

(The Return of the) Critics' Choice

International Film Festival Rotterdam
21 January – 1 February 2015



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Roger Ebert in *Life Itself*, Kevin B. Lee's Critics' Choice

(The Return of the) Critics' Choice

Film journalism has been rediscovering itself at a dizzying pace in recent years. In the undercurrents of mainstream media critics have started to make essayistic films, investigate forms of live film journalism and experiment

Could audio-visual film criticism be an answer to the much-lamented demise of art criticism at large? Outside of the Netherlands, the

BATES MOTEL VACANCY

video essay is on the up, but making these is labour-intensive and, owing to a lack of adequate facilities, it remains virtually untried in the Netherlands. Thus this year's Critics Choice not only gives audio-visual film criticism a larger podium in the Netherlands, but also functions as an agora for debate on the future and the state of film criticism, also in the context of film festivals, which increasingly act as alternative screening circuits. All matters that need to be addressed in The Netherlands.

Even if it has become relatively simple to find and use (moving) images for new forms of criticism, we still see that old reflex that film critics (and their editors) limit themselves to the text and film still format (with the same 'branded' pictures recycled over and over). Now what is the effect on film criticism (and cinema) when the discourse, the criticism, the appreciation, the enthusiasm, the love are no longer about an absent object, but about a present one, in the same medium? Will that be the beginning of a happy love affair or a catastrophic amour fou?

The audio-visual essay as a hybrid between text and image, between film and criticism, studies the question how we perceive, understand and appreciate cinema. At the same time it examines why we speak of cinema as a 'language' and if film criticism and analysis are something that exists in language predominantly? What would happen if film critics used the same

tools and materials as filmmakers? Would their works still be 'critical' and analytical? Or would they become practitioners of a whole different craft?

Kevin B. Lee and Adrian Martin & Cristina Álvarez López are among the pioneers of the genre. They respectively selected opening film *Life Itself*, a documentary about film critic Roger Ebert who died last year, and the restoration of Walerian Borowczyk's *Docteur Jekyll et les femmes* (1981), a controversial cult version of the age-old Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde story. Writer and critic Bianca Stigter decided she would reflect on the process of watching itself and make a long version of a short archive film shot in the Polish village of Nasielsk in 1938. Her *Three Minutes Thirteen Minutes Thirty Minutes* will have its world premier at the festival. Rüdiger Suchsland chose *Die Lügen der Sieger* by Christoph Hochhäusler, a film he can both defend and critically dissect. Dutch critics Hedwig van Driel and Kees Driessen take their first steps on the path of audio-visual criticism with *Laggies* and *When Marnie Was There* (provisionally the last Ghibli film). Finally, Argentine Roger Alan Koza selected *White Out, Black In*, a Brazilian dystopian docudrama in the tradition of Chris Marker's *La jetée* that breaks down, stretches and transcends boundaries between genres, as well as between film and the world itself. This year's Critics' Choice wanders and wonders in that marvellous wilderness.

Dana Linssen is a film critic, writer and philosopher from the Netherlands. She is editor in chief of the independent film magazine de Filmkrant, long time film critic for national daily newspaper NRC Handelsblad, lecturer film analysis and film history at the ArtEZ Theatre Academy in Arnhem and founder of the Slow Criticism Project, an on going series of publications, events and interventions as a counterbalance against the commodification of film criticism.

Jan Pieter Ekker is a writer, designer and consultant with broad interests and tastes. He writes for publications including Het Parool, VPRO Cinema and de Filmkrant, as well as designing logos, brochures, newspapers and books. He sits on advisory and selection committees for the IDFA, the Hubert Bals Fund and the Mediafonds. Ekker is also the creator and organizer of the Cinema.nl Poster Prize. www.jpekker.nl



Anton Ego in Ratatouille: "In many ways, the work of a critic is easy".



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Kevin B. Lee is a filmmaker, film critic and producer of over 200 video essays exploring film and media.

