

# Decider's Wisconsin Film Festival live-blog: Thursday



By John Wiedenhoef, Scott Gordon April 3, 2009

**J**ohn (1:30 a.m.) *Not Quite Hollywood* has to be the stupidest name possible for this documentary. Although the secondary title “The Wild, Untold Story of Ozploitation!” makes up for it a bit, in a perfect world the actual title would be *Breasts, Blades, Blood, Bullets, Blazing Speed...and More Blood*. First off, 100 minutes was way too long for this mostly chronological mash-up of scenes from and commentary on some of the best/worst films from Australia, and I could have done with about half of the Quentin Tarantino commentary (sample bad quote: “The movie fuckin’ kicks ass, man!”)

That said, if you love Roger Corman, Jack Hill and Russ Meyer, then you have to check out the 1970s and 1980s films with names like *Fantasm* and *Turkey Shoot* made by Anthony I. Ginnane, John D. Lamond, Brian Trenchard Smith, and Richard Franklin. Far from apologetic for their affinity skin and slash, the only regrets the film-makers seem to have come from having been too subtle.

Holding back on beheadings and amputations: problem.

Filming a mouse in a marsupial werewolf fetus costume emerging from a human vagina: not a problem.

Producer/writer Lamond gives his commentary in front of a stripper working a pole – just so you know he can still bring the sleaze. I lost count at 41 breasts (not sure how that happened) but the slow-motion shot of John Holmes emerging from a swimming pool really stole the nudity show. And these were just clips, people.

Jamie Lee Curtis and Stacy Keach look like they're still in shock as they recall their experiences making the 1981 movie *Roadgames*. Not surprisingly, Dennis Hopper was the only American actor who could out-Oz the Aussies. His method portrayal of the titular character of 1976's *Mad Dog Morgan* involved copious amounts of 150 proof rum and ended with a police escort to his departing flight.

**John: (11:15 p.m.):** Yep. 19 films. Write it down.

I was way too late to sneak into 24 City without causing a ruckus, so instead I nabbed the last seat in the Orpheum Stage Door balcony for Goodbye Solo. The synopsis in the film fest guide didn't do much for me, but I mostly liked what I saw on the screen. The plot is straightforward: Senegalese taxi driver Solo is having marital problems with his very pregnant Mexican wife when he gets hired by a world-weary, white septuagenarian named William for a final cab ride two weeks hence to a local scenic overlook in Winston-Salem, N.C. It's a cultural collision to be sure, but it goes to unexpected places.

Director Ramin Bahrani uses non-professional actors, so some of the scenes are a bit stiff. The film meanders a bit in the second act (the woman directly in front of me fell asleep – not an easy feat in the Stage Door balcony), but Bahrani's ability to make cultural differences inform rather than define his characters shows a deft and able hand at storytelling. The real gem of the movie is the portrayal of the quick-talking, bright-smiling Solo by Souleymane Sy Savane whose exuberance forms a great counterpart to the measured pace of the film. The film plays again on Friday at 5:15 p.m. at the Orpheum Stage Door.

**Scott (10 p.m.):** Whoa, *19 films*, John? Dispatch the men in white coats!

**John (9:45 p.m.):** Scott just texted me a suggestion to post a morale/fatigue meter on my attempt to see 19 (or so) films this weekend. After two I'm still going strong, but I'm currently 30 minutes late for *24 City* at MMoCA. If it's sold out, I'm SOL City.

**John (9:30 p.m.):** Yishai Orian (hint: read my 7:30 p.m. post first) probably wouldn't have paid much mind to the VW Beetle if it hadn't been for Doyle Dane Benbach. The ad agency oversaw an uber-popular US ad campaign for the little car from a former enemy country not long after World War II. *Art & Copy*, directed by former Madisonian Doug Pray, tells the story of the rise of the creative mind in advertising from the point of view of the creators of some of the most indelible advertising campaigns of the last 50 years (the Beetle, "Just Do It," introduction of the Mac, the "me" generation, "got milk?"). Not really a critique or defense of advertising, the film more of a peek into the minds of people who really believe that what they do is art. Pray intersperses some great cinematography of Billboards and a Satellite launch throughout.

Also, one "only in Madison" moment during the film: At the playing of a clip of a Ronald Reagan campaign ad written by documentary subject Hal Riney there was audible hissing in the audience.

