

THE FILM

VERDICT

08 SEPTEMBER 2023

DAY 10

VENICE REVIEW DAILY

COMPETITION

LUBO



Francesca Scorzoni

VERDICT: Part survival-revenge drama, part love story, Giorgio Diritti's "Lubo" addresses the Swiss state's forcible removal of Jenisch children from their families beginning in the 1930s, and while Franz Rogowski's magnetism keeps his morally complex character sympathetic, the film feels too much like a miniseries cut down to a very long feature length.

Jay Weissberg, September 7, 2023

Cinema – and the world in general – has largely overlooked the Jenisch people, a Germanic-speaking nomadic group mostly living in Switzerland, Germany and Austria who've been subjected to the same kind of discrimination as the Roma. Valentina Pedicini's 2017 film *Where the Shadows Fall* dealt

in part with the state-sanctioned kidnapping and "re-education" of Jenisch children, but that didn't get nearly the attention likely to accrue to Giorgio Diritti's *Lubo*, in competition in Venice. It's a story of survival in which Franz Rogowski plays the titular character, an itinerant entertainer whose personal tragedy leads him

[Full review, click here](#)

COMPETITION

HOLLY

VERDICT: A high school girl demonstrates a special gift for empathy and healing others in Belgian director Fien Troch's mysterious, multi-layered parable about the price of doing good.

Deborah Young, September 7, 2023

A great tragedy whips through a small community at the beginning of *Holly* when a fire breaks out in the high school and ten students are killed. But that morning one girl seems to have a premonition and calls the school to say she won't come, because she has a feeling that something bad is going to happen.



From this bare premise, award-winning Belgian writer-director Fien Troch (*Home, Kid, Someone Else's Happiness*) launches an intriguing explora-

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OUT OF COMPETITION

ON THE PULSE

VERDICT: 'On The Pulse' is an admirable but out-of-touch portrait of the gritty work of investigative TV journalists.

Kevin Jagernauth, September 6, 2023

In an era of newsroom budgets being slashed, cable TV in free fall, and unending media consolidation, even the idea of a investigative television news team seems antiquated.

So it feels somewhat nostalgic to watch Alix Delporte's third feature *Vivants* (*On The Pulse*), which despite its desire to be au courant, nonetheless feels like a picture out of time.

In fairness, Delaporte does address the challenges of the modern newsroom early on: flagging viewership, youth engagement, and keeping audiences from flipping the channel. But the dramatic focus is still on the nitty gritty, day in and day out grindset of the front line television reporting hustle. Our guide through this insular world is Gabrielle (Alice Isaaz), who has arrived in Paris from Grenoble, with a technical institute degree under her belt, specifically to fill the open intern role on a highly regarded, close knit, investigative journalism team. She beats out a slew of other eager candidates by quickly getting



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veteran Vincent (Roschdy Zem) on her side, who convinces Camille (Pascale Arbillot) to bring her on. From there, it's all hands on deck.

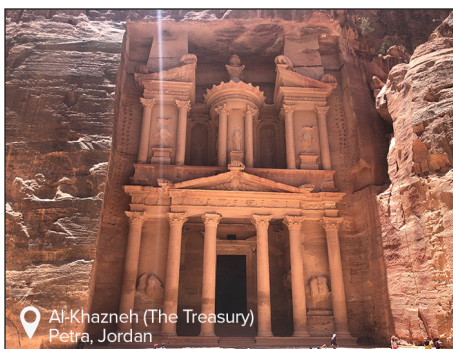
On Gabrielle's first assignment, she jumps in the back of an ambulance and follows the team around an emergency room, as they prepare a report about the crumbling infrastructure of the public healthcare system. She's with the crew when they follow vegan commandos as they raid a rabbit farm. By the time Damien (Vincent Elbaz) is sent on a dangerous mission to a battle zone, she's fully part of the workplace family worrying about his safe return. But not every gig is an adrenaline rush — a fashion show is an easy layup for ratings, but as Gabrielle will learn, it brings its

own distinct set of problems.

Running under 90 minutes, *Vivants* feels too slight to be bafflingly credited to Delaporte and three other screenwriters. It's clear that at some point Delaporte and Co. made a conscious decision to strictly focus the action in the office or in the field. But in leaving any kind of meaningful insight into the team's personal lives and internal struggles behind, the characterizations suffer and remain flat.

Gabrielle arrives confident, cool-headed, and capable, and largely stays that way, never overwhelmed despite being wholly inexperienced. She's just as comfortable in the editing suite as she is operating a camera, and every-

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Al-Khazneh (The Treasury)
Petra, Jordan

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ORIZZONTI

GASOLINE RAINBOW

VERDICT: The freewheeling independence of the open road is given a Gen-Z spin in the Ross Brothers' kinetic and affecting hybrid documentary.