His award-winning video *Transformers: The Premake* was named one of the best documentaries of 2014 by *Sight & Sound Magazine*, and selected for the Berlinale Film Festival Critics Week, International Film Festival Rotterdam and Viennale International Film Festival. He is Founding Editor and Chief Video Essayist at *Fandor* and founding partner of dGenerate Films (a distribution company for independent Chinese cinema). He was supervising producer at *Roger Ebert Presents At the Movies*, and has written for *The New York Times*, *Sight & Sound*, *Slate* and *Indiewire*. He is currently pursuing an MFA in Film Video New Media and Animation and an MA in Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Life Itself

Directed by Steve James

Fri 23-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 09:30 Cinerama 1

A Life Journey Shaped by Optimism

Full disclosure: I appear in *Life Itself*, around the 104th minute, identified as a contributor to Roger Ebert's website. I also worked on Ebert's television show in its final season. So in some respects it is impossible for me to offer an "objective" critical view of this film, which attempts to tell the story of Ebert's storied life and career in a way that most people can relate to. In some way it aspires to the same personalized, populist spirit by which Ebert delivered his opinions on film, touching millions of people around the world.

When Roger Ebert died in 2013,

he left behind an extraordinarily prolific body of work: thousands of film reviews, dozens of books, and hundreds of hours of reviews delivered on his weekly television show, much of which can be found online. The film distills this overabundant material and infuses it within a remarkable life journey, shaped by the optimism and cultural idealism of the 1960s, the workaholic ethos of the once-mighty newspaper industry during the peak of its power, and the boom of movies as home video rentals in the 80s, which summoned an expert to visit people's televisions and offer opinions for

what movies to put on the same screen.

These conditions are all now a thing of the past, commemorated by this film that stimulates sweet feelings of nostalgia and mourning for both a life and a time gone by. Since this is the opening film for a series devoted to showcasing the work of film critics, are we thus mourning the decline of film criticism through this movie? This feeling was reflected by many reviewers of the film in the United States who seemed as wistful about the "glory days" of their profession as much as Ebert's life. But I insist otherwise.

From *Life Itself*, I hope we can understand why there will never be another Roger Ebert: not just because he was one of a kind, but also because the kind of world and movie culture in which he lived and thrived no longer exists. Ebert himself realized this, which was partly why he devoted more and more time to his website as his television show declined in the ratings. What does the future hold for those inspired to follow his example? To know the answer requires paying close attention to the evolving role of movies in our world, and in our lives themselves.

A Chorus to the Love of Film

In 2012 the magazine *Sight & Sound* conducted the latest edition of its famous international critics' poll of the greatest films of all time. I first encountered this poll through *Roger Ebert's Movie Home Companion*, the first film book I ever owned. In that book, Ebert wrote about the films from his top ten ballot in the 1982 version of the poll. His words played those movies in my mind long before I had a chance to see them.

Through working with Ebert, I came to know several of his contributing writers from around the world that he had met online or in his festival travels. Ebert cared deeply about the universal power of the movies, and was humbled that people from different cultures and backgrounds could find value in his words. I produced this video with the participation of 19 of his contributors, using 10 different languages to read his thoughts on his most favorite films. Ebert gave this response to the video: "The gift of a lifetime. Ever so much better than a 'tribute' in which we hear words of praise, it centers on film. An international chorus to the love of film."



Cristina Álvarez López is a video artist, film critic, translator, and co-editor/co-founder of the online Spanish magazine *Transit: cine y otros desvíos* (<http://cinentransit.com>). Her texts have appeared in the journals *Trafic*, *Frames*, *Caiman*, *Sight & Sound*, *Screening the Past*, *de Filmkrant*, *LOLA* and *Shangrila*, on the website *Fandor Keyframe*, and in books on Philippe Garrel, Chantal Akerman, Bong Joon-ho, Max Ophüls and Paul Schrader. Her audiovisual essays appear regularly in *Transit* and *MUBI Notebook*, and on the resource website *The Audiovisual Essay* (<http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/>). She co-edits the Audiovisual Essay section of the academic journal *NECSUS* (<http://www.necsus-ejms.org/>). She teaches at Goethe University, Frankfurt.



