

2009 RMWFF Film Descriptions

(un) veiled

Ines Hofmann Kann

(un)veiled introduces the audience to ten Muslim women from various backgrounds who now live in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Their discussion about hijab, the headscarf, revolves around a lecture on the same topic that was banned last minute but delivered anyway. In a time when Islam and especially Muslim women are represented as monolithic and beset by backwardness, the women in *(un)veiled* show the diverse, lively, argumentative debates in Muslim societies about the meanings of modernity, emancipation, and feminism. Dubai, where the filmmaker lived for eight months, becomes a character in itself, showing the complex face of a contemporary Arab city. (36 minutes)

American Outrage

Beth Gage and George Gage

Carrie and Mary Dann are feisty Western Shoshone sisters who have endured five terrifying livestock roundups by armed federal marshals in which more than a thousand of their horses and cattle were confiscated -- for grazing their livestock on the open range outside their private ranch. That range is part of 60 million acres recognized as Western Shoshone land by the United States in the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley, but in 1974 the U.S. sued the Dann sisters for trespassing on that land, without a permit. That set off a dispute between the Dann sisters and the U. S. government that swept to the United States Supreme Court and eventually to the Organization of American States and the United Nations. *American Outrage* asks why the United States government has spent millions persecuting and prosecuting two elderly women grazing a few hundred horses and cows in a desolate desert. The United States Bureau of Land Management insists the sisters are degrading the land. The Dann sisters say the real reason is the resources hidden below this seemingly barren land, their Mother Earth. Western Shoshone land is the second largest gold producing area in the world. (56 minutes)

The Bake Shop Ghost

Lorette Bayle

In a haunted bake shop, a determined young woman struggles to find the perfect recipe to satisfy a hungry spirit. Based on a best-selling children's book, this film provides enchantment for all ages. (16 minutes)

Blessed is the Match

Roberta Grossman

Narrated by Joan Allen, *Blessed Is the Match* is the first documentary feature about Hannah Senesh, the World War II-era poet and diarist who became a paratrooper, resistance fighter and modern-day Joan of Arc. Safe in Palestine in 1944, Hannah joined a mission to rescue Jews in her native Hungary. Shockingly, it was the only military rescue mission for Jews during the Holocaust. Hannah parachuted behind enemy lines, was captured, tortured and ultimately executed by the Nazis. Incredibly, her mother Catherine witnessed the entire ordeal - first as a prisoner with Hannah and later as her advocate, braving the bombed-out streets of Budapest in a desperate attempt to save her daughter. With unprecedented access to the Senesh family archive, and through interviews, eyewitness accounts and the prolific writings of Hannah and Catherine Senesh, *Blessed Is the Match* recreates Hannah's mission and imprisonment. The film explores Hannah's childhood against the backdrop of significant historical events resulting in a rich portrait with several interlocking strands. (86 minutes)

Boy Interrupted

Dana Perry

Boy Interrupted is a film that raises questions. It asks how a young boy can end his life at the tender age of 15. It struggles to find answers about what kind of family he had and the life he led. By its very nature, it is a naked display of its filmmaker's personal life at its most revealing and perhaps disturbing. How can a mother, we may ask, make a film about the death of her son? What defines this film as a remarkably unique and truth-telling achievement is the way it explores how filmmaking can create closure for its creators as well as its audience. Dana Perry has gathered home movies, photographs, and a variety of different documents to tell the story of her son, Evan: his bipolar illness, his life, and his death, and their impact on those who loved him the most. She interviews his siblings and friends, his doctors and his

teachers, and in the process, she chronicles a harrowing and difficult journey. The camera provides insight and revelation, and yet *Boy Interrupted* is a film that is also full of despair. The film's saving grace is that it functions, in the final analysis, as therapy for both its viewers and its subjects at a most fundamental level. It is an essentially human story, and a parent's worst nightmare. (92 minutes)

Crossing Midnight

Kim Snyder

Set on the border of Thailand and Eastern Burma, *Crossing Midnight* tells the story of a remarkable community of refugees from Burma working against incredible odds to help their own. Today, one million internally displaced persons are living in the jungles of Eastern Burma in the midst of on-going armed conflict. There, they live on the run, risking injury and death to forage for food to sustain their families. Over two million more have fled to the border of neighboring Thailand after enduring decades of oppression by a brutal military dictatorship.