Ben Nicholson, September 7, 2023

There is a glorious wide-eyed openness to Bill and Turner Ross's Gasoline Rainbow.

A tale of five teenage friends embarking on a post-high school road trip from their backwater Oregon town, it brims with the captivating allure of new horizons. Made with the Ross Brothers' trademark disregard for the boundaries between documentary and fiction, employing the same improvisation-



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al style as their recent hit *Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets* (2020). Here, the narrative was conceived of by the filmmakers before then being embellished in concert with their young cast. Representing the filmmakers' bow on the Lido, the film

has its world premiere as part of Venice's Orizzonti competition.

The glamour and romance of Venice feel a long way from Wiley, Oregon. It's the small town in which Nathaly (Nathaly Garcia), Makai

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GIORNATE

THE SUMMER WITH CARMEN

VERDICT: The latest feature from filmmaker Zacharias Mavroeidis (Defunct) is queer, sexy, Greek and low budget but not quite as fun or smart as it should be.

Boyd van Hoeij, September 7, 2023

A queer filmmaker in a funk despite his pink-blue hair needs to come up with a treatment for a film that's "fun, sexy, Greek and low budget" in Zacharias Mavroeidis' *The Summer with Carmen* (To kalokairi tis Karmen).

The resulting meta film succeeds on three of those counts, which is not bad, though the film is never quite as playful as the premise promises, mainly because it needed a much punchier rhythm. That said, LGBTQ festivals and distributors will eat up any film that starts with a shot of someone scratching



Giornate degli autori.

their hairy bum on a nude beach while we are informed about the golden rules of screenwriting — never mind the fact that they then are neither obeyed nor meaningfully subverted. *The Summer with Carmen* (the female of the title is a literal bitch on four paws) premiered in Venice in the Giornate degli autori section.

Broad-chested and luxuriantly hirsute Demosthenes (Yorgos Tsiantoulas) is a 33-year-old for-

mer actor and current civil servant whose number one priority is men, or rather sex with said species. One summer weekend, he hangs out with his former actor and current director friend Nikitas (Andreas Lampropoulos, almost a beanpole next to Tsiantoulas' beefy build), at a queer beach. Between bouts of bitchy comments and voyeurism, the two try to come up with a plot for a film that responds to the requirements of Nikitas' unseen

[Full review, click here](#)

VERDICT SHORTS

SENTIMENTAL STORIES

VERDICT: A largely deserted port plays host to subtle drama unraveling at a glacially pace in Xandra Popescu's strangely beguiling study in stasis.

Ben Nicholson, September 7, 2023

There are not really any sentimental stories in *Sentimental Stories*.

There are plot details that can arguably be recorded: a woman and her niece work in an often empty diner in the middle of a vast port; a couple apparently begins



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the process of separation; workers in fluorescent vests idle the day away. However, if there are narrative developments, they occur in almost imperceptible increments and remain oddly devoid of emotion. Both sentiment and stories

seem eerily absent. And yet, Xandra Popescu's short, which screens as part of the Orizzonti competition in Venice, has an irresistibly enigmatic timbre and tempo all of its own.

'Cinema of stasis' is a term that would more typically be applied to films packed with long shots that feature little to no movement either in front of, or behind, the camera. While that description would not be inaccurate here, the stasis in Popescu's film feels far more fundamental. The world of *Sentimental Stories*, which feels hermetically sealed in a similar way to the shipyard of Evi Kalogiropou-

[Full review, click here](#)

BIENNALE COLLEGE

FIREDREAM

VERDICT: Firedream offers lessons of passionate honesty in work made with love, and creativity even with some shortcomings.

Lucy Virgen, September 7, 2023

“I can’t imagine why someone wouldn’t want to keep on living,” says Lucas, the teenage protagonist of *Firedream* (Lumbrensueno), lamenting the death of a friend. The deceased’s mother replies, “perhaps he did not want to keep on dying.” This conversation furnishes a capsule description of the very sober drama *Firedream*, the Mexican participant in the Biennale College Cinema section of the Venice Film Festival.

