo-Nazis posing for a group picture while complaining about their required masks and failing to properly align the angle of their arms for a Nazi salute.

Read More 'League of Exotique Dancers': Hot Docs Review

The filmmaker posits numerous theories about the spike of hate crimes that occurred in Russia, including 49 murders of foreigners, in the months leading up to the 2008 elections. Among the more provocative is that Vladimir Putin tacitly encouraged the violence as a means of frightening the populace into voting for his handpicked candidate, Dmitry Medvedev.

The film does get bogged down at times with its barrage of facts and theories. And the director has taken the highly unusual approach of filming the proceedings like a narrative feature, including beautifully composed cinematography, a portentous musical score and dialogue that often feels carefully scripted. At times the polished style makes us question the veracity of the proceedings, but the violent hatred and prejudice displayed by many of the film's principal subjects feels utterly and terrifyingly real.

Venue: Hot Docs

Production: Mockofiction

Director: Vladi Antonevicz

Producers: Vladi Antonevicz, Gabriel Romanov

Director of photography: John Cherny

Editor: Neta Braun

Not rated, 87 minutes

8 Must-See Documentaries That Haven't Been Finished Yet From the Hot Docs Pitch Forum

May 10, 2016 by: Anthony Kaufman

"Showgirls of Pakistan" won big, but the annual Toronto forum also played home to 19 other documentaries looking for a home.



Hot DocsHot Docs Forum

"This is *the* fucking *one*."

So said Amazon Studios development executive Brianna Little during the 17th edition of the Hot Docs Forum, one of the world's largest and most important conferences for pitching in-the-works documentary projects.

It was a rare moment of effusive praise for the Forum, revealing not just Little's first-timer enthusiasm, but also a general feeling among the documentary executives that this year's 20 nonfiction projects were a largely solid bunch. Only one of the docs faced outright negative criticism, while the rest of the 19 films (representing more than a dozen different countries) were mostly warmly welcomed by the 300 key funders and other decision-makers sitting in the massive wood-paneled room within the University of Toronto's Hart House.

READ MORE: Hot Docs 2016 Announces Full Lineup

Hot Docs Forum isn't a place where deals are signed in the hallways, but it does spark anticipation, meetings, and for a couple of films, cash prizes. This year's winner of the Best Canadian pitch and CDN$10,000 in cash went to "Showgirls of Pakistan," a compelling story of female dancers in Punjab's smut theatres (which was unfortunately undermined by an overly sensationalistic and over-cut trailer).

Another pitch from first-time Italian director Giovanni Totaro called "Happy Winter" received the Cuban Hat Award, which included CDN $1,223.50 as well as industry passes to 2017 Hot Docs, Doc Leipzig, an IDFA accreditation, and consulting sessions with various industry experts. "Happy Winter" won over the audience with newcomer Totaro's nervous excitement — one industry exec compared his "charm offensive" to Roberto Benigni's — and a beautifully shot winsome clip reel about working-class Italian families on vacation on Palermo's Mondello Beach.

Other highlights of the two-day forum were "The Patriot," a dark tale of extreme nationalist ideologies and twisted vengeance in the digital age from "Censored Voices" producer-editor Daniel Sivan and produced by Zafrir Kochanovsky of Israel's TTV Productions, as well as projects from Pulse Films ("XY Chelsea") and Parabola Films ("Billy"). Because of media blackouts on the three projects, further information on the docs is embargoed.

Another surprise was Patricia Gillespie's stunning and stylish trailer for "American Monster," a dark Southern Gothic true-crime look at the pathology of American violence, which turned out to be the Forum's first-ever docu-series pitch. This news turned out to stymie most of the broadcasters in attendance. Originally set up as a feature documentary, the project made a deal just a couple days before the Forum with Morgan Spurlock's Warrior Poets to develop the film into a multi-part series. Outside-the-box companies showed strong interest, including VICE Media ("This is the most creative and compelling thing I've seen at Hot Docs," noted VICE development exec John Turner) and Norway's VGTV ("I'd like to make an offer," said acquisitions head Hans Andreas Fay), but it was Forum moderator Axel Arno from Stockholm's SVT who seemed to surmise what most everyone was thinking: "I know Netflix is in the room," he said, "they will find you."



Hot Docs"Mudflow"

Netflix came up a few times during the conference as the proverbial elephant in the room. During the Forum's most commercial pitch, for "The Last Animals" about elephant and rhino poaching, from photojournalist-turned-filmmaker Kate Brooks and heavyweight producer Laurie David ("An Inconvenient Truth"), it was BBC Storyville's always candid Nick Fraser who declared, "If I was I Netflix, I would buy this on the spot."

"The Last Animals" grabbed the attention of the executives on the roundtable like no other pitch in the 48-Hour Forum. It was the project that made Amazon's Briana Little gush, and other executives follow suit with praise for the trailer's "strong images" and effective use of "pulling at heartstrings." PBS's Marie Nelson said she was not ready to concede the documentary to Netflix and could be instrumental in helping aid the filmmakers with their outreach and impact campaign, while Mette Hoffmann Meyer, head of docs and coproductions for Denmark's Danish Broadcasting Companies, suggested the world's public broadcasters could all pull together to coordinate a simultaneous "The Last Animals" airing event as way to keep the nonprofits in the game. But in discussions after the pitch, the general consensus is that "The Last Animals" will be picked up by a more commercial entity.

One such company HBO already has a first-look deal with "Rules To Live By," another favorite project at the Forum. While the story of director Hope Litoff's search to understand the suicide of her sister artist Ruth Litoff may sound like a downer, Litoff has described the tone of the film as "witty, sad, often outrageous and even funny." BC's Nick Fraser called the project "very brave and terrific," and praised the trailer for its "texture" and the way it beautifully expressed her observations. Produced by Beth Levison ("The Trials of Spring," "Lemon") and shot by Dan Gold ("Blue Vinyl"), "Rules to Live By" has already received support by the IFP and an Accelerator Grant from Chicken & Egg.

A compelling sports story arrived in Poland's "Over the Limit," an intimate portrait of the world's most outstanding rhythmic gymnast, Russia's Margarita Mamun. The film follows Mamun for over a year as she readies to compete in the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. On the page, the project did not seem like it would stand out, but many of the executives were taken by the filmmaker's profound access into this sheltered community. "This is one of those stories that transcends nationality," said PBS's Mariel Nelson, "and it's something I'd love to see at PBS."

Another foreign pitch that turned heads, David Baksh and Anna Thomson's "Yoghurt Utopia" tells the quirky and surprising story of a Spanish yogurt factory set up in the forest, where the hundreds of workers are all hospital patients with mental illnesses. Supported by the Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program, the film will reveal how the endeavor has become both a commercial success, amidst trying economic times for Spain, but also a revolutionary approach by Catalan psychiatrist Cristobal Colon to treating and empowering the disabled. Champions in the room included Arte France's Mark Edwards, Amazon's Brianne Little, and Vice's John Turner who found Colon to be a compelling central character with a "beautiful, youthful energy" that he thought would resonate with their audience. More on the project can be found here.



Hot DocsHot Docs Forum

From Chicago-based Kartemquin Films came another foreign favorite, "Eating Up Easter," a surprisingly moving look at the Rapu Nui residents of the Pacific Island nation of Easter Island, as they grapple with a rapidly growing tourism trade and increasing loads of trash and pollution. A classic tale of globalization and its discontents, the trailer also benefited from two compelling sets of characters, a crotchety grandmother who strives for sustainability in a recycling center in the background of the majestic Easter Island statues and a young couple trying to heal their community through music. Companies such as Japanese broadcaster NHK, Arte France, and Germany's RTL Television all showed interest in the project. Because of financing the project has received from ITVS's Diversity Development Fund, it will eventually find a home in the U.S. on one of PBS's strands.

READ MORE: 5 New Must-See Documentaries From the 2016 Hot Docs Festival

The last but not least project in the Forum was "Mudflow" from Oscar-winning nonfiction filmmaker Cynthia Wade ("Freeheld," "Shelter Dogs"), co-director Sasha Friedlander and producer Tracie Holder ("Joe Papp in Five Acts"). Focusing on the plight of Indonesian villagers in the wake of a massive mud volcano, the project showed off gorgeous cataclysmic images of the area, along with a potentially stirring and complex story of the collision of politics, people and corporate interests in the region. Executives from NHK, Participant Media, Danish Broadcasting and Al Jazeera all showed interest, while Dutch broadcasting exec Margje de Koning offered a valuable lesson for perhaps all documentary-makers: "Beauty," she said, "is very important when we see harsh stories."

How Tony Robbins won over docmaker Joe Berlinger

- 

Listen 18:05

He was reluctant to attend. He nearly left on the first day. So how did skeptical documentarian **Joe Berlinger** wind up making a concert-style film about a Tony Robbins seminar?

Berlinger says his new documentary about the high-profile life coach, *Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru*, isn't for those who already love or hate Robbins. After meeting Robbins at a party, Berlinger reluctantly agreed to attend one of his seminars — and he ended up convinced that most people misunderstand both self help generally and Robbins specifically.

- Watch the trailer for Tony Robbins: I Am Not Your Guru (warning: explicit language)

Today Berlinger — known for moving films about injustice, like *Paradise Lost* and *Crude* — joins Shad to explain what compelled him to turn his lens on the self-help magnate. He also responds to critics who say his film is too onside with Robbins to be revealing.

"I've made a lot of feel-bad movies. This is my feel-good movie," he says, adding that the film is more of an exception than a change of course.

"Don't worry, my next film is about genocide."



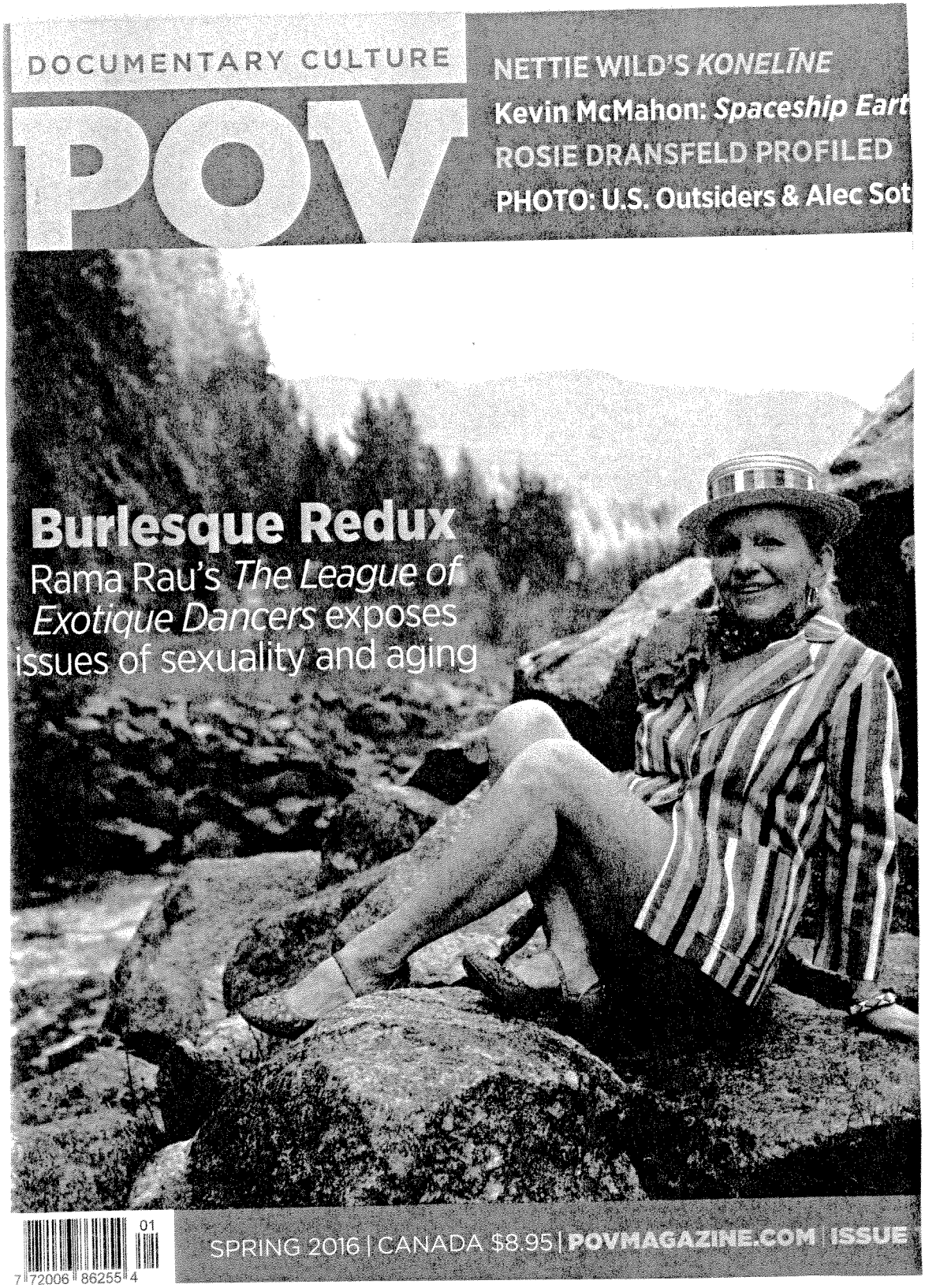
After being invited by Tony Robbins himself, director Joe Berlinger reluctantly attended one of his multi-day seminars. The results surprised even him. (Radical Media/Third Eye Motion Picture Company)

WEB EXTRA | Robbins has advised the likes of Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, and Serena Williams. He sells out massive, multi-day seminars. He's churned out scores of books and media interviews. But he remains a polarizing figure.

Watch his TED talk, his most viewed clip on YouTube, and tell us: does he intrigue you? Repel you? Inspire you? Why?



POV – Spring 2016



Working Women

Investigating *The League of Exotique Dancers*

Opposite page from top: Canadian legen
Stein on stage at the Burlesque Hall of Fa
Weekend; Gina Bon Bon at her home in L

By Kiva Reardon

ON MARCH 8, 2016, KIM KARDASHIAN, a woman known for baring it all on her reality show and in magazine spreads, tweeted a nude photo with the caption: "HAPPY #INTERNATIONALWOMENSDAY." (The capitalisation being her own enthusiastic addition.) The internet, as it does, quickly reacted. She was a slut, a bad example; she should be ashamed. She was empowered, confident, a brilliant businesswoman driving traffic to her subscription-based lifestyle blog and iPhone app. Opposing camps formed and think pieces abounded. Then the internet, as it does, quickly moved on to something else. But as the dust over the debacle settled, one thing was clear: the world is still very uncomfortable with women's nude bodies—especially when women themselves have ownership of and are capitalizing on their exposed flesh.

Director Rama Rau encountered a similar sentiment (though on a not-so-viral scale) when she announced she would be making a film about aging burlesque dancers. "My feminist friends were horrified," Rau said over the phone in Toronto. *The League of Exotique Dancers*, which will open Hot Docs this year (where I work as an industry programmer), traces the careers and lives of some of the biggest stars of burlesque's heyday from the 1950s to 1970s: Toni Elling, Gina Bon Bon, Delilah Jones, Holiday O'Hara, Kitten Natividad, Marinka, Camille 2000, Lovey Goldmine, and the Grand (Canadian) Beaver, a.k.a. Judith Stein.

