



**First, the Recap:**

Define cinema. For all the time that has passed that the format known as motion picture has been a part of our entertainment and artistic culture, its styles, formats, and contents have so greatly varied and evolved. Yet, in this ever-changing realm of creativity, we find that the modes of expression that filmmakers choose to experiment with can push the limits of what most would call the traditional notions of what this art form should appear like. Is it only mass appeal that makes good film? Or is there a more subtle but no less impactful means by which a filmmaker might choose to incorporate? Welcome to the new era of filmmaking at what it means to fashion cinematic work.

**Next, my Mind:**

With that kind of synopsis, I am sure there are already some who are attempting to ponder what exactly this means in the context of a film critics review, but trust me when I say, it is more than apropos when it comes to the efforts being screened at the 2020 Berlin Revolution Film Festival, and definitely applies to the ten and a half minute short from director Michael

Higgins and producer Medea Electronique. As with so much of indie cinema, this was a DEEPLY experimental effort and another that employs only visual and sound to explain itself to viewers.

Wasting no time establishing its quirky roots, the visuals capture you right off in their blatant and purposeful use of full-on “unrestored film footage” imagery, grainy and “static-y” yet arresting, as it follows non-descript people during what could almost be construed as invoking an air of totally unknown, cult-like ritual, as we don’t truly discern what is happening. It’s like watching a film made through the negative strip of an old photo as opposed to the full color version of the image, and it makes for a rather unsettling atmosphere when allowing the obscurity of the picture to wash over you.

What also makes it a rather disturbing view is the wildly chaotic musical accompiament that provides that eerie, ominous tone and manner, along with barking dogs, miscellaneous landscapes, strobe effects, buildings, plants, varied actions, people, movement, all weaving together to make a “narrative” leading us into the mysterious and the bizarre. It very much gets surrealistic, and the overall atmosphere it elicits remains as such the whole way through. Again, this is FAR outside the lines for what most mainstream filmgoers would even want to admit IS film, but that’s precisely why this critic can ultimately say that’s what Higgins and Co. are after. Artistic expression to bring about a sense of time, its passage, and recollections of the past yet firmly rooted in the present.

And so in total, with its muted colors, gritty look, and admittedly creative approach, “Olive” dutifully finds its place among avant-garde cinema and proudly displays it so in a manner that we hope does cause people pause, but more so that they can take it in and find an appreciation for inventive, imaginative filmmaking and those behind it so they can expand their pallet and realize that filmmaking is FAR from one, two, or three dimensional when it comes to the independent community and those who call it their base of operation.

As always, this is all for your consideration and comment. Until next time, thank you for reading!

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