Adrian Martin is Professor of Film Studies at Goethe University (Frankfurt), and Monash University (Melbourne). He has been translated into over twenty languages, with regular columns in *de Filmkrant* and *Caiman*. He is the author of seven books including *¿Qué es el cine moderno?* (2008) and is co-editor of the online film journal *LOLA* (www.lolajournal.com) as well as the books *Movie Mutations* (2003) and *Raúl Ruiz: Images of Passage* (2004). His latest book is *Mise en scène and Film Style: From Classical Hollywood to New Media Art* (Palgrave, 2014). His audiovisual essays appear in *MUBI Notebook* and *The Audiovisual Essay* websites.



Docteur Jekyll et les femmes
Directed by Walérian Borowczyk
Sat 24-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 21:45 Cinerama 1

Blood and Chemicals, Surgery and Sexuality: All Up for Grabs

Steven Soderbergh has *The Knick*, but Walérian Borowczyk (1923-2006) had the flick. It's his auteur trademark, his intimate calligraphy, but if you blink you can miss it: sometimes just a few frames at the end of a shot, where WB moves the camera off whatever he has been filming, creating a sudden, inconclusive swerve of vision. He often kept it in the final edit – to confound our contemplation and shake up our senses. It's like the dazzling rays and reflections of light in his images, like the ever-crashing chords and synthesised swirls of Bernard Parmegiani's music: Borowczyk opens up realms of perception that are beyond the

niceties of cultural taste, past the laws of genre, and that pay no heed to the supposed distinction between narrative and experimental cinemas. Actually, there is much common ground between Soderbergh's knick and Borowczyk's flick as practiced in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne* (1981): both artists explore a not-so-distant but seemingly medieval past in which the meaning and use of bodies and psyches, blood and chemicals, surgery and sexuality, were all up for grabs. WB's film suspends us between ultra-rationalist, bourgeois dinner table talk of empirical science (embodied by Patrick Magee

and Howard Vernon) and the magical metamorphoses performed, with the aid of a full bath, by Jekyll (Udo Kier). Behind the cabinets of curiosity, someone is watching Jekyll's transformation into Hyde: it is his fiancée, Miss Osbourne (Marina Pierro). Is she shocked, scandalised, betrayed in the knowledge that the man she loves is secretly, truly an Other? Not a bit; she wants total immersion. Miss Osbourne is Surrealist Woman, one in a long line of 'heroines of evil' that Borowczyk celebrated. They go all the way, beyond good and evil. This heady brand of feminism is what WB

added to the classic Robert Louis Stevenson novel that serves as the loose, mythic scaffolding or merest point of departure here. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne* ends like no other movie: *in media res*, in a phantom carriage that seems propelled of its own accord, with a man and woman between life and death, between ecstasy and the abyss, between everyday flesh and the new, metamorphosed flesh that Cronenberg later imagined. Borowczyk suspends us once more; he flicks us out of the narrative, the screen – in order, no doubt, to seek and live these delights ourselves.

Another Way Way to View and Hear the Movie

One of the aims of our audiovisual essay work is to find, through a creative montage, the 'other film' hidden inside any given film: a secret logic, a counter-film, a hidden pattern. We seek another way to view and hear the movie, turning and observing it from a new angle, or locating a hitherto concealed entry-point. Sometimes, this means discovering the experimental film that is lurking inside a seemingly classical, narrative, conventional one – stripping out the fiction and the characters, the evident themes and arcs.

In the case of Walérian Borowczyk and his *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne*, however, we are (beyond the grave) collaborating with a director who had already, as it were, entirely turned the glove inside out: although there is always a story line, it is his remarkably intricate work with aesthetic exploration that seizes the foreground. Looking into his unique style of representation, we ask: what this foreign country called the past, or history, for him, and how did he reveal its strangeness? How did he connect technology with flesh? And how did he move – both serenely and violently – across the social division of the sexes?