Like Kardashian, the women on whom Rau turns her camera spent their lives being judged for capitalising on their figures, and, like Kardashian, the women do not give a damn—then and now. It is this latter fact that sets the documentary apart from so many other narratives about women labouring on the fringes of society: Rau doesn't pass judgment on the women; she doesn't moralise their choices or vacillate between finger-wagging and fear-mongering. Instead, she presents a fulsome and celebratory picture of a group of women who, without realising it at the time, forged the way for the sexual freedoms that many women know and enjoy today—few women recognise these forbearers of the right to bare i

This is partly why Rau decided that a documentary on the of burlesque performers was a natural fit to be explored th feminist lens: it is a part of women's history that is routinely "I wanted to show an alternative history of the women's stru feminism—there's no one picketing [in this documentary], women are demanding to be treated as equals," she says. (noting that the title of the documentary comes from the the dancers' first union.)

Rau admits that before making the film she did not abiding interest in burlesque. After finishing her previous *Market*, about the illegal organ trade in India, she was not su she wanted to pursue next. She did know, however, that she to work again with producer Ed Barreveld. In a meeting, B floated the concept of burlesque by Rau, who recalled thin it's just about young women stripping, I'm not interested something I can sink my teeth into—race, sexuality, gende

With an inkling that there was more to burlesque than just and pasties, Barreveld and Rau hired a researcher—who a pened to be a burlesque performer—and she pointed the p -director duo in the direction of the Burlesque Hall of Fam Vegas. (Where else?)

"Woah, that's a real story," Rau says of her reaction w heard about the Hall of Fame, which annually honours w the field. "I knew this would be an interesting film for me to deal with age, beauty and gravity taking over." She wante working right away, but there was one issue: she knew th was going to tell the intimate tales of these dancers, she w to have to assemble an all-female crew.

In an industry where the number of women behind the is abysmally low, this act in-and-of-itself feels political. I however, it was purely practical (though slightly sensiti

POV – Spring 2016 (2 of 4)



BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY STORY LINE ENTERTAINMENT





her trusted producer is male). "I knew I couldn't have men on this shoot," says Rau. "These women [the dancers] are trained to please the male eye—they're in control. I knew as a woman they would talk to me in a different way, react to me in a different way." Luckily for Rau, on *The Market* she worked with one of the best DOPs in the Canadian doc landscape, Iris Ng. They paired up again on the film. Rau also hired Shasha Nakhai as the production (and later post-production) manager and Mary Wong to do location sound. The team then headed off to Sin City.

Whether it was the gender of the crew or merely Rau's own persistence and persuasive skills as a director, the results are telling. In interview after interview, the burlesque stars reveal not just tantalizing tales about their lovers and glory days, but also candid confessions: struggles with addiction, dwindling bank accounts, and one particularly harrowing brush with breast cancer brought on by botched silicone injections. Rau felt it was important to include these lows, but at the same time she refused to let the doc sink into a depressive tone. When asked if this was an intentional move to subvert the cliché (and problematic) "struggling stripper with a heart of gold" narrative, Rau acknowledged that she was aware of conventional expectations. It was her subjects, however, who dictated the direction of the doc: "It's in the women and the way they live their lives. I could have dwelled on their poverty now, but they don't wallow—they're drinking champagne when they can."

In *The League of Exotique Dancers*, the present is not always as pretty as the past, but it is clear that the women refuse to live in anything other than the moment. And even in a film filled with truly inspirational quotes (don't trade "your pussy and soul for a wedding ring" advises one dancer), this theme is one of the most poignant aspects of *The League*: while it is looking back on a bygone era, it is also firmly rooted in the present, just like its stars.

The doc negotiates this shift away from nostalgia by placing the climax in the women's performances at their induction into the Burlesque Hall of Fame. As such, the structure of the doc empowers the women to take action in the present—workin choreography and designing new costumes—rather tha passively reminiscing. Rau then interlaces archival foo photographs from their past performances, which further sense of lived continuity in the women's lives.

It also helps that the women's present day performances mesmerizing as the ones they gave decades ago. All of Rau's are born performers, and while their flexibility might have di somewhat, their stage presence is just as impressive as e in their golden age, the dancers continue to glow. In man would have been easier to focus on those nubile glory days rightly refuses, and instead offers up a sight that is rarel screen: women of all ages and body types having a hell of a g

Capturing this exuberance was extremely important who wanted to convey the layered aspects of the perform disrupt the typical "male gaze" that is associated with filmi disrobing. This term, coined by feminist film theorist Laur points to how film narratives and techniques are often g male viewer: women exist as objects to be ogled, stalling narratives with their beauty, and are rarely seen (or treate thing more than an unknowable fantasy. Rau notes she explore creating "a female gaze," which manifests here as e ing the talent, skill and personalities of each woman, and including shots of the audience reveling in the performa faces in the crowd are supportive and joyful. It is not abou ing and critiquing the women's forms, but about being celebratory community.

This female gaze also meant moving beyond a very na type that is typically presented on screen: "The first time [the women] perform, I was stunned," Rau remarked of he to the Burlesque Hall of Fame. "Not just as a filmmaker bu son: everybody was accepted—every gender, body type, [







ALL PHOTOS COURTESY STORYLINE ENTERTAINMENT

Clockwise from opposite page: Gina Bon Bon performing at the Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekend in Las Vegas; Camille 2000 gets her makeup done at the Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekend; Marinka, Queen of the Amazons at her home in Las Vegas; Director Rama Rau

transgender [women]." This left an impact on her, especially, "coming from mainstream media and seeing the [same] blonde Caucasian bullshit." Interestingly, just as the tone of the documentary was dictated by the women, so was the diversity.

In Vegas, Rau and her team talked to some 25 former dancers. "I didn't go in thinking 'I need a black woman, a Mexican woman'—I wanted the women with the best stories." The women she found, however, "happened to represent the world." Rau downplays her role in what is really a radical casting move: women over the age of 30, to say nothing of women of colour over 30, rarely get starring roles. But that she was open to *seeing* these stories speaks volumes. Put another way, diversity is a quota, but that Rau had the ability to recognise and honour these women is closer to real inclusivity.

For instance, instead of being oblivious to race, as much of mainstream feminism can be, Rau highlights Toni Elling, a black performer who faced racism at her day job and then as a burlesque dancer. (Elling still has a feisty, no bullshit vibe; of breaking the colour barrier, she says: "I didn't know I was pioneering. I was just working.") Similarly, the documentary sheds light on Kitten Natividad, who played up her Mexican heritage as part of her onstage persona. Like her body, her race was something that she could reclaim and capitalise on.

When I told Rau about Kardashian's nude Women's Day pic, the director laughed. "Well, good for her," before noting how frustrating it is that we are still having the same discussions about female nu as we were when her subjects were on the stage in 1960s. In this v *The League* acts as a corrective to these ongoing one-note conve tions, or what Rau calls "intellectual feminism," which favours a v narrow kind of achievement (and one that's often dictated by wh economically privileged women). As Rau neatly puts it: "It's easy people to just dismiss [this work] as pandering to the male ego. it's important to see it as part of the continuum of women's work So, it was important to me to treat these women the same way would a doctor or lawyer." And after watching the documentar is impossible to deny that these women are nothing short of hig trained professionals.

Burlesque, or even the type of modern-day performance that s like Kardashian engage in, is far more complex than most will e comprehend. The dismissal of this kind of sex-infused labour assu incorrectly, that harnessing your body as a woman is a "natural g and not a cultivated and calculated asset. One that, yes, someti is the result of exploitation, but other times is an empowered d sion. That we still dismiss, look down on and question work t falls outside of the parameters of what has been deemed respecta especially in feminist circles, only proves we need more women these forgotten godmothers of sexual expression. We need m women talking about—and enjoying—their bodies. As Rau s society creates "shame around women's bodies, and that's how control women." And shame has no place in this league. POV

Kiva Reardon is a film programmer, writer and the founding editor of *clé*



Résistance Québec en Francais

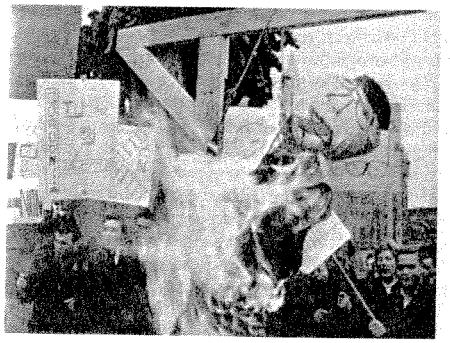
Minority report: John Walker explores his family history as an Anglophone in *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*

By Matthew Hays

TALKING TO FILMMAKER JOHN WALKER, you'd think he'd been on the most dangerous documentary ever. "I talked myself ou for a long time," he says. "Even recently, when I discussed the i some of my Francophone friends, they would say, 'Oh, you're brave.' I t something that's a bit taboo."

The topic is something that's not exactly verboten but is something leave people a bit queasy: in *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*, Walker exp complex relationship with Franco-Quebec culture, his Quebecois com and how and why many of his family members felt co to leave Quebec as the nationalist movement grew anc Walker shows all of this from his perspective—that is, who identifies as a Quebec Anglo. When Walker rec as a child, a bomb was blown up by the radical orga FLQ (Front de libération du Québec) mere blocks home, he still remembers the shock and horror hi parents expressed. He also recalls his father's he at deciding he had no choice but to leave Quebe better opportunities that Toronto represented—a that never made him entirely happy. Walker talks t members and colleagues, but what's most intrigui *Quebec My Country Mon Pays* is that most of the t talking to Franco-Quebecois—including fellow filr Jacques Godbout and Oscar-winner Denys Arcan Quebec nationalism and language tension.

"This is a story I've held within me for a long ti Walker, who's been making films for decades. His ca filmmaker includes the Genie-winning documentar *Under a Dark Cloth* (1989) and he was a member of making collective that made the unique 1987 feature *Tan*. As a cinematographer, he lensed *The Champag* (1995) and *Referendum: Take 2* (1996). "It's a story I' been eager to tell. Every film I make these days, I may be my last. I'm half-joking when I say that, but funding situation the way it is, I do wonder."

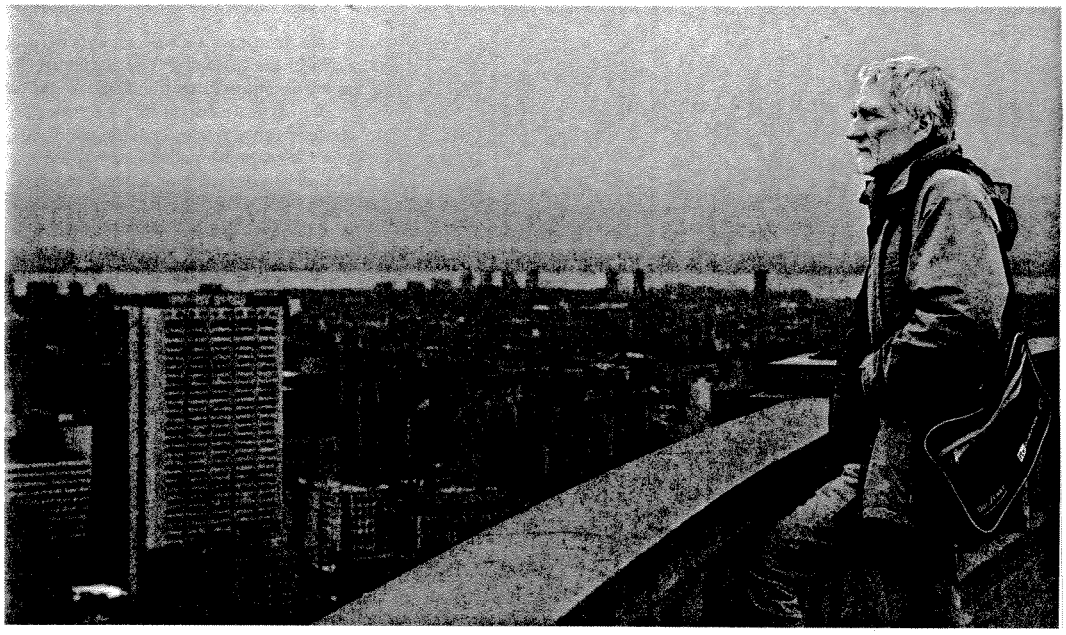


Quebec riots

Walker recognizes that the political is deeply personal, so he has int the history of the Quebec Quiet Revolution with his own life story. "Th of English and French for me began on the ice rink when I was playing The French didn't like us, but I had no idea why. When I was elever started to go off, and what I did know was the bombs were against the I'll never forget when a bomb went off so close to our house. Terrorism the psychological impact of that gave me a deep-seated anxiety. On so this film is dealing with those adolescent fears, but also feelings of reje

For Walker, his strongest feelings of rejection were not so much for his father. A thriving artist in the '60s, by the time the Parti Québécoi the government in 1976, Walker's dad felt he had little choice but to he Highway 401 to Ontario. "He was then 52, and a graphic artist, and more of his work was moving to Toronto. He left because of work. He had re Levesque, but he still didn't want to leave. It wasn't about deep-seated a But it was traumatic. He had a great time in Montreal; it was a great cit had his artist friends who he was working with. When he went to Toro

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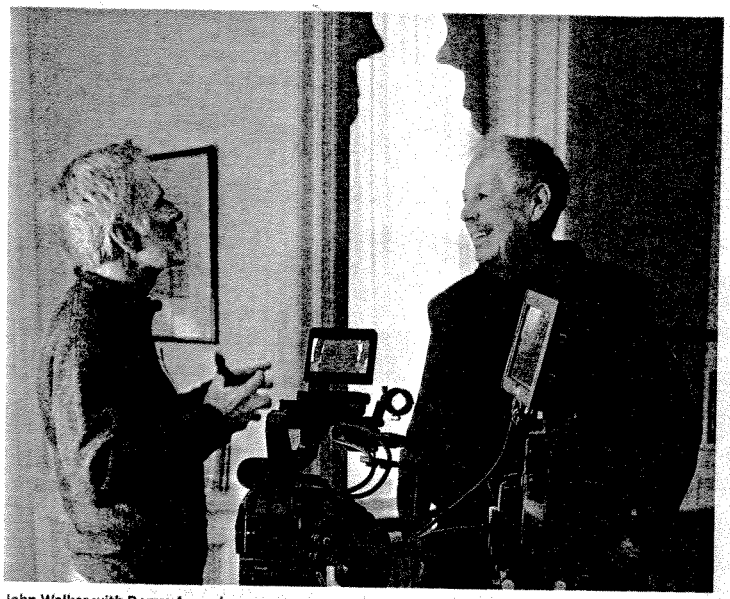


KATHERINE GIGUERE



COURTESY WALKER FAMILY

From top: John Walker at Mount Royal Lookout; J Walker at home,



John Walker with Denys Arcand

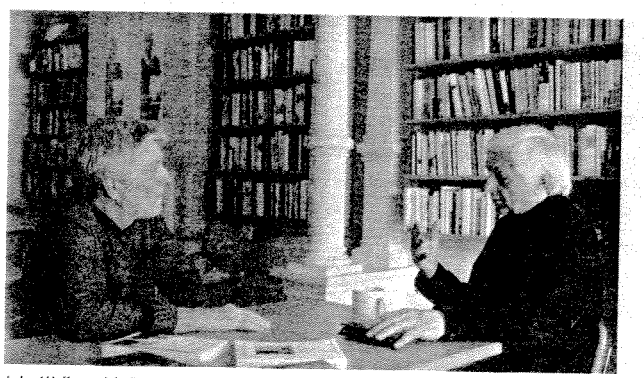
of that changed. I really felt for him when he had to make that move. Toronto didn't really suit him—it was a very tough transition."

But here's the best part about *Quebec My Country Mon Pays*: unlike so many discussions about Quebec nationalism and independence that come from an Anglo perspective, Walker doesn't really come from a position of bitterness or blame. He never comes across as an "angryphone"—the term given to Anglos who won't let go of the past and who assume a victim posture. Instead, it is clear Walker has great respect for the cultural leaps and bounds made during the Quiet Revolution, when Quebec went from being a quasi-feudal society into a modern state, throwing off the shackles of the Catholic Church and embracing higher education and socialist ideals.