The central theme is adolescent angst, which manifests as insecurity, paranoia, boredom, but also as improbable romantic dreams and the desire to continue living. Lucas is a young man who works in a hamburger joint, he lives with his mother and his sister. He likes to take photos and make short videos with his cell phone, but he doesn’t have a strong interest in life. At work, he meets Óscar, a young man who is both realistic about job possibilities and fanciful about almost any other subject: he believes he is



Colectivo Colmena

receiving cosmic messages, has multiple paranoias, and pretends that the boyfriend of the girl he likes is in reality a passing relationship. Óscar believes they have broken up. The manager of the burger joint is the typical middle manager who pressures employees with dreams of an unachievable future. Lucas’s life moves between the anarchy of Óscar, and the servile capitalism of his boss who believes that being a good employee is a reward in itself. Lucas’s mother tries to

[Full review, click here](#)



Colectivo Colmena

BIENNALE COLLEGE

LUMBRENSUEÑO

CINE VERDICT: *Lumbrensueño* da una lección de creatividad, disciplina y amor al cine aún con algunas deficiencias.

Lucy Virgen, September 7, 2023

“No puedo imaginar por qué alguien no quiere seguir viviendo” dice Lucas, el adolescente protagonista de *Lumbrensueño* lamentando la muerte de un amigo. La madre del difunto le contesta “tal vez no quiso seguir muriendo”. Esta conversación retrata, con pocas palabras, y un drama muy sobrio *Lumbrensueño*, participante mexicana en la sección Biennale- College-Cinema del Festival de Cine de Venecia.

El tema central es la angustia adolescente, que se manifiesta como inseguridad, paranoia, aburrimiento, pero también con improbables sueños románticos y ganas de seguir viviendo. Lucas es un joven que trabaja en un restaurante de hamburguesas, vive con su madre y su hermana. Le gusta tomar fotos y armar pequeños videos con su celular, pero no tiene un interés fuerte en la vida. En el trabajo conoce a Óscar un joven que es a la vez realista con las posibilidades laborales y fantasioso en casi cualquier otro tema: cree recibir mensajes cósmicos, tiene múltiples paranoias y no pretende que el novio de la chica que le gusta, es una relación que ella ya terminó. El gerente de la hamburguesería, es el típico jefe intermedio que presiona a los empleados con ofertas de un futuro imposible. La vida de Lucas se mueve entre

[Full review, click here](#)

CRITICS WEEK



Square Eyes Film

MALQUERIDAS

VERDICT: Women in Chilean prisons record motherhood and the raw pain of separation in Tana Gilbert's empathetic and impressionistic, mobile-shot doc of solidarity.

Carmen Gray, September 7, 2023

In her emotionally raw and affecting, activism-driven feature debut *Malqueridas*, screening in the Critics' Week line-up of the Venice Film Festival, documentarian Tana Gilbert captures what motherhood is like inside Chilean prisons.

Digital recording in Chile's prisons is a clandestine activity. It is officially forbidden by the rules and able to impact privileges if detected, but common nonetheless, and not a crime. The ease with which images can now be taken on a mobile phone, with the shrinking size and democratisation of digital tech, has enabled Gilbert to collate a view of this world that is more intimate, and prisoner-led, than what is usually depicted in movies about jail life. It also stands apart from the deluge of contemporary films about our always-online social media reality. The most poignant frame through which to consider the mobile-shot imagery in *Malqueridas* is the family photo — because these furtive snaps are one of the few ways a woman doing time can shore up memories and continue connection with their child.

Gilbert has woven together images taken by more than twenty women serving time in prison, and their testimonies. These have been reconstructed into one composite experience, voiced by Karina (former

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MALQUERIDAS

CINE VERDICT: Mujeres en prisiones chilenas retratan la maternidad y el crudo dolor de la separación en este empático e impresionista documental de Tana Gilbert filmado con teléfonos celulares.

Carmen Gray, September 7, 2023

En *Malqueridas*, su primer largometraje impulsado por el activismo, emocionalmente crudo y conmovedor, proyectado en la Semana de la Crítica del Festival de Cine de Venecia, la documentalista Tana Gilbert captura la maternidad dentro de las prisiones chilenas.



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Las grabaciones digitales en las cárceles chilenas son una actividad clandestina, oficialmente prohibida por reglamento y un motivo para afectar privilegios si se detecta, pero común de todos modos, pero no un delito. La facilidad con la que hoy se pueden grabar imágenes en un teléfono móvil, su disminución de tamaño y la democratización de la tecnología digital, le ha permitido a la directora recopilar una visión de este mundo mucho más íntima y conducida por prisioneras del que es generalmente representado en el cine sobre la vida en prisión. También se distingue del diluvio de películas contemporáneas sobre nuestra realidad de redes sociales siempre en línea. El marco más conmovedor a través del cual considerar las imágenes digitales en *Malqueridas* es la foto familiar, porque estas instantáneas furtivas son una de las pocas formas en que una mujer que cumple condena puede anclar sus recuerdos y tener una conexión continua con su hijo.

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