Bianca Stigter

writes essays about art, cinema and culture that are published in *Per ongeluk expres*, *De ontsproten Picasso* en *Goud uit stro*. *De ontsproten Picasso* was nominated for the AKO Literatuurprijs 2008, *Per Ongeluk Expres* for the Halewijnprijs 2014.

On stage her essays were presented in 'Lady Mondegreen Live' en 'De per ongeluk Expres', two 'disrupting events' about art, chance and coincidence Stigter curated for the SLAA.

About Amsterdam during World War II she published the 'travel guide' *De bezette stad. Plattegrond van Amsterdam 1940-1945* that has become a classic.

Stigter studied History at the University of Amsterdam and is contributing editor of NRC Handelsblad.

Is Three Minutes a Lot or a Little?

It is Thursday the fourth of August 1938. A black sedan drives five Americans to the small town of Nasielsk, 30 miles north of Warsaw. One of the travellers, David Kurtz, has a camera with him. He films three minutes in the town he was born in. Seventy-five years later, the images he shot, in black and white and in colour, are the only moving images left of the Jewish inhabitants of Nasielsk prior to their destruction. Of the 3000 Jewish Nasielsk-ers only 100 survived the Holocaust.

Is three minutes a lot or a little? A split second was enough for a woman to recognize her grandfather as a young boy in the film, and it took a few years to research all those seconds. The home movie of David Kurtz is now the subject of a book by his grandson, writer Glenn Kurtz, and three minutes can become a lot if you research them thoroughly. *Three Minutes in Poland. Discovering a Lost World in a 1938 Family Film* is the moving result that changes a mere travel souvenir into

a rich historical treasure trove. Three minutes of footage that offers a glimpse into a lost world. David Kurtz shot it in 1938 on a holiday trip to Europe. Kurtz went to familiar touristic destinations, including Volendam and the south of France. But he also visited the small town he was born in before immigrating to America as a child. The footage he filmed in Nasielsk contains no extraordinary images. We mostly see people looking and waving at the camera, as was still

common in those days in most places. Being filmed was a new experience.

Not what you see, but what you know is what makes these images extraordinary when you look at them now as past, present and future get tangled. Major and minor become fluctuated.

In David Kurtz' home movie, film regains its original magic, of capturing the present in a way which lets it refuse to completely become the past.

Three Minutes Thirteen Minutes Thirty Minutes

A video-essay made by Bianca Stigter with the participation of Glenn Kurtz (Work in Progress). Sun 25-1 14.00 De Doelen Van Cappellezaal. Followed by an extended Q&A.

Three Minutes Thirteen Minutes Thirty Minutes

When I heard about the book *Three minutes in Poland* and saw the footage on the website of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, this was the first thing that came into my mind: would it be possible to somehow extend the footage David Kurtz shot in Nasielsk in 1938. We see life, three ordinary, glorious minutes of it, and than suddenly everything is gone. There are no more images. This is all there is. After reading the book the idea stayed with me. Could we lengthen the film? Could we keep the people in it in the present for longer?

The detailed information Glenn Kurtz provides in his book made it possible to try. Can three minutes become thirteen minutes or even thirty?

Rüdiger Suchs-land



studied history, philosophy and politics; is now a cultural activist and regular contributor and film critic for German national dailies (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Zeitung* etc.), as well as the bi-weekly film magazine *Filmdienst*, for radio channels (*deutschlandfunk*, *SWR*, *WDR*) and websites (*telepolis*, *artechock*). As well writing at times for regional dailies, weekly papers and other magazines like *revolver*, *Rolling Stone Mag* etc. Curator of the film festivals of Mannheim-Heidelberg (international films) and Ludwigshafen (German films). Wrote and directed the documentaries *Caligari – Expressionism and Cinema in the Weimar Republic* (2014) and *From Caligari to Hitler* (2014) that premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was shown at many festivals including IDFA.