Walker refers to what he sees as "myth-understandings" between the Franco and Anglo communities. "There are myths and untruths about either side. Through a better understanding of history, you can poke holes in those myths. One was the idea that the English are all wealthy and took their money when they left. A lot of English took a hit for the one per cent. My ancestors didn't have any power, they were farmers with no wealth, but they were English-speaking."

As Walker is speaking to his cultural peers—usually other filmmakers—we can feel his respect for the advances Quebec society made, very quickly. Denys Arcand recounts leaving the church, once and for all. He describes it as a sudden sensation: one minute he was sitting in church, next he was asking himself why on earth he was there, and then he was gone, never to return. As Walker points out, the shackles of the church teachings were tied to bad governance and widespread corruption.

Walker says the feeling in the film reflects his own sentiments. "I was sympathetic as I grew older to what was going on in Quebec—the importance of language and culture and the independent spirit. The other thing that comes up is growing up in a minority. We're the most privileged group of people on earth, but still a minority. What's interesting is that the minority status is felt on both sides: the French feel they are a minority within North America, while the Anglos feel they are a minority within Quebec. We have a similar sensibility on some level."



John Walker with Jacques Godbout

It's here that the film ties together the strange connection the Quebec Franco and Anglo communities share: a dire existential dread. While the Quebecois sense they are a minority in North America, grappling with a federal government run mainly by Anglophones and a dominant American culture, Quebec's Anglos feel threatened as a minority within Quebec's borders. *Quebec My Country Mon Pays* indicates how both cultures feel caught in the existential crosshairs.

And perhaps not surprisingly, Walker refers to a quote from a famous existentialist to explain why he suffers no ill will towards Quebec's Franco majority. In 1963, Jean-Paul Sartre stated: "It is recognized as a truism that the consequences of people's actions often end up escaping them, since every undertaking has repercussions

BOSTON PHOTOGRAPHERS ARCHIVE 2016.082

upon a vast number of unsuspected relationships within a society."

"For me, that quote is just perfect," Walker explains. "It explains how Quebec's emergence, its independence, its finding itself, would leave all other considerations aside.

"Jacques [Godbout] said it was a poetic revolution at the beginning, which led to a political one. It was about artists who wanted to take down a conservative, Catholic-controlled society. I knew French kids who were kicked out of school for reading Sartre. [Then-Quebec Premier] Duplessis censored NFB films in Quebec—the authorities saw them as films made by communists."

Walker also points out that some of the most lasting terminology to describe Quebec and Montreal came from outsiders. The Quiet Revolution was a term first coined in *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's first national newspaper. (Though some have referred to it as "Toronto's national newspaper.") And the term "Two Solitudes" came from the title of Hugh MacLennan's 1945 novel. In it, the author has a fictional character attempting to reconcile his two different identities as Franco and Anglo. The term has come to refer to the indifference and ignorance Quebec's Franco community has towards Anglos, and vice versa. In a 2005 speech, then-Governor General Michaëlle Jean declared that "the time of 'Two Solitudes' had finished."

But where Walker's film becomes a bit dark is his current reflection on the state of Franco-Anglo co-existence. Watching the film, one gets a great sense of his respect for the Quiet Revolution, but the Two Solitudes seem as entrenched as ever. Part of this comes from the endearing bluntness of Arcand, who doesn't hold back. Did he or anyone else think about the exodus of Anglos—hundreds of thousands of them—from Quebec during the '60s and '70s? Arcand chuckles and basically says that just meant there was more real estate for the people who stayed behind. Arcand clearly doesn't care if what he says sounds insensitive: Francophones didn't care what was going on in the English-speaking community, he states, and for all intents and purposes, they still don't. He speaks with a candor that commands respect.

The long shadow of the Two Solitudes came up again, as one of Walker's researchers on the film, Christina Clark, expressed her own feelings about not quite fitting in, despite speaking French fluently. "She spoke to me about the inability to assimilate, even when you speak French very well. I was surprised to hear that those separations often remain. When I was young I wanted to integrate, but so many of my friends were leaving, it was as if there was no future here. Christina's going through that too, years after I did. And sometimes she gets the suggestion that, well, it's not that bad—just head down the 401 if you need to."

But, Walker insists again, "I'm not angry. When Hitchcock shot a film in Quebec, he called it a "priest-ridden society." People wanted to get past the church and all its control. I say at one point in the film, "I've tried anger but it doesn't work." When you can understand something, it doesn't make you angry. Despite the exodus and everything else.

"I tried as hard as I could not to generalize in the film," Walker explains. "If the people I interviewed wanted to generalize, that was up to them, but I didn't want to make generalizations myself. And I don't see this as the definitive film on Quebec from an Anglo's perspective. Everybody's story is different." POV

A contributing editor for *POV*, **Matthew Hays** has written for *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Vice*, *Cineaste* and *The Walrus*. He teaches film studies at Marianopolis College and Concordia University in Montreal.



Claude Jutra

ARNAUD MAGGS (COURTESY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA, R7959-19003)

The Jutra dilemma

Building up to locking his final cut, John Walker found himself in a bit of a dilemma *Quebec My Country Mon Pays* was to open with a fascinating quote that goes like this believe in ideas: the right of a people to se government, each person's need for a nati and cultural identity. But, as I get carried a with enthusiasm, I can't help thinking that worst collective crimes were committed in the name of nationalism. This contradictio tortures me and it is to this contraction tha am committed."

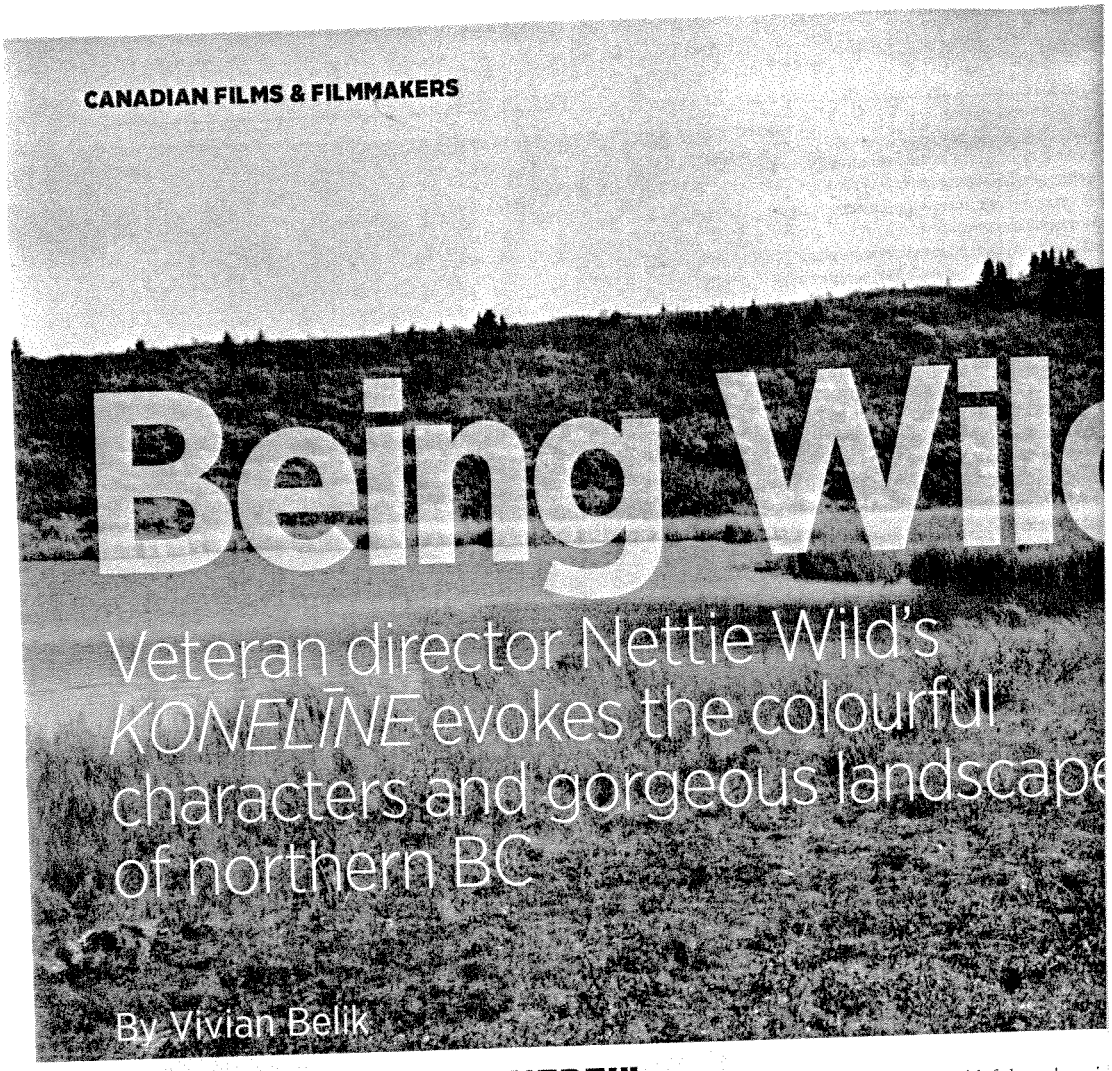
It's a fantastic quote, one that perfectly reflects certain aspects of the film. The problem? The person who said it was Clau Jutra, widely regarded as one of Quebec's greatest filmmakers—but also the man at t centre of one of the greatest posthumous scandals ever in Quebec or Canada's cultu history.

On February 16, a new biography of Ju hit bookstands, and in a few pages, author Yves Lever described Jutra's sexual attract to boys. Many knew of Jutra's interest in teenage boys, but within 24 hours of that news came an interview in *La Presse*, in wh an unnamed man described first having be sexually assaulted by Jutra when he was 6 years old.

Within 48 hours, Jutra's legacy had be completely rewritten by the scandal. If the allegations were shocking—and they are a best allegations, seeing as Jutra has been dead for over 30 years so cannot respond them—the sheer velocity of the scandal w even more jolting. Several streets, a park, t main cinema in the Cinémathèque québéc the Canadian National Screen Award giver to the best first feature film director and th name of the entire Quebec film awards—a would have the name "Jutra" removed.

After much thought, Walker and his producers and distributor have decided no open the film with this quote.

— MATTHEW HAYS



Being Wil

Veteran director Nettie Wild's *KONELĪNE* evokes the colourful characters and gorgeous landscape of northern BC

By Vivian Belik

"IT'S JUST WILD OVER HERE!"

I hear a voice exclaim from the other end of the telephone line. "I'm up to my eyeballs in equipment."

I was surprised that someone whose last name is Wild would use a descriptive like that so liberally. But I don't think I knew what to expect from a director who had nearly been gunned down by howitzers on her first documentary.

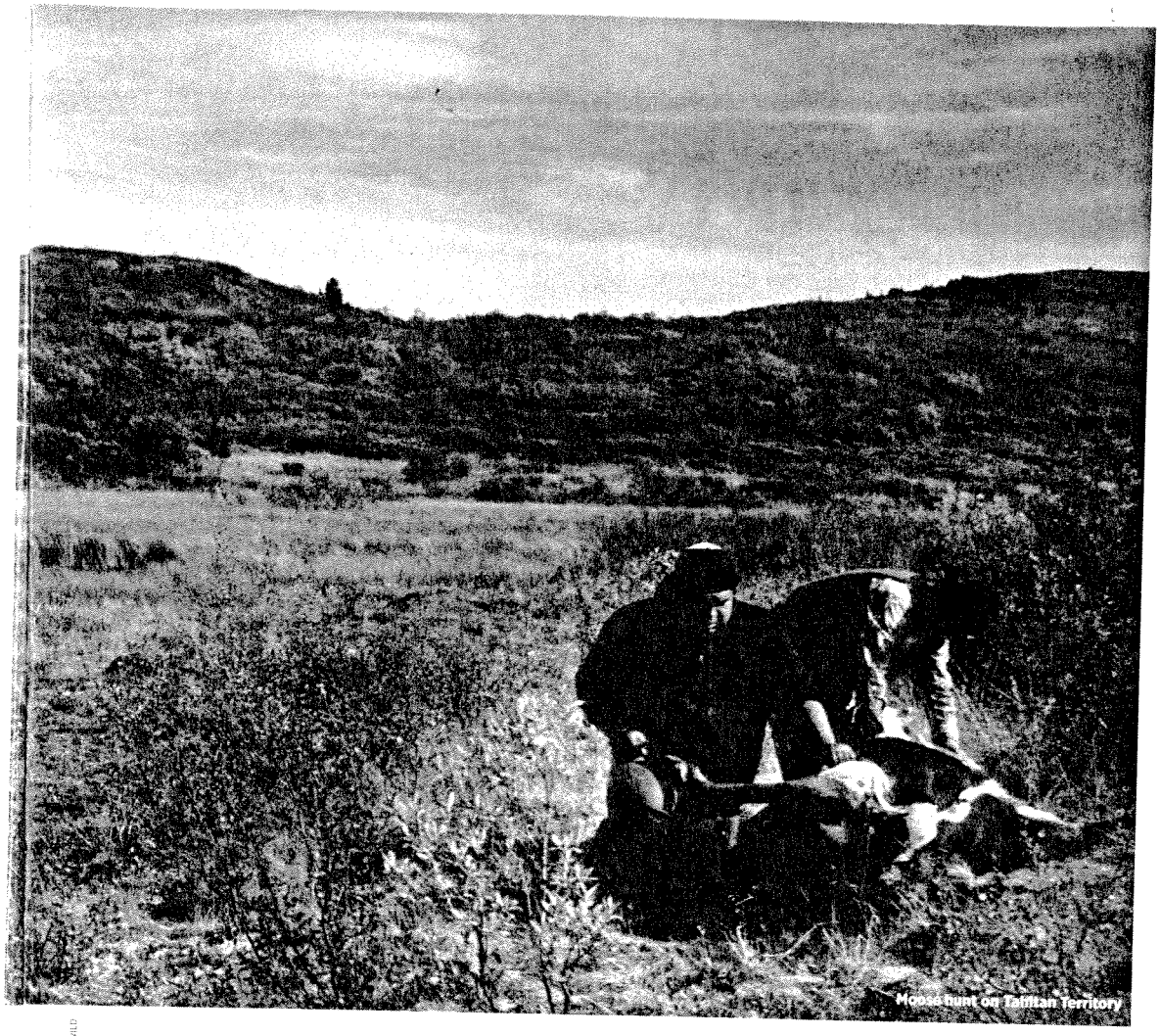
It's her second day in Whitehorse and Nettie Wild is sitting alone in a room piled high with speaker cables, projector equipment and an awkwardly large screen that folds together like a piece of Meccano. Misfortune seems to be trailing her. Two technicians she hired wound up in the hospital within days of each other. And the back hatch on her rental truck where she stores her gear is frozen shut.

Wild is preparing to drive into northern British Columbia to premiere the first feature-length documentary she has made since *Fix* in 2002. Clad in her Swedish wool army pants, faded leather jacket and reading glasses adorned with tiny pumpkins, she laughs amidst the chaos.

She's elated to be back north and tells stories of her time in the wilderness: the day she got stranded on a mountain after a helicopter picked up the rest of her group and left her alone in overnight; getting shuttled through the bush by dog horseback; and the dozens of unique northerners she's ous remote outposts.

It's this last part that has most fascinated her. Wild *KONELĪNE: our land beautiful*, is a stunning portrait live and work in northern British Columbia. "The peop across this land live a really intriguing lifestyle," she North, there are the First Nations who've been there f of years who live a mixture of contemporary and trad of life. And then there are the non-native "wackos," as calls them, who have wound up in the North for a varie "It takes a real kind of personality to choose to battle th and turn it into a way of living."