During the violent crackdown of the 1988 student uprising, Dr. Cynthia Maung and a group of fellow students fled to the border of Thailand. There, with virtually nothing in hand, they created the Mae Tao Clinic in a one-room barn.

Over twenty years later, in the midst of an unparalleled healthcare crisis, the clinic has grown into a community of over 500 healthcare workers, a school for refugee children and a dedicated group of cross-border backpack medics who travel at great risk through the jungles of Eastern Burma to treat those living on the run. Through rare footage of these backpack medics and poignant testimony from community leaders, *Crossing Midnight* presents a unique portrait of resilience, courage and hope. (29 minutes)

Daughters of Gardeners

Karina Marceau

"RAISING A DAUGHTER IS LIKE WATERING A NEIGHBOUR'S GARDEN" - Indian Proverb India is sitting on a time bomb. The threat comes from within. Thirty-six million women are missing. The economic burden of dowries and the ancestral preference for boys make the birth of a daughter a shameful event. Ultrasound tests and abortions, medical acts which were supposed to represent progress for women, are instead being used against them. Trapped between tradition and progress, the second-most populated country in the world terminates girls before they are even born. Demographers do not hesitate to qualify the crisis of selectively aborting female fetuses as a real feticide. *Daughters of Gardeners*, is a deeply moving and profoundly human documentary; an investigation of States where aborting girls has become a very profitable industry. This one-hour film follows the journey of a young Canadian journalist, in her quest to understand and document this demographic crisis, as well as its disastrous consequences on the entire Indian society; the inability of men to find wives; the increase in prostitution; the worsening AIDS pandemic; the kidnapping and trafficking of women; the advent of illicit marriages, etc. Unexpectedly poetic images for such a subject succeed in capturing the human element behind a reality that nonetheless appears quite inhumane. Avoiding the trap of perverse sensationalism, its very sensitive commentary acts like a veritable ray of sunshine cutting through a menacing sky. A film of hope, against all odds... (53 minutes)

Flying Lessons

Janet Grillo

Struggling to raise an adolescent boy with autism, Jeanne realizes that her love alone cannot sustain them, until his does. (14 minutes)

For the Life of Me

Jean Strauss

Imagine going through your whole life without knowing who you were when you were born, without knowing what your own name had been, your own history and medical background - and you were told you had no right to know these things.

For the Life of Me follows Dave, a 52 year old adoptee, as he embarks on a journey to find the woman who gave birth to him. Along with fellow middle-aged and elderly adoptees Joe, Betty, Janet, Pam, Ruth, Carolyn and Ina. Their stories shed light on the impact secrets can have over an entire lifetime. (53 minutes)

In Place Out of Time

Erin Hudson

In Place Out of Time is a poetic portrait of a fourth generation New Mexican who sold his backhoe and picked up a camera in pursuit of a photographic quest. Eight years ago, at the age of 65, Embree "Sonny" Hale had a spark of inspiration and started a quixotic journey to take a picture of every petroglyph and pictograph in New Mexico. This film illustrates Hale's day-to-day triumphs, challenges and survival strategies as he pursues his passion to capture and preserve the memory of ancient inscriptions on rock.

A true-life Western, *In Place Out of Time* is set in the stunning landscapes of New Mexico and captures the grit and gumption of a man who follows his heart and pursues his true life's work. Ultimately, this film takes a gentle and multi-layered look at an individual's eternal connection to community, landscape, and memory. (45 minutes)

Just Me?

Amy Neil

A young lesbian feels isolated in her large extended family. But when she discovers a stockpile of vintage photographs that reveal the hidden life of her great grandmother, she begins to suspect she is not alone. (22 minutes)

The Kinda Sutra

Jessica Yu

Where exactly do babies come from? And how are they really made? Mixing humorous animation and interviews, Jessica Yu poses these questions to a variety of adults and youngsters who explore their earliest understanding of sex, conception and how the two, uh, intersect.

