



MIFFING 2021

WHAT TO CATCH
AT THIS YEARS

MIFF a guide brought
to you by the
programmers
of

DOCUMENTARY MEETS

We would like to acknowledge that this zine was created on stolen and unceded Wurundjeri Land. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and operate.



We're hitting pause on our program this month in the knowledge that you, our devoted attendees, but also us at Doc Meets HQ, are spoiled for choice and relatively time-poor as we plunge into the 69th Melbourne International Film Festival.

Our city's dominant festival returns proffering a mix of viewing experiences via their newly launched 'MIFF play' streaming platform and - with lockdown five lifted in the nick of time - an expanded selection of cinemas, strategically catering to both the un-vaxxed potential super-spreader market whilst still meeting their obligations to purists and/or the boomer demographic. Needless to say, this hybrid festival (let's call it MIFF Mutt) should offer an abundance of ways to get your non-fiction fix this month while we've 'Gone MIFF-ing'

Still, we thought we'd throw you a line and pass on some recommendations. Here's what hooked us in the program - hope you find something tasty!

Emmett & Keva



***All Light, Everywhere* | 109 mins | Theo Anthony**

Sun 08 Aug 7:00 pm ACMI 1

Thu 12 Aug 8:30 pm Hoyts 10

As one of the contingent who thought that Theo Anthony's audacious first feature, the discursively structured, prosaically titled *Rat Film* (throwback to MIFF 2017), lived up to the hype, his follow-up has been on my watchlist since I got wind of it after its Sundance premiere back in January. In *All Light, Everywhere*, Anthony offers a galaxy-brain / Chris Marker-style meditation on surveillance culture and specifically police body cameras, again taking his native Baltimore as a case study (and again calling on fellow resident Dan Deacon to score). Wouldn't be surprised to see anyone who came along to our screening of Pacific Street Films' *Red Squad* at this one! **KY**

***Bulletproof* | 84 mins | Todd Chandler**

Sat 07 Aug 1:45 pm Kino 2

Fri 13 Aug 9:00 pm Kino 1

& online through MIFF Play

Through documenting the strategies employed to prevent and contend with mass shootings, *Bulletproof* examines the meaning and complexities of 'school safety'. Director Todd Chandler observes mainstay American high school rituals, aka classic 'rite of passage' experiences like homecoming parades, morning announcements, and math class, and conflates these images with those of lockdown drills, teacher firearms training, metal detector screenings along with school safety trade shows to reframe the emergence of violence in American schools as 'tradition'. This meditation might offer some insight into the normalisation of violence and the impact this has on broader societal values – as the students' personal privacy is shown to be always in conflict with the prevention of violence. **EA**

***The Inheritance* | 102 mins | Ephraim Asili**

Sat 07 Aug 9:00 pm Kino 1

Sun 15 Aug 6:30 pm ACMI 1

& online through MIFF Play

I managed to catch Ephraim Asili's singular debut feature earlier in the year, as it bounced around a few blue-chip fests (TIFF; NYFF; the Berlinale), so I can say with confidence: this hybrid docudrama offers a rich patchwork history of Black artistry and activism. The filmmaker has dubbed it "[a remix](#)" of *La Chinoise*, and, like the 1967 Godard film, it's a pop-coloured work of radical politics, depicting the day-to-day of a single location: a house in West Philadelphia takes the place of Godard's Paris apartment as the hub of a budding liberationist collective (modelled on Asili's own stint in one such organisation) wherein scripted drama sandwiches historical memoir and poetry. **KY**

***No Ordinary Man* | 84 mins | A Chin-Yee, C Joynt**

Sun 08 Aug 4:15 pm Kino 1

Thu 12 Aug 9:30 pm ACMI 2

& online through MIFF Play

No Ordinary Man is positioned to deliver on the 'speculative truth' front – interweaving archival and 'audition' footage in which transgender actors vie for the role of portraying famed American jazz pianist Billy Tipton. (Though Tipton lived most of his as a cis-man, he was outed after his death, against the wishes of his family, as queer.) While this formal element has most often been used to agitate and unearth the horror and mystery of 'true crime' cases (like in *Casting Jon Benet*, or *The Thin Blue Line*), I'm bracing myself to grapple with a link that Aisling Chin-Yee and Chase Joynt might draw; that being the 'crimes' of the media and the historical horrors of trans representation, which ultimately fostered ugly societal fascinations and beliefs that trans communities are struggling to rewrite today. **EA**