Beyond this cast of characters is a lush wilderne massive deposits of copper and gold. In this case, a 'go of mineral deposits near the Tahltan First Nation co Telegraph Creek, Iskut and Dease Lake. "You've got land where the seeds of conflict have been sown mil ago," says Wild. These towns are fighting an onslaug



Moose hunt on Tahltan Territory

COURTESY NFB/THE WILD

exploration that threatens traditional ways of living while also offering jobs in an economically starved area.

Wild wanted to dig deep into this debate over land but to do it in a way that was different from her earlier films. In the '90s the director spent time in a Gitxsan community near Hazelton, British Columbia documenting a First Nations logging blockade. "I'm proud of *Blockade*, but this time, I didn't want to make another finger-waving movie like so many out there today, that tells people what to think and has smart people expounding all this doom and gloom."

KONELĪNE is a poetic and moving take on a universal struggle. Gone are the experts and the classical story arc. Instead, Wild widens the focus to include less typical story plots and characters: the men who erect the transmission lines for the mining industry; the hunting outfitter who relies upon untouched wilderness for her livelihood; and the community members relocating fish affected by mining. The land is the main thread that connects these smaller stories together with most of the characters appearing only once in the documentary.

It was a big risk for the director. "If you're not going to hang it around a classic storyline, which I've spent all my life doing, then what the heck are you going to do in terms of holding the thing together and creating a piece that resonates and holds audiences says Wild. "Out of fear I wanted to fall back on the political sto and follow the blockades but my editor and DP were saying, 'No, n no.' Because for them, going for the art and going for the abstra was where the juice was."

While researching the film in 2012, Wild tried winning ov mining executives and protesters with the hope of including the in her story. But after negotiations with Imperial Metals stalled ar she refused to join the First Nation blockade line as a protester. Wi was shut out from both sides of the conflict. "That was hard to tal personally, but I think it saved the film in the end. It pushed it in new direction."

Oscar Dennis is one of the few protesters we see in *KONELĪN* A linguist recording some of the last Tahltan-speaking elders the area, Dennis is a passionate voice in the film. "We're done. Tl monster is here. This is no longer a peaceful haven," he says. But lil many Tahltan in the area, he realizes the situation is complicate "We also need the mine; that's the reality."

Earlier in the film we meet a First Nations diamond driller wl has lovingly named his drill bit 'Black Betty.' He's aware of tl

mining controversy but is unapologetic about his role in the situation. "Personally it's putting food on my kids' table," he says. It's tough though. Our elders fought for this land. What my grandparents are against, I'm doing."

Wild deftly plays with these dualities throughout the film. In another scene of *KONELĪNE*, the camera follows a helicopter as it precariously transports a 16,000 pound transmission tower through the sky. Symbolic of the mining industry, the tower is also unexpectedly beautiful, appearing like a flying cross high above the mountains. The film succeeds in creating tension not only through these small character portraits but through imagery as well. With its impressive cinematography from Montreal's Van Royko, *KONELĪNE* is reminiscent of *Manufactured Landscapes* and *Baraka*, the latter of which inspired Wild while filming. "If what we were shooting looked like a picture postcard, we cut, and if it looked like an abstract oil painting, we rolled."

IT'S FEBRUARY 7TH, opening night of the Available Light Film Festival and there's a lineup for *KONELĪNE*. The 420-seat theatre at the Yukon Arts Centre is sold out. 20 members of the Tahltan First Nation have driven 10 hours to Whitehorse to see the film on a big screen and they're mugging for photos on the festival's makeshift red carpet. The documentary is billed as the 'world premiere,' but in truth the film has already played to audiences in Telegraph Creek, Dease Lake and Iskut.

Acting as producer, director and a/v technician, Wild drove down the Alaska highway with local journalist Meagan Deuling in tow. "We transformed the gymnasiums in those communities into little cinemas. We shot the film in Cinemascope, we put in a surround sound mix and it was really important to bring all of that to the Tahltan," says Wild. "As soon as they walked in the door you could just see the magic of show biz happening."

Wild didn't know how people in these communities would respond. At her first screening in Telegraph Creek, a community nestled deep in the Stikine River canyon, Wild cautiously set out 40 chairs. By the time the screening began nearly half of the town's 200 residents had turned out. "When they started to watch it, and then laugh, I knew we had hit a home run," she says.

"It was a whole different kind of film distribution." Wild nearly had to cancel her screening in Iskut after an elder in Telegraph Creek, a three hour drive away, died. She convinced the First Nation chief to go ahead with the screening, promising there would be no dancing or drumming before the film. Her commitment to the Tahltan paid off. First Nation elders in all three communities approached Wild to give thanks for the film.

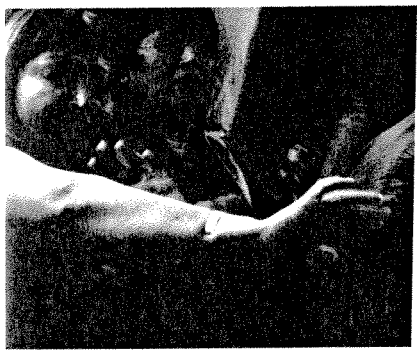
She was also well received in Whitehorse. "As a proud Tahltan woman, I want to compliment you because you did well representing our people and our culture," said one audience member who had brought her two young grandsons to the documentary. "I thought the part in the film where the community was saving the fish was just the most beautiful moment." Wild won the audience choice award at the Available Light Film Festival.

"When you go into a community, any community, with a camera to make a documentary, really deep down they have no idea what you're doing," says Wild. "With the Tahltan in northwestern BC, there's been a fair amount of anthropologists and documentary crews coming into their area and apparently they don't show them their work afterwards...I wanted to make darn sure these stories got back to them and got back to them first."

It's all part of a shift Wild is undergoing in her own creative process. At 63, Wild isn't chasing down stories the same way she did





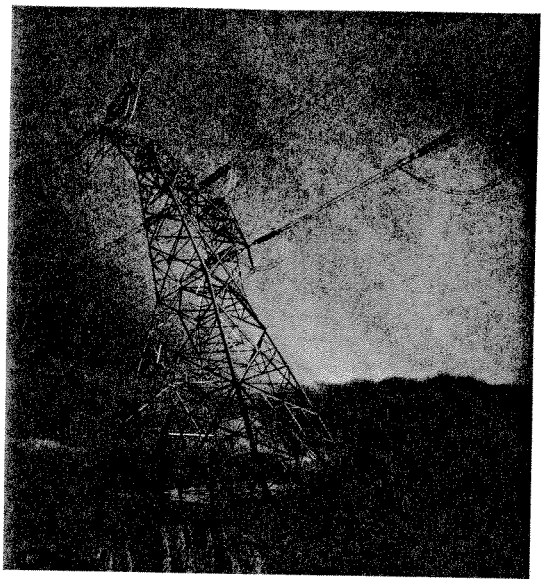


Above: the ecstasy of "Stickgambling." Opposite: Aurora through power lines

with her earlier films. "I'm in the middle of really ch I make movies. I'm hungry as an artist to blow the and push myself into making something new," she

"There's a kind of weariness about putting mysel of pushing people to be vulnerable, because they pusl people see the final film they don't know what the he That's an intensely lonely place as a filmmaker. And me that just doesn't want to go to that place anymc

IT'S AN UNSEASONABLY WARM February morning I I'm zipping down the Klondike Highway with Wild munity of Carcross. Wild is effervescent, animatedly how she got into filmmaking. In her early 30s, Wild ing street theatre to communist guerrilla fighters in where she and her group were bombed by goverı four days straight. She decided to make her first do



COURTESY NETTIE WILD

the fighters' struggle and it resulted in the award-winning film, *A Rustling of Leaves*. Since then, she's made four more feature length documentaries, story-edited several films, worked as a professor and created content for non-profits and for the web.

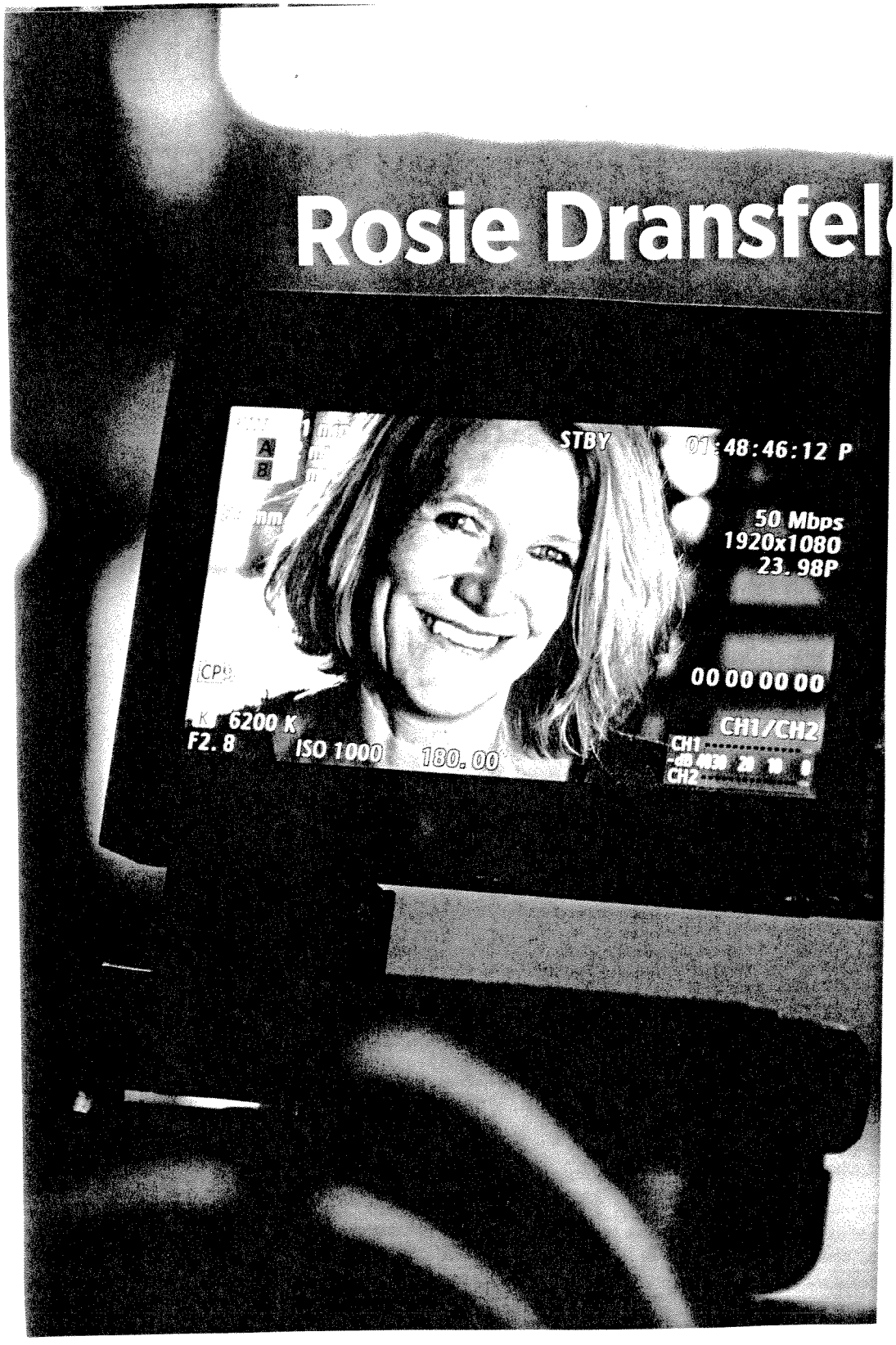
Standing on an old train bridge in Carcross, Wild leans over the railing and, using her iPhone, intensely documents the patterns of ice that have formed on the shore. She doesn't move until she's gotten the picture just right. "Isn't it beautiful," she says.

A few years ago, while filming *KONELÎNE*, Wild started tracking the movements of salmon spawning up the Adams River in British Columbia. It was the largest salmon run that had ever been recorded in that area. "I was just completely knocked out by what I saw," says Wild. "When I looked into the pools of the river, it was like looking at huge, swirling patterns of fish, like colossal, moving abstract art." Unable to shake the image of these fish from her mind, Wild sought out funding from the National Film Board to create a short film. Again, she wanted to stay away from political rhetoric and hit her audiences viscerally rather than intellectually.

"You can't recreate a river but you can give yourself permission to interpret it," says Wild. That's when Royko, editor Michael Brockington and producer Betsy Carson, all of whom also worked on *KONELÎNE*, came up with the idea of projecting the images onto a vast surface in the centre of Vancouver. For three years her team captured footage of the fish underwater with a Phantom camera which shoots 800 frames per second. The footage was then shaped into an immersive 20-minute film that Wild plans to project every night during the summer of 2017.

"I'm finding a real thrill in going into an environment and trying to see if I can come up with extraordinary and compelling, abstract images through cinematic language," she says. "It doesn't rely on somebody peeling like an emotional banana. Rather, it falls back on me to see if I can see their world in a different way." POV

Vivian Belik is a freelance writer and recent graduate of Ryerson's MFA in documentary media, splitting her time between Whitehorse and Toronto.


Rosie Dransfel
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A modern master of cinema verité

By Rebecca Sullivan

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING has always been an important tool of activism and education, but for Rosie Dransfeld, politics must be tempered by artistic concerns. "My films have a message, a political issue behind them," she says. "But it is as important to create films that are entertaining and engaging."

Dransfeld has become one of Canada's most celebrated contemporary cinema verité directors. She insists on using only natural lighting and low-impact filmmaking, ensuring that the film crew understands where the story lies. The goal for her is to reach deep into the heart of a world too often hidden from view, but to do so in ways that connect the audience to the subjects on screen and provoke reflection from both.

It is this ability to capture the full humanity of her subjects and place them at the centre of stories that resonate with emotion that led Hot Docs to name Dransfeld "the master of verité cinema." As Hot Docs states, "Her films are powerful encounters of the human condition and invite audiences to take another look at reality, balancing on a thin line between laughter and tears."

That invitation is not so much to change the world as it is to change one's own attitudes. Dransfeld hopes that her films have contributed to political conversations. And perhaps they have, obliquely. Alberta is now having a debate about payday lenders and the financial traps we lay for impoverished people who can't access conventional banking systems. This issue was the subject of the award-winning *Broke*. Canada is finally having conversations about sex worker rights and safety. *Who Cares?* was released at the start of debates on Bill C-36, The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought to the forefront the bleak history of Canada's abuse of First Nations children. Chris Hoard, a main character in both *Broke* and *Anti-Social Limited* is a survivor of the infamous Sixties Scoop, when the government forcibly took Aboriginal children from their families and placed them in foster homes. Without human stories to connect with, these problems would feel too remote and hopeless.

Since her first feature, the quirky *Beaverman* (2002), Dransfeld has built her career on cinema verité explorations of people on the edges of society, surviving against systemic racism, sexism, abuse and the grinding cycles of poverty. She eschews the pol for "the good, well-crafted story" that offers honest depict real people up against untenable odds.

Her opportunity to become an independent filmmak the result of a move from the cosmopolitan city of Hamb Edmonton, then Canada's heartland of right-wing populisr was a critical juncture in the national film and media sector. Tl was shuttering studios and firing in-house creators. News ag were concentrating in major urban centres, leaving regional gutted. In Germany, Dransfeld worked first as a print journali made the switch to television where she contributed invest pieces for the German public broadcaster, and also created cal satire pieces for the long-standing comedy series *Extra* Canada, she expected to continue in that line of work but cou find what she calls "cat stuck in tree" journalism. Looking for options, Dransfeld was excited by the dedication to lon storytelling provided by public broadcasters like the CBC, T the National Film Board.

