

OPENING NIGHT FILM

House Without Roof

Dir. Soleen Yusef (Germany/Kurdistan 2016)

House Without Roof is about the journey of the siblings Liya, Jan and Alan who were born in the Kurdish area of the Iraq and grew up in Germany. The three of them want to fulfill their mother's last wish to bury her in her home village beside her husband who got killed in the war under the Saddam Hussein regime. On their nerve-wracking Kurdish-odyssey they are not only faced with their extended family that does not accept the last wish of their mother, but particularly with their own matters. In recent years they distanced from each other as a matter of individual survival. - Each has a significantly different life - and whenever they are speaking, it is reproachful. In parallel during the course of their journey, it is noticeable that in their home country the dimension of an awful conflict, is

heading for disaster.

This film is exactly what our festival is about. Multi-tiered meaning on so many levels. On a macro level, this film really elucidates the modern Kurdish culture and their struggle for identity and battles they face collectively in Iraq and surrounding areas. Yusef brilliantly takes this conflict and transposes it on a micro level with the three siblings whom the plot revolves around. Many films can do this successfully, but it is difficult to also have a genuine story and sincere performances.

Often in my writing about film, I emphasize the universality of cinema...an essence that transcends borders, culture and time. The delicate nuances of the two brothers and sister's relationship with each other and with themselves resonates no matter who the audience is. And this phenomenon connects us in a way politics never will. This is also just a basic, wonderful

road trip film...a literal and metaphorical journey that captures the magic of these types of trips where introspection is fostered by the liberation of the open road. - Alexandra Nakelski

trailer:

<https://vimeo.com/172228900>

House Without Roof.jpg 274 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Attachment options... House_Without_Roof1.jpg

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8:30

Growing up in the 80s, the suburbs were exciting in cinematic screen space: E.T., The 'Burbs, The Breakfast Club et al... But as now as an adult

looking back was it ever so? Or has it evolved into an endless channel of mediocrity and dull hum-drum routine? Did Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin nefariously plant images of fun at the work place into our heads? The filmmakers of 8:30 aesthetically capture the "infinite loop" of the suburban existence post 1980s!

8-30.png 3.03 MB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

9-22 (Democracy Held Hostage)

Dir. Bamdad Bahar (USA 2018)

Recent History...USA is suffering from an epidemic called Cultural Amnesia not only can we not retain what happened in the last few years...but it seems all history post Nixon is either forgotten, ignored, or never absorbed in the first place. I remember first hearing of the Iran Contra scandal in my early teens and I did a

bit of research (this was PRE Internet people!) and things just didn't add up. And I asked myself...am I the only one who thinks things do not add up? The destabilization of Iran, the hostage crisis and many other occurrences the US had their hands in are very much factors in the quagmire of political and foreign upheaval we experience today, yet everyone just shrugs their shoulders and wonders how we got here? That 9/11 was such a shock, that the current administration is such a shock....I am fascinated with history of the Carter into Reagan years as I think it was such a dark time that we have collectively forgotten everything from pop culture to foreign policy. The older generation may be able to recall and perhaps be biased in their memory; Gen X has vague recollections of the Ollie North trials and the Millennials...well good luck talking anything 70s to them! I in no way endorse this film as historically accurate in all aspects BUT what is relevant here is the style...what struck me was the roundabout

cyclical nature of the lawyer trying to get a straight answer and JUST CANT....it is soooo fitting for the whole Oliver North trials and even what is going on today...there is blatant scandal under our noses and no one can get a straight answer! We are in a postmodern vortex of confusion where nothing adds up. Obfuscation is best serviced by more media and digital realms of the Internet...there is no agreed upon "truth" ...it is in my mind ...collective madness. This is still fun though! This animation is old school so definitely hit The Bulldog before coming.