Frantic and Furious in the Berlin Republic

A hamster wheel. It turns and turns and in it a small rodent runs for his life in a frantic and furious manner. These wheels have, in addition to the charm of the pure movement, the sinister quality, that as a viewer you sometimes wonder if it's the animal driving the wheel, or actually an animal trying to keep pace with an ever faster driving wheel. System or individual, who decides in the end? That is indeed the question in Christoph Hochhäusler's new

film *The Lies of the Victors* (*Die Lügen der Sieger*) one of the most interesting new German films. *The Lies of the Victors* tells the story of Fabian Groys, an investigative journalist, who is working in the Germany capital for "a Hamburg magazine" (i.e. most probably *Der Spiegel*). Fabian traces political scandals in the postmodern Berlin Republic. Although he sometimes evokes the pathos and our forgotten memories of the untouchable,

incorruptible researcher, all in all Fabian is in no way a revenant of Robert Redford's character in Allan J. Pakula's *All the Presidents Men* – whose heroic aura Hochhäusler cites, as well as he does with that films inherent paranoia. More likely this Fabian seems to be an echo of the eponymous hero of Erich Kästner's *Fabian* in Berlins golden age during the Roaring Twenties of the Weimar Republic: an indifferent decadent, a flâneur

through his own life, and a game-addict, who also plays with himself and his fellow-men, and who is curiously missing a basis in life. It is his work that sets the pace of his existence, and keeps Fabian alive at all. He finds peace only when looking at his pet in the hamster wheel. The airy coolness of this hard-boiled leading-man tracing a political scandal is crisscrossed with overheated images of Berlin

nightlife with clubbing, illegal gambling-halls, fencing-fights and furious Porsche-rides though the urban jungle. It's no coincidence that those city passages remind one off Walter Ruttmann's Berlin symphonies. New Sobriety is also the approach of a Lobbying-Agency, which is fabricating the political consensus with a no nonsense-attitude in grey suits, albeit with dirty thoughts. Hochhäusler's complex, superbly

filmed movie is most of all interested in how loose impressions condense into a closed narrative. The director asks the question, what is actually real? You can accuse him that he gives away the idea of truth a bit too easy and – with his very general form of criticism – serves to the paranoia of the audience. One can argue about a lot here, but Hochhäusler at least asks the right questions, and his answers are challenging.

Die Lügen der Sieger

Directed by Christoph Hochhäusler
Sun 25-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Mon 26-1 09:15 Pathé 6,
Fri 30-1 16:00 Schouwburg GZ



Roger Alan Koza

works as a film critic in the Córdoba newspaper *La Voz del Interior*; publishes regularly on films in *Quid* and *Ñ* magazines and as well as on his blog *Ojosabiertos* at *OtrosCines* site. He currently hosts and directs the TV show *El cinematógrafo* aired by Channel 10 in Córdoba and 360 Channel around Argentina. He has published *Con los ojos abiertos: crítica de cine de algunas películas recientes* (2004). He has also published the essay *El inconsciente de las películas*, in *Arte e Psiconálisis* (2005). He edited *Cine y pensamiento: las conferencias de Mar del Plata* (2006), and *Cine del mañana* (2007). Since 2006 he has been a programmer for the Vitrina section at the Hamburg International Film Festival; and since 2011 for the FICUNAM (Universidad Autónoma de México's International Film Festival). Between 2009 and 2011, he directed the Festival of the Rio Negro Proyecta National Festival (Argentina). Since 2014, he is also the artistic director for the Cosquín International Film Festival (Córdoba). He has been a juror at various international film festivals.



Branco sai, preto fica
Directed by Adirley Queirós

Mon 26-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Thu 29-1 16:45 LantarenVenster 1