"I would agree with Kevin McMahon that documentary a Canadian art form," says Dransfeld. "I realised there w incredibly rich history, and saw an opportunity to tell my st a unique way. Unlike Germany, Canada is a country that ages entrepreneurship." So, after having learned the ropes a producer, in 2000 Dransfeld took the opportunity to fou own production company, ID: Productions. From then on sh produced and directed many documentaries.

There is no question that Dransfeld has developed a dis style that is at once indebted to the Canadian documentary t of cinema verité without the encrustation that sometime from a lifetime of watching old NFB films in classrooms. Sh shirks from the idea that she is constructing a drama out of circumstances.

While many other social justice filmmakers elect to use t documentary format to paint a big picture of injustice and i relying on experts and global case studies, Dransfeld pr

COURTESY ROSIE DRANSFELD AND ID PRODUCTIONS

zoom the camera into essential human stories, "Cinema verité is perfect for the exploration of the human condition. You can create real life drama. It is an ever-evolving art form." She finds that the conventional educational style of documentary filmmaking doesn't trust the audience enough to reflect on their attitudes toward more marginalized people and to draw their own conclusions. Nor does it take enough time with its subjects to draw a complete picture of their humanity.

With *The Dogwalker*, she knew she wanted to tell a story about how people with disabilities are punished with poverty, but she also wanted to strip away misconceptions about the fullness of their emotional lives. On one of her own dog walks, she met Michael Borowski. With a makeshift steady-cam strapped to her, she and Borowski began to take their walks together. It was an opportunity for Dransfeld to test how well Borowski would appear on film and to give him time to build trust in the experience until he could forget that he was even being filmed.

A similar approach led Dransfeld to David Woolfson, the owner of the A1 pawnshop featured in *Broke* (2010). After touring many pawnshops scattered across Edmonton's poorer neighbourhoods, she felt that he had the humour and the sharp-wittedness to invite audiences into his world. "It is part of my casting routine, familiarizing myself with the world I want to film and hoping to find a strong, ambiguous character who will provoke a lot of questions from the audience." Dransfeld spent six months just observing the rhythms of the pawn shop, so that when the cameras were turned on it took only four weeks to finish filming. While researching, she met Chris Hoard, a First Nations drifter who struck up an unlikely friendship with Woolfson. That relationship became the heart of the story.

Following the success of *Broke*—which won the Donald Brittain Award for Social/Political Documentary at the 2010 Canadian Screen Awards—Dransfeld remained in touch with Hoard, waiting for a story to emerge. It took her three years doing short vignettes and showing Hoard how to use a videocamera on his own before there was some meaningful development in his life. In this case, it was Hoard's plan to use the business skills he had acquired as a drug dealer to launch his own all-native construction company to beautify his impoverished neighbourhood.

The scenes where Hoard is filming himself and reflecting on his circumstances are the most compelling in Dransfeld's doc. The film opens with Chris Hoard framing himself in front of a mirror; he exhales and proclaims, "So. Here we go." With those words he not only invites the audience into his own perspective, but also seems to grant consent for the documentary camera to follow him on his journey.

Dransfeld experimented with this combination of observational and participatory filmmaking in both *Anti-Social Limited* and her film just before it, *Who Cares?*. "Cinema verité is a very open and creative style, especially for the documentary subject. I can invite my main characters to use the camera themselves. This adds something really wonderful to the film. I did this in *Anti-Social Limited* with Chris, and for Courtney in *Who Cares?* so we could see these incredibly brave, unguarded moments," she says.

The juxtaposition of observational and participatory cinema in her two most recent films takes audiences through both big emotions and intimate moments. In *Who Cares?*, a documentary on street-level sex workers in Edmonton, Dransfeld provided a camera to one of her main characters, Courtney Heather. That footage is in extreme and very jumpy close-up, reflecting Heather's post-traumatic stress disorder after years of abuse and the struggle of no longer engaging in sex work. However, at the end of the film, Heather turns the camera around to capture a sunrise, allowing us to imagin life for her in some unknown tomorrow.

By contrast, Shelly Sowan, still working but hoping to s is filmed only by Dransfeld and always at a respectful di as not to overcrowd her emotional moments, such as stands on the street corner she worked while she was pr talks about her dead child, or goes to apologise to an old she assaulted. The film is framed around the RCMP Pro which collects DNA and personal information of sex worke bodies can be identified if they are killed. That high-sta is laid starkly bare by this balance of intense, violent out quiet, observational moments of the toll that violence ta workers and the people they love.

"With my films, I hope to empower my main characte can find ways to tell their stories. I'm not trying to mak better people; I'm just trying to portray them as people, wi sentimental. I want to show their humanity and the co their lives," says Dransfeld.

It's evident that Dransfeld's characters are not typic ing." But they do demand dignity and respect for the c have to face the camera and reflect on their worlds. Th compelling yet open-ended accounts that do not tell vi to think, but ask audiences to step outside their comf invite viewers into worlds we don't easily have acces them the opportunity to live in this world for a while f comfort of their couch."

Despite her indebtedness to cinema verité, Dransf keen to re-invent herself and try other styles of story tell opment right now is *Boom!: The End of White Privile* essay on the rise of right-wing populism in the Unit Europe. In its own way, it's as ambitious as the ground *Transplant Project*, a multi-pronged investigation in medicine, which she started working on after directi about patients waiting for organs and using dialysis.

Dransfeld is stepping back from director duties to p feature cinema verité documentary and an episode of *Things*, for which she and director Niobe Thompson unprecedented levels of access to the University of Alb transplant centre.

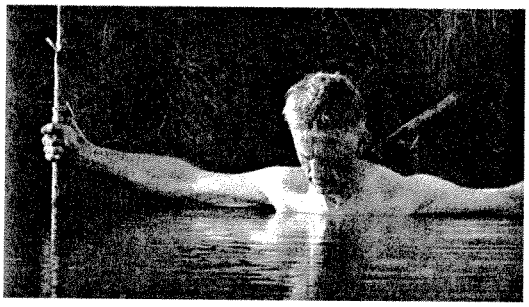
The feature, *Memento Mori*, is an emotionally arres with the experience of death and the wonder of livi body. The television episode, titled *Recycled Lives*, journey inside the evolving science of transplants through discoveries are solving the organ crisis an the future of medicine. Together, they interweave th the social, the reflective and the educational sides o This in-between place is where Dransfeld feels dc best reach its potential.

"We are now at this exciting point where the tech so far that we can experiment with all kinds of ways says Dransfeld. "But, more importantly, the audie the intricacies of documentary, so that we are ab drama that is also deeply true. I think we're really this moment with what we can accomplish with th

Rebecca Sullivan's most recent books include *Bonnie She Love Story* (UTP 2014), and, with Alan McKee, *Pornograp Agency and Performance* (Polity 2015). She is the director Studies program at the University of Calgary, where she l multi-year research program on feminist documentary fil











Clockwise from top left: *The Dogwalker*, 2
Who Cares?, 2012; *Broke*, 2009; *Anti-Soci*
Limited, 2014; *Beaverman*, 2002 (all dir. F
Dransfeld).

A dialogue betwee two crewmembers on Spaceship Earth

Is the planet sustainable? Director Kevin McMahon and *POV*'s Marc Glassman engage in an epistolary exchange

For top on opposite p closeup of ants; Earth from the Moon by Jim 1968; sunbathers in C New York City.

By Marc Glassman and Kevin McMahon

MG: Marc Glassman | **KM:** Kevin McMahon

MG: Kevin, *Spaceship Earth* shifts the standard trajectory of environmental films. The vast majority of films in any category tend to operate within the accepted limits of that genre: a noir is a noir; a rom-com always has its conventional laughs and tears and—closer to home—you know a verité doc when you see one. What you've done in *Spaceship Earth* is to rephrase the debate about what can be done about the environment. That's an achievement politically as well as cinematically.

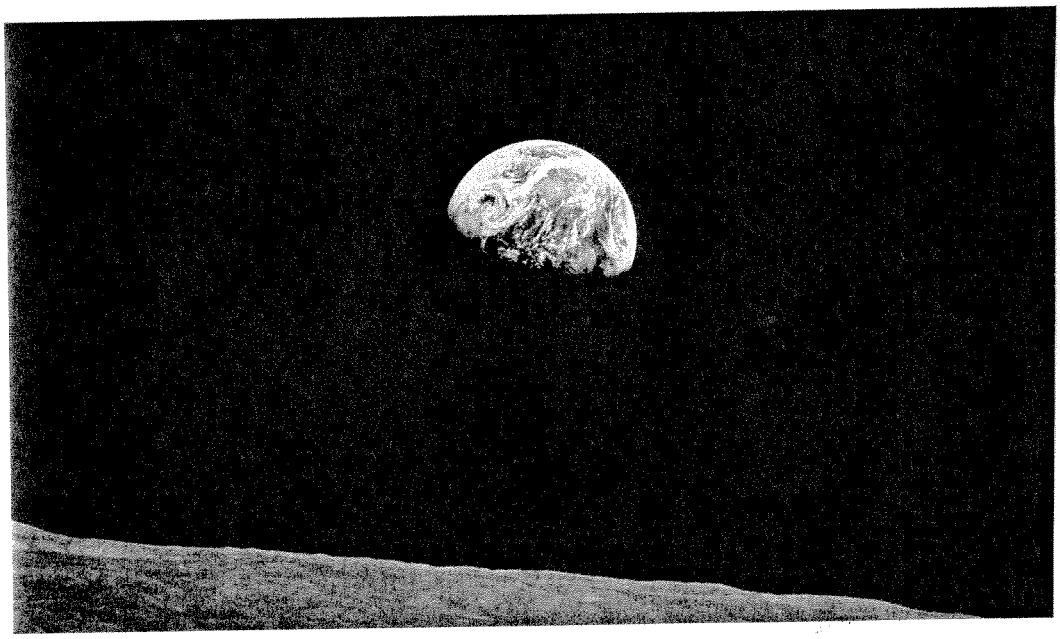
You had me—and you'll have audiences—through your premise. Too many green docs just concentrate on their specific environmental concern, whether it's about water or oil or climate change. You start off with the quote from Marshall McLuhan that inspires the film: "There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew." Words of wisdom from a Canadian figure who contributed so much to the philosophical debates of the 1960s. And then you hit us with the knockout punch by another '60s intel Buckminster Fuller: "People say to me, I wonder wh be on a spaceship. And I say to you, you don't realize doing because everyone is an astronaut."

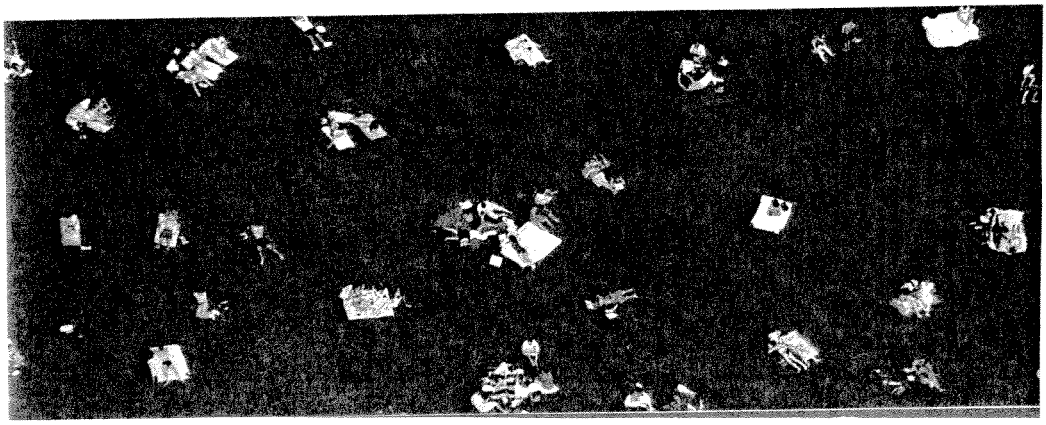
Suddenly, the current debate about the environmer ingly present in the American Republican primaries, is p trast to the great aspirations of the '60s. Footage of Ca with a rocket launching towards the moon, placed in celestial soundtrack of Ohad Benchetrit and Justin us back to a time of more complex thoughts and great dreams. The ruminations of astronaut Ulf Merbold, "earthrise" after emerging from the dark side of the m thoughts of Fuller and McLuhan into the realm of a "Before you thought of the earth as so huge that it your imagination. You just can't perceive it as a sph all of a sudden you see the earth as a spaceship on w are traveling through the empty universe."

Creating this atmosphere of intellectual debate as

POV – Spring 2016 (2 of 6)







affords you—and your viewers—the opportunity to look at our environment in a deeper, if slightly retro, way. By looking at the planet as another spaceship in the universe and humanity as the operators at the helm of the vessel, we're reminded of the fragility of the Earth and our need to protect and nurture it.

Having set the scene, you people it with such articulate experts as anthropologist Wade Davis; popular science writer Jared Diamond; marine and atmospheric scientist Andrew James Watson; astrobiologist and earth system scientist Takafumi Matsui; climate change researcher and writer John Schellenhuber; cosmologist Martin Rees and *Limits to Growth* co-author Jorgen Renders. But that's not all. You give us fishermen in Brazil, politicians in Germany, British utopian idealist Rob Hopkins and Icelandic promulgators for renewable energy.

We soon realise that some of these people are already navigators on Spaceship Earth while others are hoping to find solutions for on-going global problems.

You structure the film around this notion of the world as a spaceship. In a way, it becomes a bit like a sci-fi film. Perhaps it's a spiritual remake of Kubrick's special f/x expert Douglas Trumbull's follow-up to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Silent Running*. Do you remember that film, Kevin? A botanist played by Bruce Dern escapes from a space station and takes his scientifically created eco-system to another galaxy after Earth's crops all die.

The structure of Spaceship Earth is logical and voluminous in content: *The Fuel*—now mainly oil; *The Navigators*—scientists and politicians: *The Engines*—the alternatives from hydro power to atomic to solar; *The Passenger Cabins*—how we're behaving in terms of consumption and working with renewable sources; and *The Crew*—what we're doing to change things.

These chapters allow you to provide us with an overview of what we're doing to properly helm this earthly spaceship. It allows you to come to conclusions, some positive and some negative, while still leaving the future as a subject for future debate. And perhaps another film in a decade.

So: Kevin. I have a lot to ask you.

How did you come up with the notion for *Spaceship Earth*? You made a film about McLuhan; has this been brewing since that time?

You have a who's who of characters in the film. Who were your favourites? Who surprised you? Did Schellenhuber, for example, stun you with his wisdom and demeanour?

You have so many positive stories in the film: in Iceland, in a small town in England, in Frankfurt, Germany. Are you feeling more optimistic about humanity's future on this planet?

Can you tell me more about the film's structure? How did you arrive at it? Does it work for you, now that it's completed? Would you change elements in the film and reframe some of its arguments if you could?

Are there countries that you wished you had visited? Did some great stories or observations (or both) end up on the cutting room floor?

KM: Thanks for the generous comments, Marc; I will take them as a tribute to the brilliance of the people we met making this film. All that is revelatory, shocking and inspiring in the piece came from their deep thinking about our planetary situation. In fact, *Spaceship Earth* is the product of a strange and massive collaboration.

As you know, my journalistic preoccupations have always been nuclear weapons and the environment. Both raise existential questions, because no advantage that comes from having The Bomb or polluting the biosphere is equal to the risks. So considering either makes you think about planetary limits. Expressing that spaceship metaphor has a long history via McLuhan, Fi others, like Carl Sagan. Since 9/11, it's become even more The global village has turned out exactly as McLuhan pr would, with electric technologies re-invigorating ancient t

So the metaphor has nagged me for a long time. The edit Larsen, who cut a lot of environmental docs, said of *Spacesl* "this is the film every filmmaker I've worked with for 20 yea to make." I'm sure she's right. But we all know it would be to cold-pitch any broadcaster on an environmental doc this ambitious. So I never did. As fate would have it, the broadcaster, NHK, came to me.