Alexandra Nakelski

Democracy Held Hostage.jpg

Democracy Held Hostage.jpg 68.5 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Au Pays Des Merveilles

Dir. Jihane El Bahhar (Morocco 2017)

Leila Laibidi was living in luxury with her rich husband; but he died in a remote village; so she will find herself compelled to bring his remains to his hometown. She is accompanied on her journey with her driver and other household staff. This motley crew, during their misadventures, discovers what is really important in life in this heartfelt road trip film...in Morocco! Au pays des Merveilles which translates to "In Wonderland" tells the story of a wealthy, snobby and pretentious woman, whose circumstances have led to her sharing the life of a modest family in the Atlas mountains where the living conditions are cruel. The film was shot in the whereabouts of Azrou town. In Wonderland is a drama and comedy hybrid. It tackles the rough life led by villagers in the Atlas mountains with its harsh and icy climatic condition, through a comical approach.

Au Pays des merveilles.jpg 800 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Bhedi Gothale (Shepherd)

Dir. Ganesh Gurung (Nepal, 2017)

The storytelling in Shepherd has a timeless quality about it. It is a story of forbidden love and family values, set in the serene landscapes and gorgeous scenic mountains of Nepal. I was absorbed by the dreamy narrative and gentleness of the characters portrayed. Despite the primitive lifestyle of these characters in a setting so isolated from the modern world, it was very easy to relate to their struggles and desires. Thus, the story reveals simple human truths about what it means to be alive. - Amy Peterson

* This movie was filmed in remote area of Lamjung, Nepal where there wasn't even

electricity!

Shepard.jpg 426 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Shepard.jpg

Die Tochter (Dark Blue Girl)

Dir. Mascha Schilinski (Germany, 2017)

When Jimmy and Hannah finally find a buyer for their decrepit holiday home on a Greek volcanic island, the former couple return for the first time to this place where they separated exactly two years ago. Their seven-year-old daughter, Luca, who is adored by both parents, accompanies them – something the little girl is not averse to and uses their devotion to her advantage. No sooner do they arrive on the idyllic island in the Aegean than the old tensions and conflicts begin to resurface.

Hannah in particular is jealous of the intimate relationship between father and daughter – a relationship from which she is almost

aggressively excluded. But then something happens that nobody expected: Hannah and Jimmy grow closer to one another again – and this once more throws Luca's world into confusion. Although her parents' separation at first felt like being expelled from paradise she has made herself at home in the second best of all worlds. But if the adults have now decided to change everything around again – or even go back to the way things were – they should at least be aware that their daughter has enough sand in her pockets to really jam up the family works! Beautifully shot and great character studies.

67th BERLINALE – PERSPEKTIVE

DEUTSCHES KINO Berlin Germany February
18, 2017 World Premiere

EAT

Dir. Jimmy Weber (USA,2014)

It is hard to stray far from one's true love, mine always being fascination with special FX gore makeup and, two... Los Angeles...EAT provides both in my retrospective for the "LA LA Land Program". I first met director Jimmy Weber when I wrote for the STARZ Denver Film Festival back in 2014. EAT is a smart satire on a city that literally and figuratively can eat you up alive. The City of Angels is a Mecca for struggling artists that migrate here to pursue their version of the "American Dream." Having lived there extensively finding my own path in the film industry, I witnessed first hand the sweet smell of desperation as people swapped their dignity for remedial roles, jobs in the restaurant industry and could not pay rent or buy food to maintain the appearances of a cast-able "prospect"pay for noodles or keep my hair fabulous? It may seem like a superficial decision, however, the rules for this city are only understood by those who sacrifice everything for

that call of potential fame. Some come with the desire to produce true art...some want the attention and to be beloved by millions, regardless, it is more about resilience, adaptation and perseverance more than talent in most cases. From the outside looking in, Los Angeles comprises of superficial people waiting in perpetual traffic for superficial motivations, yet to those who have lived in this beautiful city, it is a bittersweet amalgamation of daily creation, desperation, illusions and reality all co-habiting in a symbiotic life form of its own morphing. The entire world looks to LA for entertainment and those that participate in this unrelenting game of chance, it is worth it to connect to people globally in these philosophically transcendent ways through their performances. I miss LA for this reason. -
Alexandra Nakelski

