Diversity & High Quality in 2018 Oscar-Nominated Live Action Short Films

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on February 13, 2018 - 9:02am

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Rating: **5.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – From deafness to religious conflict to one of the most vicious events in American history, the Oscar nominated Live Action short films fulfill the drama, emotions and even laughs in a compact form. The 2018 Live Action Shorts nominees are being shown in one program, locally at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema in Chicago. Click here [19] for more information. The Animations Shorts are also being shown.

The caliber of all the live action shorts – which of course means a narrative with actors, as opposed to animation or documentary – are at a top drawer level, both as stories and films. There is even a surreal comedy ("The Eleven O'Clock") that delivers hilarity and thoughtfulness in 13 scant minutes. There is not one to recommend over the other, only a journey of cinematic purpose in each film, delivered with a creativeness that becomes emotional. Even the film that is a plea for action ("The Silent Child") is free of the stickiness that those type of works carry… it is inspiring in its activism.

'The Silent Child,' Directed by Rachel Stenton and Chris Overton
Photo credit: Shorts TV

The films are DeKalb Elementary, a contemporary look at the psychology behind shooting incidents. My Nephew Emmett is about the Emmett Til civil rights incident in the 1950s, and stunningly marries the past to the presentation. The aforementioned “The Eleven O’Clock” and “The Silent Child” are from Australia and Britain, and have a crispness to their art… “Eleven” even has a Monty Python feel. And finally, “Watu Wote: All of Us” explores a real life incident that expands upon humanity. It’s so virtuous it must be true.

It’s notable that persons of color figure into three of the short films. In “DeKalb Elementary,” the protagonist is African American, and relates her pain to the disenfranchised white man. “My Nephew Emmett,” besides stunningly showing the normalcy of events before the Til murder, also gives a glimpse into life for African Americans in the Deep South during the 1950s, seen but never heard. The perceived resentment and entitlement of the white population depicted is a reminder of how far we have come, but how the vibrations of the era still ring many bells. “Watu Wote: All of Us” takes place in Kenya, where Christians and Muslims are in conflict, with often violent results.

The Australian and British short films have wonderful cultural and class memes to plumb. In “The Eleven O’Clock” there are professional versus administrative themes, with mistaken identity thrown in. “The Silent Child” is about an upper class family who can’t bother with their deaf youngest daughter, forcing a hire instructor to go outside the bounds of her responsibility. What is “right” becomes a standoff between employer and employee.

’The Eleven O’Clock,’ Directed by Josh Lawson and Derin Seale
Photo credit: Shorts TV

Take the opportunity to see these shorts if they’re available in your area (especially you Chicagoans), or watch them once they become available for digital download (February 27th). It will make your Oscar viewing that much more informative, and will take you on five journeys in a 99 minute presentation.

The 2018 Oscar Nominated Shorts – Live Action are currently playing in Chicago at Landmark Century Centre Cinema, 2828 North Clark Street. See local listings for other show times and theaters. Available through Video-on-Demand February 27th, 2018. Featuring the short films “The Silent Child” (Directed by Rachel Stenton & Chris Overton), “Watu Wote: All of Us” (Katja Benrath & Tobias Rosen), “The Eleven O’Clock” (Josh Lawson & Derin Seale), “My Nephew Emmett” (Kevin Wilson Jr.), an “DeKalb Elementary” (Reed Van Dyk). Not Rated. Click here *[20] for more information.*

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