For our colleagues at NHK, Fukushima was more than disaster, it was a turning point for civilization. Japan is with an old conservation ethic. The Japanese have long climate change and, since Kyoto, have seen themselves i guard fighting it. But they mostly intended to do that wit power. The tsunami and nuclear meltdown swept that i With massive electrical shortages and no easy solutio leagues were viscerally confronted with the existential all earthlings face. They wanted to make a documentar speak about that. But they weren't sure how to frame it.

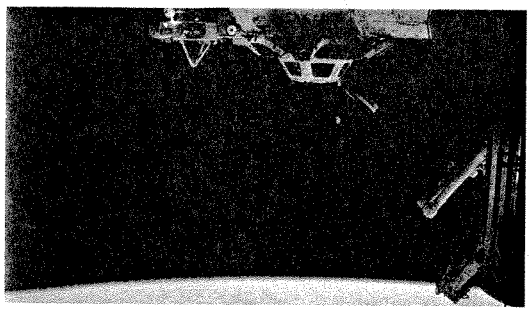
Weeks after the disaster, our colleague Takahiro Hama Hot Docs and addressed the International Trade Forum, an international project that broached the big questions us, at Primitive Features, to propose a conceptual frame was the moment the old spaceship Earth meme was re formed. I wrote the treatment, with the structure as it e film, in about an hour. Of course, it took two years of fu three years of production and a ton of work by a big gr laborators in Japan, Germany and Canada to fill out that

Our wishlists for characters and locations were probab longer than our resources allowed. Moreover, the peopl to were so knowledgeable in their various fields that it v cutting them down. They all moved us. Maybe the two th me most were the geoscientist Dave Hughes, on fossil David Sloan Wilson, an evolutionary biologist. From I learned that fossil fuels are already finished as a viable en for humanity, but replacing their role in our bloated lif be much harder than most people realize. From Sloan learned that certain human traits—like tribalism—were e advantages, but our technologies have transformed them i

As to the optimist/pessimist question....gee, I dunn including climate change in my work since 1988. Betwee *Earth* and our TVO series *The Polar Sea*, about the warn it has been my only subject for the last several years. A I conclude that our children (not rhetorically speaking, your actual children, who are in their 20s) face potential the likes of which are only imagined in the most apoc person shooters. I also conclude that humanity has the te political, cultural, ethical and legal knowledge to blunt the coming disasters. I argue in *Spaceship Earth* that th force of our individual values will ultimately choose ou

So is that optimism or pessimism?

MG: Optimism or pessimism? When we're talking abo ronment, neither is 100% appropriate, is it? Looking at ice caps and the lit-up water faucets caused by frackir help feeling appalled—not just pessimistic. But the la Change Conference in Paris and the numbers of young I encounter allow us some hope for the future.









From top: German Alexander Gerst looks out of the International Space Station; Japanese tsunami rubble; greenhouse gas emissions; Blue Lagoon geothermal pool, Iceland.

As you know, Kevin, I tend to be more optimistic than you. A *Spaceship Earth* does offer a bit of hope, which, for me, was nice to s

But I must admit you have some scientists offer gloomy facts

To wit, re: carbon dioxide, which will cause climate change a add acidity to our oceans, you show this in the film (measured CO_2 parts per million): 320 in 1965; 345 in 1985; 380 in 2005; a 400 in 2015.

Followed by this statement from Martin Rees: "One thing is co pletely certain and that is that the carbon dioxide in the atmosph is rising enormously fast. That rise is primarily due to what huma are doing. No one doubts that. Also, it is absolutely clear that ex carbon dioxide in the atmosphere produces extra warming. Th is no controversy about that."

And this from Rajendra Pachauri, former chair, Internatio Panel Climate Change: "Nature has a certain order in everythi that it does. As a result of warming, the bodies of ice will melt mu faster. The oceans will expand because of the heat that they absorbing and therefore you will get sea level rise. The worst c flood prediction between 2100 and 2300 is a six meter sea rise"

Or this from Dave Hughes: "You know my three favorite wo in all of this are 'beware of scale' when you're talking about alter tives. I think there's not a chance that collectively renewables replace current energy throughput.

"In 2011 primary energy was: 33% oil; 30% coal; 24% gas; large hydro; 4% nuclear; and 1.59% non-hydro renewables.

"And that includes wind, solar, geothermal and burning biom That's where we're starting from. The biggest piece of the solut is figuring out how to lower our energy throughput a lot with radically reducing peoples' standards of living. Not going to be e It really needs a new paradigm."

So: my next line of questioning for you, Kevin, is how can world—well, really, the wealthy in the West and in parts of Asia persuaded to change their thinking? Can a paradigm shift occu

Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis are advocating for such a philosoph change in the book and film versions of *This Changes Everything*. Ot people are talking about it. Nettie Wild's new film *KONELĪNE: land beautiful* is less about confrontation and more about celebrat the land. People like the Indian economist Amartya Sen, the Austr architect Christopher Alexander, the writer and philosopher A de Botton believe in making changes in progressive steps. He even Gordon Ramsey and Rachel Ray would like the world to s into eating more organic food—though admittedly high-end far

Behind the science, which clearly has to be the text of your fi isn't there a subtext? Where are the politicians? You offer us Mar Silva, the former Brazilian environment minister, who is amaz and the Frankfurt Deputy Mayor Rosemarie Heilig, who is cle a "green" advocate, but where are the big guys? I note that your best examples are women, which is no surprise.

Are there really so few examples of alternative practices tak place in our world? Must all of your best examples for peace renewable communities come from the only truly sustaina fuel-effective country, Iceland and a rather underground moven called Transition Town Totnes, which is trying to make things ri one English village at a time?

From one member of the Spaceship Earth crew to another, Ke can you offer some more hope for a paradigm change? And if not, w are we looking at having the Earth become in the next few deca

KM: The hope question always reminds me of two people. The physicist and peace activist Ursula Franklin, who talks about earthworm theory of social change. You need worms working

soil to make it fertile, yet, on the surface, you'd never know they are even there. In *Spaceship Earth*, we could only fit a few examples. You mention Totnes, where the transition movement began. It does seem obscure, in a mainstream media sense, but there are thousands of transition communities in 44 countries. Woodstock, New Brunswick and Huntsville, Ontario are official transition towns. Who knows what they can achieve? My brother-in-law, who works in rural Malawi, has just helped a village, which had no electricity, light up with 100% clean power. Tesla is now building house batteries which have the potential to cut our electrical generation needs in half.

All of those efforts will add up to a paradigm shift eventually. Will it happen quickly enough? We could be pleasantly surprised. In 1987 I went to see the British historian E.P. Thompson, a fierce anti-nuclear weapons campaigner. I felt the same despair about the Cold War and nuclear arms race that some now feel about climate change. I was doubting the worth of our fight. Thompson had grown up with parents who fought to get Britain out of India. He said: "It didn't happen and didn't happen and didn't happen and then, one morning, it just did. You never know." Two years after our chat, the Berlin Wall fell. That did not eliminate nuclear weapons, but it smashed the paradigm of a bi-polar world which had, in 1987, seemed indestructible to everyone, including world leaders.

Several of our global operating paradigms are already crumbling. They may look solid, but they are not. In *Spaceship Earth*, New York Times writer Andy Revkin says: "50 years from now things are not going to be the same in a big way." It's a given. The real questions concern how we'll control the changes, whether they'll be improvements and how evenly their effects will be spread.

We've established, for example, that the fossil fuel economy will end.

But it makes a world of difference whether we make the transition beyond them quickly or slowly. Will we delay change and just flush our remaining carbon stores into the atmosphere, thus making mammalian life impossible? Or will we wisely hoard them so that future Earthlings will have wonderful things like steel, plastics and helicopters? My guess, and Andy's too, is the latter.

He points out that we ought to remember and appreciate our amazing good luck at discovering the global environmental crisis in time to do something about it. We could very well have been chugging away in internal combustion engines for another century, clueless to the consequences, because we had yet not invented either the spaceships or computers that we need to accurately observe our atmosphere and predict its direction. We all owe NASA huge thanks.

Our species could have died blindly, like the dinosaurs. Humanity may yet die, but it will, at least, be a conscious act. It won't be by "the force of nature." It will be suicide, or mass murder, depending on your point of view.

That's why, as Andy also says, this is the best time in human history to be young. Never before has the whole ship undergone such profound change while populated by sentient beings. We not only realize what's happening, we also understand our ability to influence the future. How amazing is that? If you are a bright 20-year-old—whether in science, law, engineering, politics, art or many other fields—you really can help to change the world. Every generation has thought itself capable of that, but it's never been so true.

Where are the politicians, you ask, especially the "big guys"? Well, the most important politician (and woman, and scientist) in the film appears only by reference: Angela Merkel. The energy transition she started in Germany is incredible to behold. In a decade, the Germans built the infrastructure to supply one third of their power without fossil fuels. And they have done it in a way that widely spreads the benefits. Nonetheless, Mrs. Merkel faces significant c home and abroad, from an establishment that is losing power. And it is easy for those old big guys to foment disc Rosemarie Heilig says, new technology alone will not s need a new paradigm of human values. As you discern, really matters are the ways in which we think and talk abou

"Average folk did not understand climate change until *An Inconvenient Truth* came out. Yes, a doc can change the world!"

—KEVIN McMAHON



That's the hardest thing to change. For such mater creatures, we are painfully slow to alter our mental p mean, what the hell are Catholics and Protestants or M Jews still arguing about after all these centuries? The a their disputes is matched only by their persistence. So politician in the world is always up against the wall of ou and intellectual conservatism.

On the other hand, consider this: global warming is a discovery. Most scientists knew very little about it in few influential ones did, and they alerted a few influent leaders. By 1992, we had an international conference a Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997. Of Kyoto, Al Gore the start of a new relationship between humanity an So everyone there knew it meant massive, total chang age folk did not really understand the issue until *An I Truth* came out in 2006. (Yes, a documentary can chang

In the 2015 Paris Agreement, all nations officially agr premise that warming should be held below 1.5 degree which requires quickly eliminating fossil fuels as a com source. So, in 30 years, we have gone from almost total glo to global agreement that the whole world must be retoo may not achieve that. But our leaders have agreed, in pursue structural changes that will inevitably require ev developed world to radically change their lifestyles an convenience, power, and luxury. And the richer you a you will have to give up. You could argue, as the activis does, that the sanctionless agreement is useless. Or hopeful that, conceptually at least, we're moving in the ri

I think global political leaders, and certainly their b are far ahead of the public on this. Leaders get proper b real scientists. John Schellnhuber told me that the reaso in the midst of its great "energy transition" is because A

is a physicist. She actually understands what is happening and what then must be done. Canada now has a Minister of Environment *and Climate Change*. Yet Catherine McKenna has "admitted" (as the papers like to say) that many Canadians are only "a little bit there" in understanding the threat. The blame for that lies with mass media.

The only briefing most of us get is in the mass media's coverage of science, which is so thin and so bad that it would be comic if this were not a matter of life and death. And what is much worse are the systemic flaws that lead to things like the mainstream "questioning" whether global warming is real.

All the scientists in *Spaceship Earth* are committed to helping humanity understand what is physically happening to us, which is obviously important. But they all agreed that knowledge itself, or even regulations based on it, will not save us. Our survival ultimately rests on changing human values and particularly on humanity maturing beyond tribalism and mindless acquisitiveness.

You cannot overestimate the degree to which mass media are failing us in all of this. And it is a big problem, because it is structural. It's not just that most media outlets only speak babytalk. And it's not just that they promote the short-term interests of their corporate owners and advertisers, though they do. More importantly, it's that conflict, consumerism and the relentless validation of individualism are built into the DNA of electric media as it has developed since the mid-20th century.

So, of course, we have a hard time getting climate change stories on TV, because TV is mostly paid for by automobile manufacturers. But, the more crucial issue is that we have executives, even in public television, who value the "debate" about global warming over the truth about it, because they think the argument makes "good TV." And we have the entire apparatus dedicated to fanning our insecurities and flattering our vanities. Because, above all, the bias of mass media is to be liked. And if all you want is to be liked, you will say whatever you think your audience wants to hear. We have known all of this for a long time. Newton Minnow gave his "vast wasteland" speech in 1961. Neil Postman wrote *Amusing Ourselves To Death* in 1985. The Internet has altered some things, for better and for worse, but I think the tropes promoted by mass media still dominate the global psyche.

Obviously, within media organizations, there are individuals who are smarter and braver than most. If there were not, most documentaries would never get made. But those folks struggle within a paradigm that is outdated and inherently destructive. Again, McLuhan was right. We shape our tools and then they shape us. We need to reshape our discourse into something that actually affirms life. And we need to do that fast.

We are in a race between darkness and light, in every sector of society. It's easy to imagine, in the long run, both success and failure.

You ask about the consequences of failure over the next decades. As you know, a very credible scientist in *Spaceship Earth* raises the possibility of total global extinction within 50 years. What keeps me working is my belief that the worst need not happen. We can save ourselves—and have a fun time doing it—if we simply muster the courage and reason to embrace all the obvious paradigm shifts that are implied in the meme "Spaceship Earth." POV

Marc Glassman is the editor of *POV* and senior programmer at the Planet in Focus environmental film festival.

Kevin McMahon has directed nine feature documentaries. He wrote and co-directed the ten-hour *The Polar Sea* and has produced many hours of non-fiction television. Kevin has had a retrospective at Hot Docs, received the Earth Prize from the Tokyo Film Festival and been named a Canadian Eco Hero by Planet in Focus.

Film Review: 'Future Baby'

May 11, 2016 by: Catherine Bray



In vitro fertilization and related procedures are emotive subjects continually being re-shaped by advances at the scalpel-sharp edge of science; as such, the topic could provide fertile ground for polemic delivered from every angle. Writer-director Maria Arlamovsky avoids this approach in "Future Baby" by giving airtime to a wide range of expert sources, who unfold the issues in layman's terms, generally as dispassionately as possible, making this a decent primer for anybody thinking of dipping a cautious toe in the world of medically-assisted baby-making.
The film's classical approach to the documentary form — talking head vignettes are interspersed with footage of subjects at work — would make it accessible to a broad TV audience, though its stoic avoidance of sensationalism may count against it in a world of networks fixated on generating hashtag chatter.

Coming on like an exemplary term paper from a student who is consistently top of his class, Arlamovsky's "Future Baby" is meticulous in its research and range of contributors presented. Interviewees include doctors, embryologists, CEOs, journalists, would-be parents, egg donors, academics, a young woman born via IVF, a bioethicist, a biotechnologist and a sociologist. It's a thorough selection. The focus is on expertise rather than emotion, with the majority of contributors delivering professional opinions in a diplomatic register.

There are moments which despite their low-key delivery, retain the power to shock. A visit to the My Donor Cycle Agency, which is outfitted in a way more reminiscent of a luxury spa than a medical center, offers a glimpse into a version of consumer choice that would feel right at home in "Brave New World." An anonymous would-be father on a Skype call with an IVF center is walked through pictures of photogenic egg donors in a manner evoking a high-end dating service. One prospective donor, an attractive young Berkeley graduate hoping to pay off her student loan, is rejected by the caller for being perhaps "a little heavy." The center employee demurs flimsily, suggesting that because so many of their donors are model-thin, he might be having trouble assessing her by normal standards.

