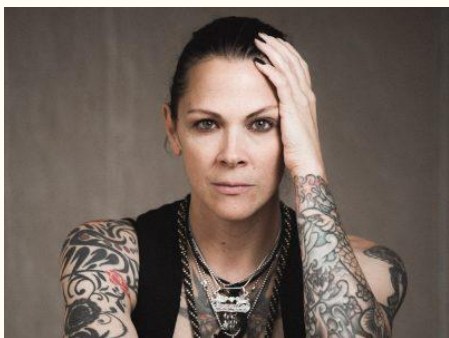




SARAJEVO REVIEW DAILY

“I wish I was hated by smarter people”

an interview with feminist psycho-horror director Jennifer Reeder



Jennifer Reeder discusses her new mind-bending avant-horror film 'Perpetrator', kick-ass gender-queer heroines, and the subversively surreal power of genre cinema.

Stephen Dalton, August 12, 2023

Cult filmmaker Jennifer Reeder is one the most thrillingly original voices currently operating on the arty, pulpy fringes of the genre-movie mainstream. With her kick-ass gender-queer characters, hallucinatory visuals and riot-grrrrl feminist attitude, the Chicago-based writer-director explodes the male-gaze

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COMPETITION DOCUMENTARY



sixpackfilm

DE FACTO

VERDICT: Selma Doborac’s formally audacious, challenging and chilling 'De Facto', a doc-fiction hybrid, decontextualises war crimes testimony to plumb the power of language.

Carmen Gray, August 12, 2023

Cinema that grapples with genocide typically seeks to bear witness to the horror, solidifying its remembrance in collective history through testimony that records the names, places, dates and crimes, as well as giving validating voice to the survivors. With *De Facto*, experimental filmmaker Selma Doborac, who was born in Bosnia and lives and works in Vienna, takes a very different approach.

She returns to the question of how to represent the atrocities of

war, a concern she previously examined through imagery of uninhabited, damaged buildings in the former Yugoslavia in her debut essay film *Those Shocking Shaking Days* (2016). She has stripped back contextualising information from the testimonies of war crimes perpetrators, and any reference to their archival sources, to consider the essence (if one can be determined) of this human will to commit atrocities, and to consider how acts which cross the bounds of what can be

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JENNIFER REEDER INTERVIEW*(Continued)*

conventions of horror and psychological thrillers with subversive wit, sense-swamping excess and campy satirical humour.

Reeder's work is often likened to David Lynch and David Cronenberg, comparisons she embraces. But there is a deeper interrogation of patriarchal power going on in her films, which is both darkly funny and deadly serious. One of her key themes, she says, is "our obsession with youth and beauty among young women and our desire to literally tear them apart."

Screening at Sarajevo Film Festival this week, Reeder's latest visually ravishing psycho-thriller *Perpetrator* stars Kiah McKirnan as Jonny, an 18-year-old high-school misfit sent away to stay with her eccentric aunt Hildie, as played by iconic screen queen Alicia Silverstone. Against a creepy

backdrop of masked stalkers, serial kidnappings and shape-shifting monsters, Jonny learns some sinister ancient secrets from Hildie that run deep in the family bloodline.

Film festivals seem unsure how to program Reeder's mind-bending, genre-subverting work.

Perpetrator has so far played in mainstream sections, midnight movie sidebars and more experimental niches. In Sarajevo it screens in the Kinoscope Surreal sub-section alongside other high-calibre art-house shockers including Brandon Cronenberg's hellish holiday gore-fest *Infinity Pool*, Bajoli's supernatural Afro-Belgian witch fable *Omen*, and Karoline Lyngbye's reality-warping marriage breakdown melodrama *Superposition*.

"It's in great company," Reeder tells *The Film Verdict*. "Seeing my name and the list of those other films makes sense to me.

[For Full Article, Click here](#)



Perpetrator Trailer

DE FACTO *(Continued)*

comprehended can be constituted, consumed or resisted through language.