Time Travel Documentary

Usually, festivals show this amazing Queiros' movie as if it were a documentary, but... since when did it become possible to film time travelling? Here, it seems as if at least one of the characters came from the future with a very specific mission: to avoid the damage induced by the Brazilian State against a part of the population living in the outskirts of Brasília at Antiga Ceilândia, Distrito Federal. This puzzling character is seen as he is teleported inside an empty cabin parked in some sort of wasteland

surrounding an enormous empty building. He goes from place to place and sometimes spies on two of his friends who were beaten up by cops in a disco on March 5, 1986. The excuse for the police action was a drug raid, but it was actually carried out due to racial hatred. This battering was not without consequences; Marquim was paralyzed after it and Sartana lost a leg. What at first could be seen as a testimonial documentary soon becomes some sort of 'observational

documentary' about a shared fantasy. Nothing is staged, except one demand posed to the two main characters; they must go beyond verbal reconstruction of events and substitute it with a recount of their lives in which traumas are exorcized through fiction. Violence, sublimated and turned into poetry, arrives at the end in a cartoonish way when apparently there is an attack against official buildings; within the context of these guys' lives, such a playful outcome is completely understandable.

Watching Marquim moving around his house in a wheelchair as he raps for his radio program or Sartana selling prostheses to people who suffer the same physical ailments he has to face, becomes in fact a contrasting backdrop to an ending not without its dose of rage. It is only justifiable to understand Queirós' film as a documentary if we think about it as a movie devoted to recording urban spaces in the outskirts of big cities. Open shots conveying an infinite space without any specific references attached

to it, architecture in which debris and waste give shape to a land detached from nature; Sartana and Marquim's everyday tasks (somehow similar to the devastation perceived throughout this territory) prove the remarkable spiritual fortitude of the two main characters. They are the ones who give us enough information to understand that losing a leg and being forced to permanent paralysis are the aftermath of actions exerted by the State against the meek bodies of citizens who exist only to serve those

who live in the centre; citizens who must commute every day to go back to their marginal areas in order to rest. Queirós' creative cheekiness reminds us of Glauber Rocha's irreverence. This, his second feature, is simply a film alike no other. This is filmmaking born from a keen desire, from a need; this is a fist that becomes a camera to struggle, shot after shot, against those contemporary films – alas, too many – which are suffocating, hypocritical and mediocre.

Hedwig van Driel



is a pop culture omnivore who wishes there were more hours in the day. When not kept too busy by her day job, she works as an editor for the *Schokkend Nieuws*, a Dutch magazine dedicated to all films bizarre and unusual; she is one of the main vloggers at *VoordeFilm*, with movie introductions focused on Hollywood movies of the 40s and 50s; and she also contributes articles to feminist website *Lover*, comic magazine *Zone 5200*, and several other outlets. Gender is a particular interest: she wrote a special about psychotic women in horror movies for *Schokkend Nieuws*, and is co-authoring the upcoming “Kick Ass Girls and Wonder Women” feature. She also keeps a weekly column about pop culture on her own blog, and can frequently be found procrastinating on twitter.

The Messiness of Lives

Director Lynn Shelton likes throwing spanners in her character's lives. Here they think they're coasting along nicely, carried along by inertia, until something happens that they can't just wave off. For Megan (Keira Knightley) in *Laggies*, a 28-year old who's so far kept adulthood at a safe distance, there are two inciting incidents: at a friend's wedding, her boyfriend drops on one knee (or attempts to, anyway) and when she runs outside, she witnesses something that upsets the way she sees the world. That night, she also encounters Annika (Chloe Grace Moretz), a teen-

ager who convinces her to buy booze for her and her group of friends. When Annika asks Megan for a favour the day after (a favour which, not entirely coincidentally, involves pretending to be an adult), Megan on a whim decides to ask something in return: a place to stay for a week to figure things out. Sneaking this past Annika's dad (Sam Rockwell) proves trickier than expected. When you think about it, Megan is being selfish, deceitful, and rash. It's a good thing, then, that the movie has Keira Knightley's extensive likeability as an asset. Whether it's convincing a tortoise to eat, contem-

plating her boyfriend's proposal, or dancing during her work as a sign girl, it's simply impossible to see her as malevolent. While the movie is undeniably Megan's, Chloe Grace Moretz does some interesting work here as well: she's always been the Teflon-teen, preternaturally confident and charming (it's why she was so well cast as Hit-Girl, and so miscast as Carrie), but in this part, she also lets the vulnerability shine through, and all of the sudden the confidence feels less innate and more like armour. As for Sam Rockwell, by this point in his career, it should be no surprise that

