

A Feast of Films

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violence. This film gives this particular family a place of respect and challenges the dominant narrative about African American life by holding up the mirror of truth. I really hope this empathetic film finds a platform and an audience.

“Step” was the best of the three documentaries I saw about school life. Amanda Lipitz, directing her first feature-length documentary, chooses to follow the senior year of the first graduating class at the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women, which aims to successfully place all its students into college and to equip them to succeed there. The film focuses on three young women and on the dance team to which they are all devoted. It provides useful windows into the struggles that are typical of African American girls and the amount of fight and sheer luck it takes for even those in such supportive environments to aspire and reach goals beyond survival. The role that dance plays for these girls is also important, planting into their bodies a sense of determination and expression they didn’t know they possessed. I’m not completely sure the filmmaker knows what she has here, but she handles her young subjects with care and respect so that the film doesn’t feel exploitive as other such films do. It is headed for a theatrical release (I just saw a preview for it in a theater this weekend) and is worth watching for.

“An Insignificant Man” is a fascinating window into Indian politics, following the insurgent campaign of Arvind Kejriwal for political office in New Delhi. A

tax official, turned activist, turned politician, Kejriwal is a polarizing figure, fighting against corruption amidst criticism that he is himself is arrogant and controlling. The film follows two years in which he headed the formation of the Common Man’s Party and an anti-corruption movement that certainly appears necessary. Unassuming and compelling, the fascinating mixture of his alliance with another anti-corruption politician with whom he later splits, as well as various dramatic events, leave viewers to wonder where the truth

access to police and officials carrying out their jobs, and elects to simply show rather than using talking heads to tell the story. In many ways, the real life action is an effective choice, forcing viewers to struggle with how difficult it is to evaluate which police and leadership choices are the most defensible and the soundest. On the other hand, the film’s dispassionate tack may increase the possibility that viewers will simply project and then take away the same perspective they brought into the theater. Still, it’s interesting to watch an apparently well-meaning, new police chief earnestly express fairly solid ideas

geous” (available now online on YouTube Red) is a pleasant but not particularly illuminating look at the life and transition of a transgender online personality. In his early years, Greg Lazzarato, the second of three brothers in a loving middle-class family, was an ebullient character and diving champion. At age 14, he established an online presence, coming out as gay and dispensing makeup tips as Gregory Gorgeous. After the passing of his beloved mother, he began transitioning to female, a process which is documented here. Gigi is pleasant and warm, but because she has such a loving family and significant

ered up, but it would help to know more than I did about the context of the crimes. The film opens with a description of the discovery of a truck filled with bodies at the bottom of the Danube and continues narrating the discovery of mass graves. The narration consists of voices of those who unearth these finds, and also people who were witnesses or victims or perpetrators of the tragedies they reveal. The filming itself is mostly of barren landscapes connected to the sites, which gives the film an apocalyptic feel but also diminishes its impact, especially since American audiences will be reading the narration in subtitle form. Worth seeking out if you are interested in this particular set of war tragedies; though they are typical of what happens in war, this film is a bit hard for someone outside Serbian culture to access for its full impact.

“Storyboard P, a stranger in Sweden” follows a talented street dancer to Sweden, where he dances and teaches and hustles and refuses to compromise in even the smallest way in deference to his art. He’s a wonder when he dances, but both he and this film are intermittently exasperating in their disdain for practical reality and refusal to engage with who is bearing the costs of Storyboard P’s choices. I always want to root for art, but this particular example sometimes made that difficult, especially since the filmmaker doesn’t add much insight to the exercise.

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Tayla Solomon (from left) Cori Granger and Blessin Giraldo from the documentary “Step.”

of Kerjiwal’s own capacity to bring change may lie. Follow the film at insignificantman.com.

“The Force,” which won a documentary directing prize at Sundance, is a two-year look at the Oakland Police Department during a period in which it was under federal monitoring and pressure to reform. Director Peter Nicks was given unprecedented

at reform and then blink when he has to make a particularly difficult moral choice; and then to watch a similar transformation in a well-meaning mayor. There are a lot of questions raised and not answered in the film, but that approach offers some benefits for deepening understanding of this complex topic.

“This is Everything: Gigi Gor-

means, her story feels more like that of Kaitlyn Jenner (whom she admires) than that of most transgender people -- and she is not insightful enough to add much self-reflection or insight in the retelling.

“Depth Two” probes deeply for the truth of war atrocities in Serbia soon after they are cov-



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MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY

24
Library of Congress established (1800)
Pigs-in-a-Blanket Day

25
Anzac Day (Australia, New Zealand)
Hubble Telescope launched, 1990
World Penguin Day

26
Administrative Professionals/ Secretaries Day
Hug a Friend Day
National Pretzel Day

27
Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
Take Our Daughters to Work Day
Tell a Story Day

28
Arbor Day
James Monroe born, 1758 (5th President)

29
Zipper Day (patented by Gideon Sundback in 1913)

30
National Honesty Day
Anniversary Louisiana Purchase completed (1803)