Of the experts on offer, bioethicist Carmel Shalev stands out as she outlines a concise but effective summary of historical and contemporary issues, beginning by drawing our attention to the 1970s position, where medical intervention in reproduction involved the freedom to choose not to become pregnant, not to continue with a pregnancy and not to unduly risk the life of mother or child via unsafe childbirth. She sets this in stark contrast to the current interpretation of "the right to parenthood" as less the right to attempt parenthood than an unalienable, almost consumerist right to a child, tracing a spectrum from wish to desire to need to entitlement, and asking audiences to consider where their own emotions in regard to parenthood sit on this spectrum.

Where the doc sometimes falls short given the subject matter is in its emotional engagement. The filmmakers have done their homework, and have clearly been resolute in their attempt to be fully inclusive of a broad range of perspectives, but the result is that the film reads as somewhat encyclopedic in tone. We taste snippets of each experience and rarely revisit a character once their minute or two in the spotlight is done, with the result that even the most engaging of the human interest stories feels abbreviated. An exception to the generally clinical approach is a surrogate's caesarean delivery filmed from above, a sort of god's-eye view of a relatively new form of creation.

Broadcasters with an interest in efficiently made and ethically sound feature-length docs on hot-button topics could consider acquisition; it's not a picture likely or perhaps even intended to spark a theatrical rights bidding war, but makes for a solid intro to the contemporary world of IVF.

The Globe and Mail – May 11, 2016 (1 of 2)

Smith: What's behind our sudden fascination with immortality?

May 11, 2016 by: **RUSSELL SMITH**

Immortality is big in culture right now. It's something that people in both technology and art are thinking about, in strangely yearning ways.

Don DeLillo's new novel, *Zero K*, concerns a brilliant billionaire tech mogul (something of a stock character in DeLillo, now – compare *Cosmopolis*) who is seeking a way to prolong his terminally ill wife's life. He has developed cryogenics – freezing – to preserve her and other wealthy volunteers indefinitely, until a cure for their illnesses can be found. The book contains much philosophical debate about the value of such an endeavour, and the value of death itself, set amid the mogul's remote yet futuristic compound, a Google-like place of believers in technology (similarly imagined by Jonathan Franzen in *Purity* and Dave Eggers in *The Circle*). The place is called the Convergence – a word that recalls both the exuberance of technologists and the myths of the religious. Indeed, at the Convergence, there are monk-like spiritual guides to help the patients contemplate their transition. The super-rich who can afford to experiment with the new technology plan to be "chemically induced" to expire, and then, when they are resurrected, to have their memories and knowledge reimplanted in them – the way you put new software on a computer.

One fixation of everyone at the Convergence is apocalyptic disaster on Earth. Their only entertainment is video recreations of floods and tornadoes on massive screens. The charismatic leader of this research wants to hasten his own death, although he is perfectly healthy, at a special unit called Zero K. It's a kind of suicide cult to achieve immortality – and avoid the inevitable chaos of reality.

Meanwhile, in real life, an actual millionaire tech genius, the real Google's chief engineer, Ray Kurzweil, has just given a long interview with Playboy in which he rhapsodizes about the potential of new technology to create real human immortality and the positive value of such a development. He himself has made plans to have himself frozen, as with DeLillo's characters, at the time of his death, with a view to being resurrected when technology permits. "I regard death as the greatest tragedy," he says. "People talk about getting used to death and accepting it, but the end of each life is a terrible loss, like the Library of Alexandria burning down. All that information, all their skills, their personality, their memories are gone." Note how his vision of the human personality or soul is as an information bank, a particularly computer-influenced conception.

Kurzweil's equivalent of the Convergence is the Singularity – the moment at which technology becomes so advanced that pretty much all human problems are wiped out, and we are transfigured into radically different kinds of beings, sort of cyborg angels. It is a concept not unlike the Rapture, and it is obviously as bananas as the culty beliefs of DeLillo's characters, but this guy is so articulate and so charming – so basically content about the world – that one can allow oneself to be pleasantly lulled by such a fantasy. (Kurzweil places the coming rapture, sorry Singularity, at exactly 2045 – just like the people with sandwich boards in public squares who tell you on what day the world will end.)

A documentary film just had its premiere at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto. *How To Build A Time Machine*, the work of filmmaker Jay Cheel, is a strange and incoherent little document of two middle-aged men with loosely related obsessions: One of them wants to build a perfect recreation of a movie prop – the machine from the 1960 movie *The Time Machine*, based on the H.G. Wells novel – and the other is a theoretical physicist who thinks he may have effected a kind of time travel in a lab, on a microscopic scale, using lasers that push particles around. The weak connection between the two men is that they both regret a death in their past – a best friend, a father – and are preoccupied with what they might have done to prevent the death; they both wonder if time travel to the past might have been a remedy for death itself. (Compared to the protagonist of *Zero K* who seeks immortality as a way of avoiding the loss of a loved one.) The 80s synthpop song *Forever Young* by Alphaville booms symbolically at one point.

Why this sudden ascendancy of yearning for immortality now? Is it simply because immortality of a medical sort might be imminent, a result of technological advances, such as nanobots, that will fight

disease in our bloodstream? Or is it because, as Ray Kurzweil implies, digital technology is now so advanced that we have already left our bodies behind? We already live outside them, and our digital selves will outlive them. ("I mean," says Kurzweil, "this little Android phone I'm carrying on my belt is not yet inside my physical body, but that's an arbitrary distinction.")

The frequently quoted axiom of Arthur C. Clarke – "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" – is pertinent to this current fascination with life without end. We are now perceiving technology as not just magic but as god-like, as life-giving, as representing an entirely new plane of being.

And mixed with this is a terrible sorrow – the crippling fear of saying goodbye.

The Hollywood Reporter

'God Knows Where I Am': Film Review

11:42 AM PDT 5/13/2016 by John DeFore



Courtesy God Knows Where I Am

An uncommonly artful investigation of personal tragedy. TWITTER

Veteran producers Todd and Jedd Wider direct their first feature doc.

The discovery of a woman's dead body in a New Hampshire farmhouse creates a sad, strange mystery in *God Knows Where I Am*, the directing debut of brothers Jedd and Todd Wider. Producers of award-winning docs by Alex Gibney and others, the Widers apply great artistic ambition to a story few would handle in this manner, resulting in a haunting film that deserves the special jury prize it was awarded at Hot Docs. Though its slow-building revelations present challenges to those who'd like to recommend it to friends, the picture will play very well with non-fiction audiences and have special value to advocates for the homeless and the mentally ill.

Opening with a dramatically illuminated shot of an apple tree, the movie quickly distances itself from the kind of TV news-magazine aesthetic viewers may expect. Throughout, the Widers and DP Gerardo Puglia (shooting on 35mm and other formats) will linger carefully over the few places and objects that made up their subject's whole world for the last months of her life.

That subject is Linda Bishop, whose story was told in a very different fashion by Rachel Aviv in *The New Yorker* five years ago. There, readers immediately knew crucial facts about Bishop's life. Here, though, we work backwards: discovering her unidentified body in the house she'd been squatting in, and hearing from the policeman who found two spiral notebooks beside her makeshift bed. The journals were addressed "to whomever finds my body"; they said at the outset that her death was the result of domestic abuse.

How did such abuse leave her in a vacant house owned by strangers, where she hid from locals during the day and scavenged apples — her only food for several months — at night? The film proceeds as if it thinks hearing "the answer" too quickly would give us a false belief that we understood the question. Instead, the Widers focus on getting us into Linda's head. We hear from her relatives and friends, who describe a bright, gregarious student of art. More importantly, we hear directly from her, as an offscreen Lori Singer reads Bishop's day-by-day account of her solitary final months.

Linda is appreciative of the home she has found, noting its pastoral details (she marvels at "a cardinal and a chickadee on top of a lilac") and meticulously accounting for the apples she harvests. She explores things left behind by the house's previous residents, and the film shares her curiosity, going to interview its owners and combing through old photo albums. But loneliness and need creep into the journals, and slowly we begin to hear about the person Linda is expecting to find her in this house.

As it gets into the literal details of how Linda wound up here, the film raises concerns about America's health care policies that are more pressing thanks to the roundabout way we've gotten to them. But the film is too invested in the personal to get very political. At its heart, it remains a quiet elegy for a woman who needn't have died so soon, or so alone.

Production company: Wider Film Projects

Directors-Producers: Jedd Wider, Todd Wider

Director of photography: Gerardo Puglia

Editor: Keiko Deguchi

Composers: Robert Logan and Ivor Guest

Additional Music by: Paul Cantelon and Moshe Knoll

Venue: Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival

100 minutes

The Hollywood Reporter

‘Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest’: Hot Docs Review

2:55 PM PDT 5/14/2016 by Sheri Linden



Courtesy of Oktober Oy

A fascinating historical chapter, inventively told. TWITTER

Katja Gauriloff’s nonfiction feature revolves around the bond between a Swiss writer and a semi-nomadic tribe in Arctic Finland.

Family chronicles, European history and ancient legends merge poetically in the sublime documentary *Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest*. Filmmaker Katja Gauriloff, a Lapland native and member of the indigenous Skolt Sami people, has not only uncovered delightful archival material about a nearly lost culture, but she also has created something that itself feels handmade and lovingly aged.

The title of her film refers to its two key figures: Kaisa Gauriloff, the filmmaker’s great-grandmother, and the little-remembered Swiss writer Robert Crottet, who lived with the Skolt Sami in the late 1930s and published several books on their lore, including *The Enchanted Forest*, a collection of traditional stories he learned from Kaisa.

With its unusual subject matter, evocative vintage footage (shot by Crottet and his life partner, Enrique Mendez) and delicate charcoal drawings and animation, the pic could find an art-house welcome after its festival travels.

Crottet's connection to the Skolt Sami, a fishing, reindeer-herding, semi-nomadic people in the far north of Finland, went beyond the ethnographic to the mystical. It began before he knew anything about them: While recovering from tuberculosis, he had fever dreams in which figures from a "Tribe of Lapland" appeared. Compelled to find them, the young playwright made his way to Helsinki in 1938, and from there to the Arctic village of Suenjel, a place he described as the "threshold to eternity."

Welcomed by the 30 families in the tribe's winter settlement, Crottet forged a particularly strong bond with Kaisa. The Russian language was probably an entry point for their friendship; born in Russia, he was a native speaker, while Kaisa had learned the language as a monastery servant. By the time he's conversant in her endangered tongue, it's clear that they also share the language of metaphor, and a poet's view of life. Asked by Crottet why she painted the neck of one sheep blue, she responds, "Blue is her favorite color."

In the footage of Kaisa and other Skolts at work and play, fluently excerpted by Gauriloff and editor Timo Peltola, their affinity to nature comes through with quiet jubilance. Kaisa's impish spirit is evident whether she's singing, dancing with children or knitting.

But while the Skolts' lives are peaceful and harmonious, their legends are filled with the bloody violence of all good fairy tales. Gauriloff weaves one such tale into the film, narrated by Kaisa and illustrated by Veronika Bessedina's animated drawings, in black-and-white with subtle tinges of color (like much of the film). An origin story about the Northern Lights, it involves a forbidden forest, magic trees, marriage, murder and cannibalism.

And the historical saga that Gauriloff traces has its own dark undertow, as war takes its toll on the Skolt Sami way of life. (In a remarkable synchronicity that the film accentuates to eloquent effect, Mahatma Gandhi visited the asylum where Crottet was treated for TB, speaking of peace as Europe prepared for conflict.) After the Finns lost the 1939-40 Battle of Petsamo to the Soviet Union, the Skolts were forced off their land and relocated to another part of Finland, where they were regarded as Russkies and exposed to disease. Crottet, then in England and a published writer, jumped into action to help the people he loved and whose traditions he probably knew better than any other European.

Gauriloff doesn't explain the Tibetan roots of the Skolt Sami, but through the lens of Crottet's story and Kaisa's storytelling, she captures the sense of the last years of their "golden era." Her finely crafted film celebrates a lost world and a forgotten artist, and will likely send viewers searching for Crottet's books.

For all its antique sensibility, the documentary is an ever-timely look at the struggle to maintain cultural identity in the face of political power.

Today the Skolt Sami number in the hundreds, and most of them don't speak their native tongue. But they're not forgotten; in October 2015, the archive of the Suenjel Skolt Sami community, which encompasses documents from the 17th and 18th centuries, was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, joining such rarefied company as the Magna Carta and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.

Production: Oktober Oy
Director-screenwriter: Katja Gauriloff
Producers: Joonas Berghall, Satu Majava
Directors of photography: Heikki Farm, Enrique Mendez
Editor: Timo Peltola
Composer: Timo Peltola
Sound designers: Timo Peltola, Jukka Nurmela
Animation: Veronika Bessedina
Sales: Oktober Oy

Not rated, 80 minutes

The Hollywood Reporter

‘Future Baby’: Hot Docs Review

9:31 AM PDT 5/16/2016 by Sheri Linden



Courtesy of NGF Nikolaus Geyrhalter Filmproduktion

Clear-eyed and provocative. TWITTER

A documentarian explores the 21st-century science of making babies.

Are babies becoming a commodity? That’s one of the unsettling questions posed by *Future Baby*, Maria Arlamovsky’s frontline report on the state of reproductive medicine. The Vienna-based filmmaker traveled the world to speak with people directly involved in or affected by the new world of baby-making, among them physicians, researchers, patients and egg donors. From microscopic views of in vitro fertilization to the tangled delivery-room dynamics of a surrogate pregnancy, she’s compiled a wide-ranging and incisive look at the ways that a fundamental aspect of being human is changing.

Both proselytizers and skeptics figure in the well-reported, elegantly shot documentary, whose multiple perspectives contribute to an eye-opening study. Beyond the mechanics and economics of the various procedures, Arlamovsky is exceptionally attuned to each situation’s often unspoken emotions, whether it’s a 49-year-old woman’s anguished longing for a child or a twentysomething’s soul-deep sadness in knowing that the identity of her sperm-donor father will forever remain a mystery.

Following the fertility tourism trail, the director speaks with a German couple on their last-hope visit to a Spanish clinic — a heartbreaking portrait of anxiety, hope and denial — and tracks the cross-border progress between American parents-to-be and the Mexican surrogate who's carrying their child, a product of the husband's sperm and the egg of a "19-year-old Brazilian model," as the wife describes her.

The shopping aspect of reproductive medicine comes through loud and clear: Couples take out loans for the procedures, à la home improvement financing; on urgent phone calls with clients, clinics offer sales spiels in the form of medical advice; and a few feet from where a low-income Mexican woman has just given birth to their son, an American couple smile for a doctor's video camera and offer a promotional endorsement of the clinic's services.

The class divide is implicit in the film's various scenarios, but only Carl Djerassi (who died in 2015) addresses the matter directly in terms of access and insurance coverage. Speaking in his Vienna office, the developer of the contraceptive pill also suggests a radical way for young women to liberate themselves from their biological clocks.

But radical is in the eye of the beholder. Arlamovsky balances the mission statements of clinicians with the probing questions of bioethicist Carmel Shalev and sociologist Barbara Katz-Rothman. The former illuminates the way that having a child has morphed from "desire to need to entitlement." Katz-Rothman sounds an alarm over the genetic engineering aspect of this emerging form of consumerism, and the normalization of decisions over which lives are worthy of creation.

With cosmetic considerations and gender selection becoming more accepted — and defended by the zygote-manipulating doctors — the sociologist's comments have a potent clarity, especially when she zeroes in on the illusion of control that's a byproduct of reproductive technologies. Katz-Rothman reminds us of the "wild chance" involved in bringing a child into the world. From a different perspective, so does a delighted, but understandably tired, New York couple whose gamble on surrogacy resulted in triplets. Arlamovsky's strong film gives one of their adorable infants the last word.