With humor, affection and nostalgia for youth's lost naivete, Yu's subjects recall some of their earliest experiences with – and misconceptions of – sex and babies and all things thereof. The stork, of course, makes an appearance, as do other less conventional elements, including floating airborne seeds, a tree, pollywogs and an unexpected bathroom fixture. This very personal, Indian-themed riff on the Kama Sutra provides a glimpse into how we think about sex and what we learn along the way. (8 minutes)

Lullaby

Kevin Markwick

A remarkable portrayal of a mother who is determined to move on after a family tragedy. (15 minutes)

Mine

Geralyn Pezanoski

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, thousands of pets were left stranded on rooftops, or left behind by their displaced guardians who desperately wanted to take them, but couldn't.

Mine is the powerful, heart-felt story about the essential bond between humans and animals told against the backdrop of one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. (83 minutes)

The Mosque in Morgantown

Brittany Huckabee

With its red-and-gold fall colors and ducks swimming in the river, Morgantown seems an unlikely battleground for the soul of Islam in America. But that's what happens when journalist Asra Nomani walks up to the door of a nondescript mosque in the West Virginia university town. Her demand that women be allowed to pray with the men, instead of being relegated to the backroom, ignites a national controversy.

The Mosque in Morgantown goes behind the sensational rebel in the mosque headlines to present a nuanced, complex portrait of the real tensions in a community that since 9/11 finds itself under a harsh spotlight. Instead of becoming a bio-pic about Nomani's own personal jihad, what emerges is a remarkably intimate portrait of a community in turmoil. A woman worries Nomani is just a provocateur out to sell books; a blonde Islamic convert switches sides, and an earnest medical student tries to find middle

ground between the factions. But the issue is larger than women in mosques. Nomani sees it as the struggle for Muslims to live in the 21st century while being defined by the seventh century. It's also about the profoundly lonely struggle of taking on one's own community.

On the day of Eid, which should be about communal celebration and mounds of fragrant biryani, Nomani watches the fragile crescent of the moon from a Chuck E. Cheese parking lot. It's an achingly telling moment in a compelling documentary about the wrenching price of change. (75 minutes)

My Mother's Garden

Cynthia Lester

In the suburban setting of a quiet tree-lined street in Granada Hills, California we see a 61 year old woman pushing a grocery cart to her front door. We watch her climb through a window covered in ivy and cob webs into her house, stepping on top of stacks of newspapers, piles of debris, rotting material, clothing, and toys; a living mass of waste that has literally pushed her out of the house and into her garden.

My Mother's Garden is the story of Eugenia Lester whose hoarding disorder has entered a dangerous and life threatening stage. Directed by her daughter Cynthia, it documents how one family comes together to cope with their mother's disorder and rebuild a lost sense of family. (70 minutes)

Neshoba

Micki Dickoff

Neshoba tells the story of a Mississippi town still divided about the meaning of justice, 40 years after the murders of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner. Although Klansmen bragged openly about what they did in 1964, no one was held accountable until 2005, when the State indicted preacher Edgar Ray Killen, an 80-year-old notorious racist and alleged mastermind of the killings. Through intimate interviews with the families of the victims, candid interviews with black and white Neshoba County Citizens, and exclusive, first time interviews with Killen, the film explores whether healing and reconciliation are possible without telling the unvarnished truth. (90 minutes)

Orgasm Inc.

Liz Canner

In the shocking and hilarious documentary *ORGASM INC.*, filmmaker Liz Canner takes a job editing erotic videos for a drug trial for a pharmaceutical company. Her employer is developing what they hope will be the first Viagra drug for women that wins FDA approval to treat a new disease: Female Sexual Dysfunction (FSD). Liz gains permission to film the company for her own documentary. Initially, she plans to create a movie about science and pleasure but she soon begins to suspect that her employer, along with a cadre of other medical companies, might be trying to take advantage of women (and potentially endanger their health) in pursuit of billion dollar profits. *ORGASM INC.* is a powerful look inside the medical industry and the marketing campaigns that are literally and figuratively reshaping our everyday lives around health, illness, desire — and that ultimate moment: orgasm. (80 minutes)

