

NEW WEST PICK: DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

Big Sky Film: ‘Silences’ Blurs Line Between Subject, Object

By Contributing Writer, 2-11-07

Editor’s Note: “Silences” is one of NewWest.Net’s picks featured this week to help you plan for the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, which opens Feb. 15 at the Wilma Theater. Click here for the trailer for the film. “Silences” plays at the festival Sunday, Feb. 18 at 5:15 p.m. in a series of shorts screenings with Dig, Memento, a Boulder Life Line, My Name is Ahmed Ahmed and In the Glow. Bookmark www.newwest.net/bsdff to keep tabs on the previews and coverage of the festival.

The line between subject and object is getting skinnier and skinnier in this crazy, mixed-up, postmodern world, and people like Octavio Warnock-Graham are doing little to rectify the problem.



Caption:

Warnock-Graham is the writer, director and producer of *Silences*, a 20-minute entry in the Documentary Short competition at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival opening this week at the Wilma. He also is the movie’s star—or, more accurately, “subject”—alongside his mother, Harriet Warnock. We know this because moments after an intro montage of the idyllic suburbia of Maumee, Ohio, Warnock-Graham turns his camera on his mother and asks “Do you know what this is about?” She fumbles the answer and he interjects, “It’s about you and me.”

As evidenced by the family photo that graces the movie’s DVD cover and website, Warnock-Graham is clearly not white. And at 36 years old, he’s decided to uncover the truth about his heritage once and for all.

If this sounds compelling as hell, well, that’s because it is. The question of how a “secret” as big as a two-ton elephant can be kept from an inquisitive young man for well over three decades is not *exactly* answered, but that doesn’t prevent a healthy dose of white guilt leaking profusely from the interviews Warnock-Graham conducts with his mother’s relatives.

And the climax of the piece, when Warnock-Graham finally connects with the source of his life’s mystery, is a profound moment that the filmmaker wisely allows to play out in near-silence.

Silences has its flaws—it falls prey to its master’s self-indulgence on more than one occasion—but it’s a well-shot and mostly well-built internal narrative from a guy who finally finds an answer to the question he faced in the mirror every day of his life.

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