Synopsis: Novella McClure is like most struggling actresses in Los Angeles: she's in her

early 30s, her fake name sounded cooler ten years ago, and she hasn't landed a role in three years. To top it all off, she's developed a disturbing habit of eating her own flesh. Novella desperately tries to hide her strange condition from her motherly landlord, Eesha, and somewhat psychopathic best friend, Candice, but her body and mind continue to deteriorate in the depressing world of failed auditions and sketchy nightclubs. Can a romantic relationship with her psychiatrist prevent her from self -destruction? Or will her fatal habit continue to eat away at her?

EAT.jpg

EAT.jpg 151 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Ingenium

Dir. Steffen Hacker (Germany, 2018)

Last year Germany wowed us with the surreal

psychological thriller Sibylle and I have got to hand it to German filmmakers...they are experts in capturing atmosphere...ever since the Expressionist movement of the Weimar Republic. Ingenium is a big budget thriller that is well crafted and again plays with the themes of what is real or what is madness as Sibylle did. These allegorical motifs reflect an ever stretching of the human psyche in negotiating the digital realm and society's constructs of what is "real" compared to what our inner truths may contest. Alexandra Nakelski

Synopsis: Felicitas has been different ever since she was a child and best friend, Natascha, shared similar mental irregularities. Now as adults, Felicitas doesn't know if her nightmares are taking over or if something bigger at large is trying to control her - and the only way to find out the truth is to consult Natascha who has since been locked up in an asylum. An interesting flick tapping into thematic temporal

shifts, déjà vu and telekinesis.

Ingenium.jpg 113 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Ingenium.jpg

Night of the Living Dead

Dir. George Romero (USA, 1968)

After the sad passing of the legendary American horror auteur George A. Romero, the Manifesto Film Festival is hosting a special screening of *Night of the Living Dead*.

The screening will give cult horror fans in Amsterdam the opportunity to celebrate the Godfather of the modern zombie film, along with the opportunity to discuss the landmark film's legacy, half a century after its original release.

Despite this being the film's 50th anniversary, it remains uncomfortably fresh, particularly thanks to its reflection of a Disunited States of America, amid the generational, racial and class-based antagonisms of May '68.

Filmed on a tiny budget at a time of global civil unrest, George A. Romero's Dead series debut drew together themes of race and the Other in an America where white-supremacy was rife. While the movie's infamous climax paralleled the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. at the time, viewers will still find an uncomfortable similarity with mainstream reactions to what should be an uncontroversial assertion, that 'Black Lives Matter'.

Meanwhile, another of the film's most shocking scenes at the time, reflecting the 'monstrous' light in which parents saw their rebellious children rioting against the Vietnam war, the film also draws clear parallels with Trump's America. An

America where an increasingly dogmatic generation of Baby Boomers seem willing to stop at nothing to save themselves from the perceived threat of their allegedly ungrateful, lazy, liberal children and grandchildren. -

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Over the Edge

Dir. Jonathan Kaplan (USA, 1979)

With only a recreation center to distract them, most of the teenagers in the drab planned community of New Granada have turned to drugs and delinquency. Carl (Michael Kramer), the son of a town councilman, is an exception, but he can't seem to help falling in with a charismatic and troubled classmate, Richie (Matt Dillon). Soon after, a trigger-happy sheriff (Harry Northrup) shoots Richie, and sole witness Carl has to go on the run, eventually inciting a

dramatic teenage riot.

One of Matt Dillon's amazing early films (actually his first film) that were quintessential of that hazy cultural malaise of the Carter into Reagan years that history seems to suffer amnesia from...Gen X ,the forgotten generation, wedged in between the Boomers and Millennials...what has their legacy been? Films like this and Penelope Spheeris's Suburbia (1983) exemplify the disintegration of the post war American dream and the logic of ignored youth leading up to the Columbine tragedy. Desperation leads to extreme measures. This is also a great portrait of an era that seems to have fallen under the historical radar; the late 70s and early 80s were a strange bridge between the disillusioned post-Watergate collective atmosphere into Reagan's "Morning Again in America" . . Since then, that "America is Number One" and can do no wrong mantra has run rampant and led to the tribalism that divides us

today. Another symptom of this is the belief that self-reflection and responsibility is seen as weak. It's worth revisiting the art from this era to examine the way people thought at this time and the thread of similarities that haunt us today.