he nonchalantly makes every scene he's in feel vibrantly alive. It helps too that while the movie hits some familiar beats, and this is Shelton's most polished and commercial project to date, the script isn't too worried about dotting all the i's. The careful viewer will know exactly what career Megan should go for at the end of the movie, but she still doesn't. By the end, she's made an affirmative choice for once, and that is framed as a triumph, but it's clear that that choice is a beginning, not an end. The movie doesn't shy away from the messiness of lives, and is all the more memorable for it.

Laggies

Directed by Lynn Shelton

Tue 27-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 16:00 Pathé 1

Lost in Adolescence

Representation is important. I remember the first time I saw *Lost in Translation*, particularly the scene on the bed where Scarlett Johansson's Charlotte tells Bill Murray's Bob about her aborted artistic pursuits, her photography phase “taking picture of your feet.” It was one of the first times I remember seeing something on the screen that rang so true to my experience. I was used to identifying with all sorts of people on screen – gangsters, gristly PT's, artsy Parisian types, femme fatales, lost men in their twenties. I was used to placing myself in another person's shoes. It was rare to witness someone who seemed to have walked in mine. Luckily, women in their twenties have been having a creative renaissance lately, with Lena Dunham, Mindy Kaling, Greta Gerwig, Jenny Slate, Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson, Sheila Heti, Issa Rae and so many more showing that women have a whole range of emotions and thoughts and insecurities that until now only sporadically appeared on screen. Even if you don't recognize yourself in Megan from *Laggies*, characters like hers contribute to a cinema wherein more people are represented, and that can only be a positive sign.

Kees Driessen was asked sometime halfway the 1990's by someone who knew someone at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam if he wanted to write for the festival daily as a volunteer.

Like Driessen, the person who asked him was a psychology student at the University of Amsterdam. 'You like films, don't you?', she asked. (He was a member of a student film club with the fanciful name 'Psynema'). 'You like to write, don't you?', she asked. (He was contributing editor of the faculty magazine with the fanciful name *Spiegel* ('Pseyechologist'). He couldn't deny either.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

After working for many editions of film festivals like IDFA, the Netherlands Film Festival and IFFR, many years as a film writer for music magazine *Oor* and as contributing and copy editor for film magazine *Skrien* and copy editing several books, since 2008 (after the burial of *Skrien*) he now writes mostly for *Vrij Nederland* and *de Filmkrant*.

When Ghibli Was There

Of course Hiromasa Yonebayashi's *When Marnie Was There* isn't quite of the same calibre as *The Wind Rises* and *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, the recent swan songs of Hayao Miyazaki (1941) and Isao Takahata (1935), the two grand masters who founded the Ghibli animation studios in 1958, directed its most important films (Miyazaki made *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Spirited Away*; Takahata *Grave of the Fireflies*) and who now seem to have both ended their careers. But there is much to like about the film by the relatively young Yonebayashi (1973) that can certainly be described as 'in the spirit of Ghibli'.

When Marnie Was There mostly recalls Miyazaki's work, with its young heroine, references to a nostalgic, idealized Europe (in the form of an English style mansion, built on the Japanese island Hokkaido), the fine lighting in the painted landscapes, the preference for small villages and secluded houses (as opposed to the sickening effects big city Sapporo), the extremely tender details (those tomatoes!) and the admission of a certain amount of magic in the everyday. Part of Ghibli's tradition is also – an open door that needs to be kicked in – the extremely high quality of the animation: the many background

details, the psychologically motivated nuances in the movements of ailing Anna, or the warm domesticity of the house of the two hippie-like family members where she is trying to take a break. And very Ghibli is the subtle personality of the characters. Our heroine starts off with many, admittedly explainable, but nevertheless obnoxious character traits – she is self-centered, offensive and not exactly empathetic – and although there are people who give her a hard time, there are no real bad guys, and in any case also enough helping hands. Yonebayashi, who made *The Secret*

World of Arrietty (2010) before, has the capacity to continue as the studio's flag-bearer. However, now that Miyazaki, Takahata and co-founder Toshio Suzuki, the main producer at the studio, have all decided to take a hiatus and consider their future, the end of an era may be at hand. Ghibli could very well be Japan's best and most successful studio, but in the end it's not really that big. It's hard to imagine Ghibli continuing without its three founding fathers. In that case *When Marnie Was There* would mean a worthy final chord for a studio that has been responsible for animation at the highest level for thirty years.