**John (7 p.m.):** I have to say I feel more than a little empathy with Yishai Orian. The Tel Aviv resident is in love with his 40-year old VW to the point of putting on a clinic on how not to be a husband: from driving his pregnant wife around in the backbreaking beater to leaving for Jordan to get the car completely overhauled while she's in the last half of her third trimester. It's hilarious or infuriating depending on how much you identify with Yishai's wife. Orian, who also produced and directed *The Beetle*, is not afraid to sex up the documentary. Much like Sacha Baron Cohen gives a documentary feel to his movies, Orian adds a little extra narrative drama (there is even a lone campfire in the wilderness scene). And he succeeds in making a little car something much more through the stories of its former owners and the friendships Orian makes on the journey. Now if I could just find the part for that classic Cadillac in my driveway...

**Scott (7 p.m.):** I beat it down State Street just in time to squeeze into *Milk In The Land: Ballad Of An American Drink* down at the Union's [Play Circle](#). Directors Ariana Gerstein and Monteith McCollum trace milk's explosion as a cultural and dietary mainstay in the States, and long the way they discover why it doesn't necessarily need to be that way. Whether digging up old exposés of the 19th-century "swill milk" industry or interviewing modern-day advocates of raw milk and natural dairy farming, the film spends a lot of time flirting with resourceful animated imagery. Once in a while it lingers too long on some clever picture, be it a reflection in a coffee cup or a rotating watch case stocked with pastries. Also, there is a group of people out there called the American Collectors Of Infant Feeders, who stock up on all manner of antique nursing bottles and fake nipples. Sometimes the animation feels a bit [Terry Gilliam](#), but the film's playful storytelling sets the tone that it's not a foodie diatribe. (Not that that wouldn't be welcome, especially here, but still.) It tells a logical story but also takes an impressionistic cross-section of milk's unlikely, vivid history.

Other notes on this film:

- Footage of Richard Nixon praising milk. Oh man, milk is so fucked no.
- "White Ammunition," a World War II propaganda film, casts milk as a crucial ingredient of victory.
- There's also a particularly snappy quote from Al Capone.

**Scott (5:20-6:35ish p.m.):** *Kinnunen* proves a gentle yet exciting start to my fest.

Estonian writer-director Andri Luup follows a sullen Finnish guy's search for a wife in nearby Estonia, where his countrymen are apparently seen as drunken oafs. (Case in point, he falls off the ferry crossing over.) Despite his clumsy efforts at dating, he seems to realize pretty early on that he really wants his Estonian-language instructor. It feels too droll and patiently awkward to be classed as a romantic comedy. The characters are just far enough off-center that the humor doesn't bonk you over the head with contrived quirkiness. In fact, quite a lot is literally left unspoken, and much of the plot hinges on misunderstandings that become sustained illusions.

**Scott (5:15 p.m.):** One of our contributors, Mike King (who also did a bunch of work for the festival), had told me the fest's official trailer is a hoot. A booster-y "We Like It Here!" spot, it celebrates our abundance of milk, beer, paper products, and (suspiciously edited in there), movies. One of those charmingly silly yet spirited things that probably won't get old if I see it a bunch of times this weekend.

**Scott (5:10 p.m.):** As folks get seated, it's time to overhear some erudite fest-goers' conversation. One fellow describes a film he saw at a previous WFF: "It was a deeply disturbing movie, but it was excellent."

**Scott (4:45 p.m.):** Folks are already lined up outside the [Bartell](#) for the 5:15 screening of *Kinnunen*, and the line will soon stretch down the block. I post a line on about this on Twitter, then one [@jessWFF](#) tweets back that she's in line too. Turns out we're next to each other in line. Twitter: Finally, a way to meet people two feet away from you.

**Scott (4:28 p.m.):** [Here's that interview](#). Time to pack up and get in line for [Kinnunen at the Bartell](#).

**Scott (3:45 p.m.):** David Wolinsky of our [Chicago site](#) did an interview this week with Anvil (subjects of *Anvil! The Story Of Anvil*), and we might be able to share that with you before the film [screens tonight at the Orpheum](#). But after, at the very latest!

**Scott (3:25 p.m.):** We've got our press passes, and Jason just made us a handy spreadsheet of all the films we've called dibs on. Because it just ain't fun if you're not using Excel. Also, John is attempting to see some 17 films or so in total.

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