

First-time writer-director Qui Sheng explores connections with time and nature that feel endangered by “progress” in his film “Suburban Birds” which plays again on Wednesday, March 20 at the Portland International Film Festival.



Film Fest is Window to World

OPINIONATED JUDGE

BY DARLEEN ORTEGA



As the Portland International Film Festival enters its final days, there are still some noteworthy offerings--and a few of the films that have finished their festival run are worth watching for in theaters or online.

Among the films you can still see, “Suburban Birds” rewards

the investment of attention and imagination necessary to appreciate its poetic approach to storytelling. First-time writer-director Qui Sheng tells two parallel stories, the first involving a team of land engineers attempting to investigate a tilt that has compromised new construction, and the other in-

volving a group of children, in the same space but possibly not in the same time. The sensitive man and boy at the center of each respective story has the same name and may be the same person--and in its enigmatic way, the film explores connections with time and nature that feel endangered by what humans tend to view as “progress.” It plays on Wednesday, March 20 at Fox Tower.

The screening I saw of “Donbass” generated a lot of interest, perhaps from people who are fans of celebrated Ukrainian director Sergey Loznitsa or are more familiar that I am with the conflict raging in eastern Ukraine’s Donbass region. In 13 shifting settings, the film depicts stories of corruption and sectarian violence so disturbing that one feels they almost belong in a different time. Journalists, soldiers, people living in abject poverty and others enjoying cartoonish wealth, staged fake news and community brutality that resembles scenes from Nazi Germany--it all adds up to a disturbing picture of the lowest human behavior that made my blood run cold. It’s playing again on Thursday, March 21 at Fox Tower.

My favorite film of the festival so far--and an early candidate for my list of the best films of 2019,

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