Palazzo di Cozzo | 86 mins | Madeleine Martiniello

Sun 08 Aug 12:30 pm Comedy Theatre

Tue 10 Aug 6:45 pm Forum

Sat 14 Aug 1:15 pm Comedy Theatre

Already proving to be a hot seller at this year's festival, *Palazzo di Cozzo* will, I assume, rate highly on my Doc Meets mates' 'standby' list. The film tracks the cultural influence of Franco Cozzo's life and legacy as a furniture salesman turned icon with a personality "as big as the bedheads he sells". Whether or not you're aware of the Cozzo stores and story, this first-time feature by the Melburnian filmmaker Madeleine Martiniello is positioned to satiate your appetite for conversation about our local and living history. It should be noted that every year a few MIFF films get booked to re-screen towards the end of the festival and I imagine that this will be one of them. **EA**

Rock Bottom Riser | 70 mins | Fern Silva

- screening (in cinemas) with eartheartearth (30mins)

Fri 06 Aug 6:30 pm ACMI 2

Fri 13 Aug 9:00 pm ACMI 2

& online through MIFF Play

Who am I kidding, the description of Fern Silva's debut feature, a postcolonial essay film that promises to riff freely on the history, traditions, and natural wonders of the Hawaiian islands, had me at the mention of a Simon & Garfunkel soundtrack moment (sing it with me: "I am a rock, I am an iiiisland!"), but there are other features to recommend it too. Michelle Carey, the former artistic director of MIFF (now dividing her time between Rotterdam, NYFF, and Cannes' Directors' Fortnight), describes the film as "[cosmic cinema non pareil](#)", and I will undoubtedly savour every second of slow-mo lava flow footage. **KY**

***Those Left Waiting* | 60 mins | Michael Beets**

Fri 13 Aug 7:00 ACMI 1

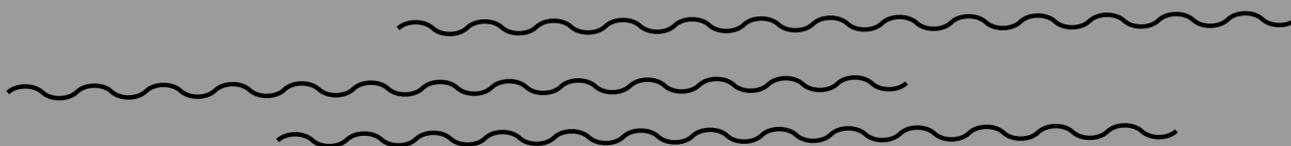
Written up as a “one-of-a-kind project”, *Those Left Waiting* makes good use of digital technologies for both cinematic and humanitarian purposes. Shot and live-streamed by refugees in camps all across the globe (the program cites the Middle East, Asia and Europe as localities), this film is of major interest to me given the process behind it. What’s on offer is ultimately a collaborative collation of the recordings, to further awareness of this crisis. In turn, this process offers to further the agency of participants, allowing for “both the hardships and happiness in their daily lives” to be self-authored, and edge these topical forms of documentary away from notions of ‘disaster porn’ made for middle-class consumption. **EA**

***Taming the Garden* | 92 mins | Salomé Jashi**

Sun 08 Aug 1:30 pm ACMI 2

Fri 13 Aug 10:30 am ACMI 1

“Quietly magnificent and strange.” wrote Jessica Kiang of Salomé Jashi’s third feature, which tracks, without narration, the process by which a number of ancient trees are uprooted from the Georgian coast and ferried across the sea, where they’re to be installed in a private garden belonging to the nation’s billionaire ex-prime minister. I’m always up for a tale of grossly excessive dreams – à la Werner Herzog’s *Fitzcarraldo* or *Queen of Versailles*, Lauren Greenfield’s doc about the construction of the biggest (and most lurid?) single-family home in the US – and the Sundance- and Berlinale-selected *Taming the Garden* looks to be a probingly poetic entry in that canon. **KY**



Honourable Mentions

- City Hall* - Frederick Wiseman

At the age of 91, the pater familias of documentary filmmaking is still going strong, his latest observational epic dedicated to Boston's local government.