When Marnie Was There

Directed by Yonebayashi Hiromasa

Wed 28-1 16:00 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 19:00 Schouwburg GZ



Five Things About Ghibli

At the time of writing the audio-visual introduction to my Critics' Choice is still a work-in-progress. Maybe 'four or three things about Ghibli' will turn out to be a more practical choice and deliver a more suitable length.

The idea is to sharpen the spectator's focus on *When Marnie Was There* with some classic Ghibli-clips, accompanied by short, minimal directions. Because there are many aspects of the marvellous beauty of Ghibli's animated films that I could try to describe verbally, but that will only be fully understood when visually demonstrated. Take for instance the subtle psychology of the usually young protagonists, which is expressed much more in their behaviour, posture and gestures than in their faces, which – with their characteristic anime-eyes – are more generic, even at Ghibli. Or it involves the role of Nature, which in a Ghibli film acts like a character, intervening in the plot and thus becoming an inextricable part of the story. Showing all that will be a way to, however limitedly, give the stage to Ghibli. Hopefully this refined eye will allow the audience to enjoy *When Marnie Was There* even more.



Program

Fri 23-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 09:30 Cinerama 1

Life Itself (USA 2014)

Directed by Steve James.

Selected by Kevin B. Lee

Sat 24-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 21:45 Cinerama 1

Docteur Jekyll et les femmes (The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne) (France/West Germany 1981)

Directed by Walérian Borowczyk

Selected by Adrian Martin & Cristina Álvarez López

Sun 25-1 14.00 De Doelen Van Cappellezaal. Followed by an extended Q&A

Three Minutes Thirteen Minutes Thirty Minutes (USA 1938/Netherlands 2015, work in progress)

Video-essay made by Bianca Stigter with the participation of Glenn Kurtz

Sun 25-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Mon 26-1 09:15 Pathé 6, Fri 30-1 16:00 Schouwburg GZ

Die Lügen der Sieger (The Lies of the Victors) (Germany 2014)

Directed by Christoph Hochhäusler

Selected by Rüdiger Suchsland

Mon 26-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Thu 29-1 16:45 LantarenVenster 1

Branco sai, preto fica (White Out, Black In) (Brazil 2014)

Directed by Adirley Queirós

Selected by Roger Alan Koza

Tue 27-1 18:30 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 16:00 Pathé 1

Laggies (USA 2014)

Directed by Lynn Shelton

Selected by Hedwig van Driel

Wed 28-1 16:00 Cinerama 1, Sat 31-1 19:00 Schouwburg GZ

When Marnie Was There (Japan 2014)

Directed by Yonebayashi Hiromasa

Selected by Kees Driessen

All films will be introduced by a video-essay and followed by a Q&A with the critic.

Critics' Choice

Curators

Jan Pieter Ekker

Dana Linssen

Critics

Kees Driessen

Kevin B. Lee

Hedwig van Driel

Adrian Martin & Cristina

Álvarez López

Roger Alan Koza

Bianca Stigter

Rüdiger Suchsland

Special Thanks

Sissy Choi

Mark Glynne

Petra Goedings

Saskia Gravelijn

Diego Gutierrez

Contact Film

Elsbeth Jongsma

Pim Kipp

Jessica de Koning

John Koning

Menno Kooistra

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Titia Vuyk

Rutger Wolfson

Design

Jan Pieter Ekker

Print

Imprimo Bussum

This publication is
supported by The Slow
Criticism Project 2015

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N F K

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