Production: Nikolaus Geyrhalter Filmproduktion
Director-screenwriter: Maria Arlamovsky
Producers: Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Markus Glaser, Michael Kitzberger, Wolfgang Widerhofer
Director of photography: Sebastian Arlamovsky
Editor: Natalie Schwager
Composers: Vincent Pongracz, Alana Newman
Sales: Autlook Filmsales

Not rated, 92 minutes

NATIONAL POST

League of Exotique Dancers brings back burlesque and reminds us why it's always better to dance naked



Sadaf Ahsan | May 19, 2016 | Last Updated: May 20 11:30 AM ET

More from Sadaf Ahsan | @_canadawhore



GATOne of the many vivacious former burlesque dancers featured in Rama Rau's documentary.

League of Exotique Dancers
Rating:
Director: Rama Rau
Writing Credit: Rama Rau
Cast: Delilah Jones, Holiday O'Hara, Toni Elling, etc.
Rated: 14A
Genre: Documentary
Duration: 90 minutes
Synopsis: A look at the burlesque dancers who made it an art and a business, as they reunite to perform at the Hall of Fame.

Personal definitions of feminism have never been hard to gather from the opinionated, but when it comes to actually exemplifying what feminism means to women of a certain age, class and industry, no one has done it better than the burlesque dancers of the ’50s and ’60s.

League of Exotique Dancers, which opened Hot Docs this year in Toronto, gives the women who pioneered the freewheeling sexuality we enjoy today on dimly lit nightclub stages the due they deserve for being the first to own the female body.

Provocative, yet tastefully done, Rama Rau's sensuous exploration of vintage burlesque brings into focus the first stars of burlesque dancing. Now much older, but not any less glamorous, Delilah Jones, Judith Stein, Lovey Goldmine, Holiday O'Hara and Toni Elling still have a particular knack for wooing the camera with an effortless endearing quality.

These were the original strippers, unique and brazen, who danced behind the mask of pasties as an art form, with routines that had to consistently stay fresh, and keep the audience both awake and aroused. But the glittery world of burlesque was not without its dark underbelly of poverty, racism and sexism, which often prevented dancers of colour and less privilege from earning equal opportunities.



GAT

According to Gina Bon Bon, dancing was "show business," which "is like a drug and you will always be addicted to it." Indeed, Rau crafts her documentary to show us that only the most headstrong persevered and made a name for themselves by bringing us to the present where the dancers of yore find themselves reuniting 50 years later in Las Vegas for the Legends of Burlesque Hall of Fame.

Clad in bejewelled bras and faux fur throws, the dancers still idolize various feminine icons, from Marilyn Monroe to Rose La Rose, the "queen of burlesque." And remarkably, they're still as game as ever, ready to relive their unforgettable pasts on the stage.

With routines that involve “making love to the curtain” and sashaying in a portable bathtub, we get glimpses of the not-so-simple (it turns out) dance routines that gave way to everything from the evolution of sexuality to Dita Von Teese’s classic martini glass.

“Feminism wasn’t about burning your bra and not shaving your legs, it was shaving your legs and working in a bar as a sex object, but knowing that you were and not trading your soul and your pussy for a wedding ring,” says former dancer Judith Stein, with a proud grin, one that each of the women in the infectious cast of League of Exotique Dancers shares.

Their collective past may have once been taboo, but the ways in which they reclaimed the feminine mystique and controlled the way they used their bodies serve for evergreen lessons for women on what it means to be proud of what you have and how you choose to use it.

But perhaps the best takeaway comes from Stein, who once ruled the Canadian nightclub scene: “One of the nicest things you can do for your body, if you’re so inclined, is put on some music and dance. If you can dance naked? Even better!”

The Hollywood Reporter – May 19, 2016 (1 of 2)

'The Apology': Hot Docs Review

10:20 AM PDT 5/19/2016 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs

This powerful documentary is alternately harrowing and uplifting, and always emotionally devastating. TWITTER

Tiffany Hsiung's documentary profiles three elderly "comfort women" who were forced into sex slavery by the Japanese army during World War II.

They should sell Kleenex instead of popcorn at theaters showing Tiffany Hsiung's harrowing documentary profiling three elderly survivors who served as sexual slaves — better known by the horrific euphemism "comfort women" — to the Japanese army during World War II. Depicting the emotional trauma that follows them to this day as well as their indomitable spirit, *The Apology* is a simultaneously heartbreaking and uplifting, devastatingly powerful experience. Recently showcased at Toronto's Hot Docs, it's the sort of documentary that proves Oscar catnip.

More than 200,000 young girls across Asia were forced into prostitution by the Japanese Imperial Army; the film includes footage of a current Japanese politician saying that sex slaves were "necessary" during the war. At one of the weekly protests in front of South Korea's Japanese embassy that have been held since 1992, men are seen hurling insults and epithets at the elderly women, calling them "whores."

Read More Hot Docs: Norway's 'Brothers' Doc Diary Takes Top Jury Prize

The goal of the women and their supporters is to extract an apology from the Japanese government, and time is running out.

"If we all die, who are they going to apologize to?" one asks.

(Since the filming, the Japanese government has issued an apology, albeit not a particularly convincing one, since no funds have yet been committed to make restitution.)

The film profiles three such women, all in their 80s and 90s and affectionately given the moniker "Grandma." Grandma Adela of the Philippines never told her late husband and family about her past. "They would be ashamed of me, I know," she says. One of the film's most moving scenes shows the aftermath of her finally revealing her secret to her grown son, who responds with soothing tenderness. Grandma Cao of China, the eldest of the trio, is cared for by her adopted daughter. And Grandma Gil of South Korea has dedicated her life to the struggle, sacrificing her ease and health to speak at and participate in rallies. She was taken at age 13 and forced into sex slavery for several years. By the time she was finally released, she was unable to rejoin or even contact her family in the now-divided country.

Read More 'Credit for Murder': Hot Docs Review

The Apology features one gut-wrenching scene after another, such as Grandma Adela nervously visiting the ruins of the former "comfort station" in which she was held prisoner, or Grandma Gil describing how she gave birth to two children in captivity, both of whom died horrible deaths.

But the filmmaker also cannily infuses the deeply emotional proceedings with welcome doses of humor that briefly alleviate the tension, such as when one of the elderly women's sons brings her beef jerky, much to the horror of her caretaker.

But it's the fortitude of the film's subjects that truly takes your breath away. "I will keep talking until the day I die," declares Grandma Gil at one of the rallies. That she's keeping her promise was made evident by her appearance at the film's world premiere, where there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Venue: Hot Docs
Production: National Film Board of Canada
Director-screenwriter: Tiffany Hsiung
Executive producer: Anita Lee
Directors of photography: Tiffany Hsiung, Iris Ng
Editor: Mary Stephen
Composer: Lesley Barber

Not rated, 105 minutes

The Hollywood Reporter – May 20, 2016 (1 of 2)

'The Pearl': Hot Docs Review

12:13 PM PDT 5/20/2016 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs
The real 'Transparent.' TWITTER

Jessica Dimmock and Christopher LaMarca's documentary profiles four transgender women in the Pacific Northwest.

The transgender community has experienced no shortage of media attention lately, but Jessica Dimmock and Christopher LaMarca's documentary, which intimately examines the lives of four transgender women in the Pacific Northwest, is a powerful addition to the growing body of

cinematic work on the subject. Recently showcased at Toronto's Hot Docs festival, *The Pearl* should easily attract wider exposure, especially on cable and public television.

The subjects, ranging in age from their forties to their seventies, are a disparate lot who share one thing in common, which is having finally embraced their true identities after many years of hiding. Amy, 72, whose wife of 46 years died three years ago, uses the house they shared as a shelter for trans women with no other place to go, supporting them on her small pension. She travels to Thailand for gender reassignment surgery, and is clearly thrilled by the results.

"Nice and empty between my legs," she observes after the operation. "I don't have that stupid dingle-dangle."

Read More 'The Apology': Hot Docs Review

Nina, 67, is a retired architect married for 35 years whose wife and children have no idea of her other identity. Hiding her women's clothing in a locked box in her garage, she only dares to put it on in a deserted parking late at night.

There there's siblings Jodi, 49, and Krystal, 47, whose story is so unbelievable a screenwriter would be reluctant to create it. The two brothers had shared a trailer together for many years, with Jodi finally coming out to her sibling even though afraid that she would lose her sole remaining family member by doing so. Instead, Krystal, a Gulf War veteran, tells her that she, too, is transgender. Krystal subsequently decides to fully disclose her new identity to the community, including her VA doctors, while Jodi is too fearful to follow her example.

The Pearl is being described as "immersive," meaning that it attempts to fully immerse the viewer in the lives of its subjects while providing no external narration, talking heads, etc. The filmmakers certainly achieve their goal, with often moving results. But the approach has its drawbacks, with the lengthy scenes featuring the four women going about their lives, including such mundane activities as going for a swim, sometimes resulting in tedium. It turns out that watching someone display their vacation photos is as boring on film as it is in real life.

Read More 'League of Exotique Dancers': Hot Docs Review

Still, there are many powerful moments, and one can't help but empathize with the four women as they experience their travails and triumphs. Their courage is often astonishing, as is their outlook, such as the sage advice delivered by one the subjects, comparing transgender people to oysters, which gives the film its title: "You gotta find that pearl and forget the shell."

Venue: Hot Docs
Production: Dimmock LaMarca LLC
Directors/directors of photography: Jessica Dimmock, Christopher LaMarca
Producers: Jessica Dimmock, Kate Barry
Executive producers: Dan Cogan, Jenny Raskin, John Hoffman, Alice Van Couvering
Editor: Fiona Otway
Composers: Grey McMurray, Caleb Burnhans, Julianna Barwick
Not rated, 94 minutes

The Hollywood Reporter – May 25, 2016 (1 of 2)

'The Happy Film': Film Review

11:25 AM PDT 5/25/2016 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs

This self-indulgent doc won't so much make you happy as just mildly amused. TWITTER

Grammy Award-winning graphic designer Stefan Sagmeister chronicles his efforts at finding happiness in his debut documentary.

In my experience, happy people tend not to be obsessed with happiness … or themselves. So it's not surprising that Stefan Sagmeister's quest for happiness, depicted at great length in his debut documentary, turns out not so well. Recently showcased at Toronto's Hot Docs festival, *The Happy Film* is the sort of exercise in self-indulgence that would have members of the Greatest Generation tearing their hair out.

Not that his story lacks entertainment value. Sagmeister is a highly successful graphic designer and artist, a two-time Grammy Award winner for his innovative album cover designs for artists including The Rolling Stones and Jay-Z. His film, seven years in the making and co-directed by Ben Nabors and the late Hillman Curtis, is an offshoot of his hugely popular conceptual art exhibit, *Happy Show*, seen all over the world.

Read More 'The Pearl': Hot Docs Review

For all his material success, Sagmeister is clearly not a happy camper. The doc chronicles his efforts to alleviate his depression through three succeeding methods: meditation, therapy and drugs, with the process monitored by psychologist Jonathan Haidt, whose books include *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*.

Meditation does not do the trick for the filmmaker, despite the gorgeous scenery in Bali, where he attended a retreat. He complains of boredom and back pain during his months-long stay, although vacation-starved viewers will mostly be green with envy.

Therapy, at the hands of the no-nonsense Dr. Sheenah Hankin, doesn't do much for him either. The psychotherapist who specializes in cognitive therapy advises her patient not to avoid conflict, and to do things that make him uncomfortable. To that end, he engages in such exercises as introducing himself to strange women on the street, which in New York City is more likely to result in an altercation than a coffee date.

But lo and behold, drugs, in the form of anti-depressants, do the trick. "I love big pharma!" Sagmeister exclaims. It doesn't hurt that shortly after beginning his drug therapy program he meets and falls in love with a gorgeous, much younger woman who reciprocates his ardor. Asked by his cameraman how he's feeling, Sagmeister tells him he's "almost recklessly happy." That is, until the relationship ends and he's once again brought to his emotional knees.

Read More 'The Apology': Hot Docs Review

The Happy Film doesn't exactly provide depth to its provocative subject, and there are weird omissions in its storytelling. For instance, the untimely death of its original co-director is only briefly alluded to. Another problem is that Sagmeister isn't nearly as charming as he seems to think he is, which limits our interest in whether he's happy or not.

The film's main strength — not surprisingly, considering its subject's avocation — is its visual ingenuity. From its striking animal-themed opening credits to its use of bunraku puppetry to such whimsical sequences as Sagmeister being lifted into the sky by a giant balloon, *The Happy Film* makes clear that Sagmeister is happiest when he's practicing his craft.

Venue: Hot Docs
Production: So So Productions
Directors: Stefan Sagmeister, Ben Nabors, Hillman Curtis
Producer: Ben Nabors
Director of photography: Ben Wolf
Editors: Sam Citron, Akiko Iwakawa-Grieve
Compoer: Colin Huebert

Not rated, 95 minutes

The Hollywood Reporter – May 31, 2016 (1 of 2)

'Zimbelism': Hot Docs Review

10:08 AM PDT 5/31/2016 by Frank Scheck



Courtesy of Hot Docs

An illuminating portrait of a too-little-known photographer artist. TWITTER

Jean-Francois Gratton's and Matt Zimbel's documentary recounts the life and career of the renowned street photographer.

Unless you're an ardent photography buff, you're not likely familiar with the name George Zimbel. But you've undoubtedly seen some of the gorgeous and evocative images created by the veteran 86-year-old photog who has been practicing his craft for more than seven decades. Fascinatingly chronicling its subject's life and career while extensively showcasing his work, *Zimbelism*, recently featured at Toronto's Hot Docs festival, should find receptive audiences in art houses and on cable and public television.

Co-directed by Jean-Francois Gratton and Matt Zimbel (the photographer's son, a jazz musician who also contributed much of the bouncy score via his band, Manteca), the film relates how Zimbel is one of the last of a dying breed of street photographers who still use black-and-white 35mm film. The photographer has little use for modern digital cameras with the ability to produce a plethora of images that he colorfully describes as "digital diarrhea."

Read More 'The Legacy of Frida Kahlo': Hot Docs Review

Zimbel began his career as a photographer and photo editor for Columbia University's student newspaper. He soon became a member of New York City's legendary Photo League (active from 1936 to 1951), where he formed friendships with such contemporaries as Edward Steichen, Berenice Abbott and Garry Winogrand.

Deeply socially conscious, Zimbel specialized in street photography, often capturing provocative images without his subjects' knowledge. He now points out that the style has become increasingly difficult to practice due to more stringent privacy laws and increased litigation.

The profusion of NYC newspapers in the '40s and '50s provided him with steady employment. Among his more memorable subjects were Marilyn Monroe, photographed as she was shooting the famous subway-grate scene in *The Seven Year Itch*; Harry S. Truman, whom Zimbel photographed extensively during his post-presidential years; and John F. Kennedy. It's a picture of the latter and his wife, Jacqueline, smiling and waving from a car during their ill-fated trip to Texas, that provides the documentary with its most dramatic element, namely the lengthy legal battle between Zimbel and *The New York Times* over that and other images of which they both claim ownership. We hear numerous alternately funny and painful excerpts from the letters between Zimbel and the *Times*' lawyer, although the decks are a bit stacked by having the latter recited by an actress in an officious, condescending tone.

Read More 'Credit for Murder': Hot Docs Review

Fortunately, Zimbel has not allowed the legal wrangling to overshadow his passion for his work. "I'm a visually upbeat person," he says at one point, and the evidence is in his deeply humanistic images that make the documentary a particular joy to watch on the big screen. And when his prestigious career is finally given the attention it deserves, with major exhibitions in museums in Europe and Montreal, you'll be celebrating just as happily as the photographer himself.

Venue: Hot Docs, Toronto

Production: Bunbury Films

Distributor: National Film Board of Canada

Directors/screenwriters/producers: Matt Zimbel, Jean-Francois Gratton

Executive producer: Frederic Bohbot

Editor: Annie Leclair

Composers: Manteca and Doug Wilde

Not rated, 90 minutes