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Over the Edge.jpg

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The Receptionist

Dir. Jenny Lu (UK, Taiwan, 2016)

I have often discussed with my students in class that what is actually scarier than being homeless is being one paycheck away from being homeless. It may seem like a "first world" problem when the mythic middle class is diminishing into oblivion as jobs for qualified

people disappear because the job market is infiltrated with thousands holding degrees that years ago meant something... but today are worthless. Automation threatens the jobs of the working class...and those graduating from universities every day find themselves taking work they are over qualified for or finding work that is questionable to their previous set of standards and ethics.

The Receptionist is a fantastic portrait of a college graduate who has no other opportunities other than to take up work in an illegally run brothel in London. She is not a working girl herself being the receptionist, but close enough to that underworld to glimpse into a reality she may have to come to face as dreams of a job in her field drift away further. Desperation drives people do things they would not normally do and justifies it with the impossibility of living in modern times. Our moral standards take back seat to paying the bills.

The acting in this piece is also superlative as often times films neglect secondary characters to only fully establish primary relationships. However, this film offers motivation into everyone's behavior and offers the audience understanding into the mindset of each woman. I found particularly the "mean girl" very satisfying as Director Jenny Lu does not offer her up as a simple cliché but someone to identify and sympathize with and even be redeemed. I often have sympathy for the villains in films and love when a character study delves into their psyche.

The subject of immigration can also be discussed...reasons for fear of "others" infiltrating borders and taking jobs is prevalent. An immigrant can work hard and get a good education...and still be in the same boat as a native citizen with that very same worthless degree..."hard work" is simply not enough

anymore in a a post capitalistic, neo-liberal
vortex of scarcity. -

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The Receptionist.jpg

Wag the Dog.jpg 20.2 KB [View full-size](#) [Download](#)

Dir. Barry Levinson (USA, 1997)

Tag line of film: Shortly before an election, a
spin-doctor and a Hollywood producer join
efforts to fabricate a war in order to cover up a
Presidential sex scandal.

I was just about to write this and news of Trump
ordering missiles dispatched on Syria in the
wake of his "stormy Daniels" scandal could not

have been more serendipitous timing.

We joke in the States that everything is a distraction from Trump and cabal's seedy corrupt goings-ons- as if it isn't all blatantly obvious...and yet here we are, as always, attention diverted thanks to a ratings hungry media and never ending social media outlets to disperse information in real time at a rate no one can keep up with.

Look over here!...now over here....meanwhile the Wizard of Oz still operates behind the curtain while more uncharted territories of digital cyberspace obfuscates the truth more. Sometimes we need humor to both cope with the sad, futile reality and to call attention to it. Here at Manifesto, we aim to revisit films that often in hindsight reveal to us that this culture we are living has been a work in progress and not as abrupt as so many shrugging their shoulders in "shock" every day may think.

Wag the Dog.jpg

Wind (Vetar)

Dir. Tamara Drakulić (Serbia, 2016)

Sixteen-year-old Mina is spending summer days with her father, Andrej, at the mouth of the river Bojana. Andrej is a kite-surfer and adventurer, and Mina is trying to be the opposite. However, she falls in love with kite-surfers, Sasa. Sasa is older than her and he has a girlfriend, Sonja. A few days Mina and Sasa spent together do not seem to change anything in their relationship. However, in Mina's adolescent world these days are changing everything.

Drakulić's film captures that endless summer feeling, shooting during that "magic hour" right

before sunset..with a perfect soundtrack to capture the essence of a moment in time that is both fleeting and eternal. - *Alexandra Nakelski*

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