- James & Isey* - Florian Habicht

If you're in the mood for a charming and intimate documentary about first nation bonds and living legacies

- Stray* - Elizabeth Lo

On the festival's lighter side we have Stray. Great if you're in the mood for some people watching via their interactions with doggos.

- Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* - A Brown, N Adair, R Epstein

For those who are keen to see a historical doc about queerness but on a screen bigger than your laptop

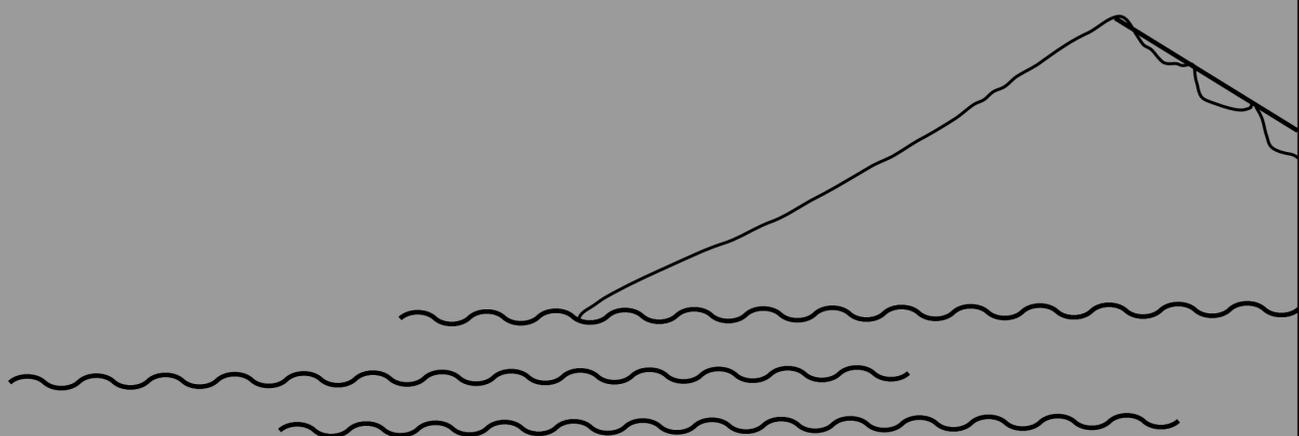
- Wojnarowicz* - Chris McKim

Those who came along to our Fast Trip, Long Drop screening probably already have their tickets to this tribute to the abrasive, brilliant New York artist and activist David Wojnarowicz.

- Woodlands Dark and Days Bewitched: A History of Folk Horror* - K Janisse

If in any other era your gender identity would have left you in a position to be potentially burned at the stake - why aren't you interested in the history of folk horror?

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Thanks

As always, we'd like to express our gratitude to Channon Goodwin and Nina Mulhall for facilitating and supporting Documentary Meets.

About

Documentary Meets is a calendar run of non-fiction films which 'meet' a variety of topics – pride; sex work; kin; colonisation, et al. Guided by these monthly topics, relevant to our calendar and community, each film has been chosen to muster awareness and incite conversation, with guest speakers on hand to offer a viewing framework. The selection boasts works that twist formal conventions in provocative, purposeful ways

Screenings are hosted at Composite: Moving Image Agency on the third Thursday of almost* every month.

Bios

Keva York is a New York-born, Melbourne-based writer and film critic. Her work has appeared in a variety of publications, including Senses of Cinema, The Lifted Brow, and Gusher Magazine. Since completing her doctorate on Crispin Glover's directorial work at the University of Sydney in 2019, she has regularly reviewed films for the ABC.

Emmett Aldred's work spans filmmaking, filmmaking education and curation. Recently he established a conceptual but functional equipment hire store called Too Much World, after Hito Steyerl's essay by the same name.

* Barring the month of MIFF, and covid restrictions permitting