

Members-Only Program 2024

Wed Feb 7

The Company of Strangers – Canada, 1990 - 105 minutes - Drama - G

When a tour bus carrying senior women breaks down in rural Quebec, the driver goes out to check the engine and injures her ankle in the process, leaving her - and the bus - to be cared for by the elderly passengers. The women occupy a deserted house and try to make themselves comfortable. Luckily, among them, there are a lot of practical skills, for example Catherine, a nun, has a working knowledge of mechanics and Alice, a Native American, can construct traps to catch food. After a few days confined together and sharing intimacies, the women have become so bonded that they are reluctant to leave when rescue arrives! Based on a true story and acted by the same people who lived it, this is a touching, funny, haunting depiction of eight elderly women, left to cope for themselves, alone in the wilderness. This was the first film we screened for Members Only thirty years ago.

Wed Feb 28

Let the River Flow (Ellos Eatnu)- Norway, 2023 - subtitles – 124 min - Drama- M

This drama is set during the 1970s environmental campaign against the building of the Alta dam in the homeland of the indigenous Saami people in Norway. Ester, a newly graduated teacher posted to the area, becomes involved in the campaign and in doing so, learns to overcome her shame about her Saami heritage. The protests against the dam become a campaign for indigenous rights as much as an environmental campaign. This is mirrored in Ester's own life as she learns to embrace her Saami heritage. In following her transformative journey, the film portrays with realism the racism behind the policy of assimilation directed against the Saami, and the denigration of their traditional way of life that had obliged Ester to hide her heritage just to keep her job.

Wed April 3

A Lion Returns - Australia, 2020 - 92 minutes - Drama - MA

In Serhat Caradee's superbly crafted film, *A Lion Returns*, a young Muslim man, Jamal, who has returned to Australia after fighting with terrorists in Syria, seeks re-admittance into the suburban home of his parents, so that he can see his dying mother one final time. But first he has to run the gauntlet — a series of lacerating encounters with loved ones whom he betrayed with his decision to go overseas. Caradee (*Cedar Boys*, 2009) delivers a confronting domestic drama that electrifies a host of hot-button issues - extremism, terrorism, religious zealotry, national identity, betrayal and loyalty. He shows both sides of the argument through prolonged dialogue exchanges that are razor-sharp, heartfelt, sorrowful and raw. All aspects of this low budget film, shot in 10 days, have received high accolades. David Stratton (4.5/5 stars) - "it grabs you from the opening scene and never lets go."

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Wed May 1

Past Lives – USA, 2023 – English with some subtitles - 106 min - Rom/Drama - M

Frequently listed as one of the best of 2023, this film is a quiet examination of relationships across the years, and across nations and cultures. Hae-sung, a 12 year old boy in Korea, is heart broken when his close friend Na-young moves with her family to North America. Ten years later Na-young is a budding literary star in New York, while Hae-sung is trudging through his military service back in Seoul and studying engineering. The two connect via Facebook and then Skype for a while. Another ten years later Na-young is married and fully established in her prestigious career in New York. Hae-sung seeks her out and comes to New York to meet up. What is their future now? Running through the film is the Korean concept of “in-yun”, the karmic bringing together of people who were lovers in past lives.

Sun May 19 2pm

Oppenheimer – USA, 2023 - 180 min - Biopic - MA15+

Christopher Nolan’s biopic of J Robert Oppenheimer (the father of the atomic bomb) is unlike any other. The film focuses on the man himself and his relationships with those around him. There are two basic storylines, and the film shifts back and forth between them. His life up to developing the bombs and the eventual loss of his security clearance (thanks in large part to early Communist connections and his outspoken opposition to developing a hydrogen bomb) is shot in color. These scenes are interspersed with black and white scenes of the 1959 Senate confirmation hearing of the former chair of the Atomic Energy Commission, who is revealed as playing a critical role in stripping away Oppenheimer's security clearance five years earlier. The visuals and sound throughout the film provoke a visceral experience in the viewer. As one reviewer said : ‘As a physical experience, *Oppenheimer* is something else entirely—it's hard to say exactly what, and that's what's so fascinating about it.’

Wed June 5

Fear Eats the Soul (Angst Essen Seele Auf) – Germany, 1974 – subtitles -94 min - Drama - M

Regarded as one of the high-water marks in German New Wave cinema of the 1970s, Ali: *Fear Eats the Soul* is an intense portrayal of a relationship, directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Emmi, a sixty-year-old German woman, falls in love with Ali, a Moroccan immigrant, twenty-five years her junior. The couple faces rejection from friends on both sides and this puts a strain on their relationship. But the couple fighting a society's prejudice and resentment of their unconventional love must fight some of their own prejudices as well. The film was made in 1974. Has society changed in the last fifty years? How would the couple and those around them act now? What is Fassbinder trying to say in this film?