Plastic

Sandy Widyanata

Anna is nervously preparing for a first date with Henry, a man she has secretly loved for years. She is manically searching through her wardrobe when Henry calls to see if they could meet earlier. Anna looks at the clock in distress – she has nothing to wear, there's a huge pimple on her nose and she's fat! Argh! If only she could change a few things about how she looks. -Like those girls in beauty magazines!...If you could, would you? And how far is too far?.....Beware of your dreams they might just come true! (8 minutes)

The Queen and I

Nahid Persson Sarvestani

When Nahid Persson Sarvestani, an Iranian exile, set out to make a documentary about Farah, the wife of the shah of Iran, she expected to encounter her opposite. As a child, Nahid had lived in dire poverty, watching Farrah's wedding as if it were a fairy tale. As a teenager, she joined the Communist faction of Khomeini's revolution that deposed the shah, sending him and his family fleeing from country to country. When Khomeini betrayed his promise for democracy, imposing more violent measures than the shah had, Nahid was also forced to flee.

Thirty years later, she needs key questions answered and goes directly to the source. Surprisingly, Queen Farah welcomes her as a fellow refugee from their beloved homeland, granting unprecedented access. Over the next year and a half, Nahid enters the queen's world, planning to challenge the shah's ideology; instead, she must rethink her own. When Nahid's prior opposition to the shah surfaces, the queen shuts down filming. Yet, in the struggle to understand each other's experiences, an unlikely friendship has blossomed. Confronting Farah about the shah's repression has become not only a political conflict but a personal one, and Nahid's objectivity is shaken. In this gripping, poignant consideration of subjectivity as truth, we learn that people write history. And can also heal it. *The Queen and I* couldn't be more relevant as we reach across our own political aisles. (90 minutes)

The Reckoning

Pamela Yates

Late in the 20th century, in response to repeated mass atrocities around the world, more than 120 countries united to form the International Criminal Court (ICC)--the first permanent court created to prosecute perpetrators (no matter how powerful) of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. *The Reckoning* follows dynamic ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo and his team for 3 years across 4 continents as he issues arrest warrants for Lord's Resistance Army leaders in Uganda, puts Congolese warlords on trial, shakes up the Colombian justice system, and charges Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir with genocide in Darfur, challenging the UN Security Council to arrest him. Building cases against genocidal criminals presents huge challenges, and the Prosecutor has a mandate but no police force. At every turn, he must pressure the international community to muster political will for the cause. Like a deft thriller, *The Reckoning* keeps you on the edge of your seat, in this case with two riveting dramas--the prosecution of unspeakable crimes and the ICC's fight for efficacy in its nascent years. As this tiny court in The Hague struggles to change the world and forge a new paradigm for justice, innocent victims suffer and wait. Will the Prosecutor succeed? Will the world ensure that justice prevails? (98 minutes)

Saint Misbehavin': The Wavy Gravy Movie

Michelle Esrick

Saint Misbehavin': The Wavy Gravy Movie is a new documentary by director Michelle Esrick, revealing the true story of cultural phenomenon Wavy Gravy, a man whose commitment to making the world a better place has never wavered.

Wavy Gravy is known as the MC of the Woodstock Festival, a hippie icon, a clown and even a Ben & Jerry's ice cream flavor. In *Saint Misbehavin'* we meet a true servant to humanity, who carries his message through humor and compassion. The film weaves together intimate verite footage, reflections from an array of cultural and countercultural peers, and never-before-seen archival footage to tell a story that is bigger than the man himself. (83 minutes)

Shouting Fire

Liz Garbus

Liz Garbus's subject is free speech and why it is the basis of a free society. Garbus's storytelling genius is in her use of the loveable, common-sense persona of her father, Martin Garbus, a famous First Amendment attorney. We are held rapt by several legal cases: a professor's outspokenness after 9/11 that led to his firing from the University of Colorado, the principal of a public school in New York being caught up in irrational anti-Muslim frenzy, and the Poway, California, high school student's handmade anti-gay T-shirt. How free is free speech? Garbus brings up cogent examples from past interpretation and defense of the First Amendment, such as the scare of McCarthyism, the publication of the Pentagon Papers, and the Skokie, Illinois, march by neo-Nazis. This film demonstrates the best of documentary filmmaking by being reflective and consistently probing, with abundant narrative drive. (74 minutes)

Sin by Silence

Olivia Klaus

Inside the California Institution for Women, the first inmate initiated and led group in U.S. prison history, shatters the misconceptions of domestic violence.

Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA) was created in 1989 to help women inside prison break the silence about abuse and learn more about what they needed to do to help others stop the cycle of violence.

Instead of fighting a system that does not fully comprehend the complexities of abuse, the women of CWAA led an initiative to help educate the system. Through careful orchestration of letter writing campaigns, media coverage, and senate hearings a movement was born and laws for battered women were changed. And for the founder of CWAA, the flicker of hope begins to grow as her possible freedom, after 26 years in prison, lies moments away. (49 minutes)

Sister Wife

Jill Orschel

DoriAnn is a Mormon fundamentalist who shares a husband with her younger biological sister. During a private bathing meditation and candid interviews, DoriAnn explores the surprisingly universal challenges of her marriage and reveals an unexpected explanation for why she chooses polygamy.

(10 minutes)

Smile 'Til It Hurts: The Up With People Story

Lee Storey

Smile 'Til It Hurts: The Up With People Story explores the clean-cut, smile-drenched singing phenomenon Up With People. Since 1965, this peppy youth group has sung to 20 million people worldwide, performed at four Superbowl halftime shows, and been parodied on *The Simpsons* and *South Park*. Talent was not required of its members, just a common enthusiastic vision to change the world one squeaky-clean song at a time. But its cheery façade concealed the more complicated reality of an organization founded on conservative American ideals and cult-like utopian ideology.

Up With People was born in response to the liberal counter-culture of the '60s by the ultra-conservative religious sect, Moral ReArmament. Over the years, they were embraced by world leaders from US Presidents Nixon, Reagan and George H.W. Bush to King Juan Carlos of Spain, Queen Noor of Jordan and Pope John Paul II. The organization's access to global dignitaries and developing countries was noticed by corporate giants---like GM, Exxon, Halliburton and Searle---who gave millions of dollars to back the popular group.

Artistically cut with kitschy and never-before-seen archival footage, and the honest reflections of former members, *Smile 'Til It Hurts: The Up With People Story* reveals what can happen when ideology, money and groupthink converge to co-opt youthful idealism. (80 minutes)

Speaking in Tongues

Marcia Jarmel

In a time where 31 states have passed English Only initiatives, one urban school district is exploring the provocative notion that speaking a foreign language can be a national asset. We follow four diverse students and their families as they encounter the challenges and delights of becoming fluent in two languages. As we witness their journey, we see how speaking more than one language changes them, their families, their communities, and maybe even the world. (60 minutes)

Sweet Crude

Sandy Cioffi

Sweet Crude is the story of Nigeria's Niger Delta – a story that's never been captured in a feature-length film.

Beginning with the filmmaker's initial trip to document the building of a library in a remote village, *Sweet Crude* is a journey of multilayered revelation and ever-deepening questions. It's about survival, corruption, greed and armed resistance. It's about one place in one moment, with themes that echo many places throughout history. *Sweet Crude* shows the humanity behind the statistics, events and highly sensationalized media portrayal of the region. Set against a stunning backdrop of Niger Delta footage, the

film gives voice to the region's complex mix of stakeholders and invites the audience to learn the deeper story.

The issues are local and human, yet they have far-reaching political, environmental and economic implications. It's a powder-keg situation that affects the daily lives and futures of the people who live there. Left unchecked, its consequences will be felt around the globe. Yet barely anyone outside the Delta knows what's really happening. (93 minutes)

The Age of Stupid

Franny Armstrong

This enormously ambitious drama-documentary-animation hybrid stars Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite as an old man living in the devastated world of 2055, watching 'archive' footage from 2008 and asking: why didn't we stop climate change while we had the chance? (89 minutes)

This Is Her

Katie Wolfe

As she gives birth to her daughter, Evie reveals her family's future and the six-year-old bitch who ruined it all. (12 minutes)

The Wednesdays

Conor Ferguson

Mr. and Mrs. O'Leary have been prisoners of old age for too long, so when they discover a way to feel young again, they take it – every Wednesday. But soon the law comes knocking at their door.... (14 minutes)