What results is a radical act of courage, in both *De Facto's* formal audacity and its existential commitment to going to the darkest of places psychologically. Utterly chilling, intelligently conceived, and cognitively, emotionally and ethically challenging, this hybrid work is in the Documentary Competition programme at the Sarajevo Film Festival, after winning the Caligari Film Prize at Berlin, where it screened in the Forum section earlier this year. Festivals with slots at the daring/ uncompromising end of the documentary spectrum should pay attention.

The set-up seems simple enough: seated at a polished, reflective table (designed by artist Heimo Zobernig) in a Neoclassical gazebo with lush greenery behind them, two smartly dressed actors (Christoph Bach and Cornelius Obonya) alternate, reciting fragments of testimony with coolly detached matter-of-factness about what they did and saw in the war.

[Full Review](#)



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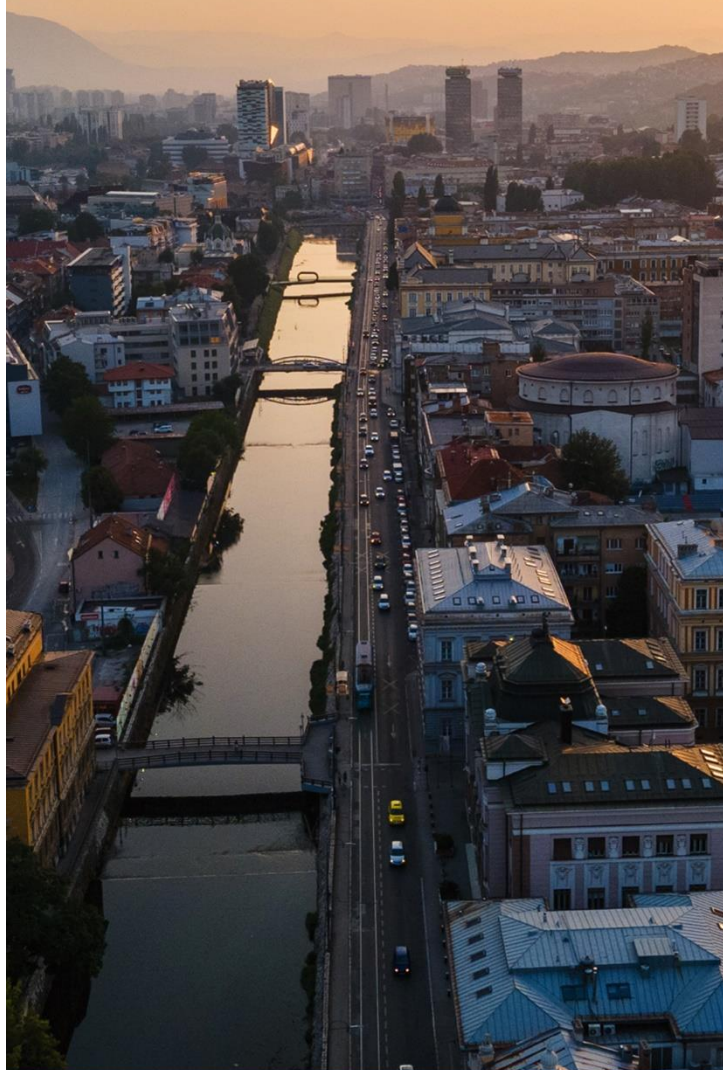
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VERDICT SHORT



VALERIJA

VERDICT: Sara Jurincic's experimental documentary *Valerija* charts an act of communion with long-deceased relatives, probing playfully at perceptions of remembrance and lineage.

Ben Nicholson, August 12, 2023

On the island where Sara Jurincic's grandmother, Valerija, is buried, there is a tradition that women get to choose the image that will adorn their gravestone.

In her experimental documentary, named for her grandmother, Jurincic travels with her mother to the island to tend the grave and this ostensibly domestic act becomes the basis for a sideways portrait of female ancestry. Using the aforementioned likenesses as a central visual conceit, the film is both about the act of commemoration and about the potential impact that heritage can have on us. Having received its world premiere in the short film competition at Sheffield Doc/Fest a few months ago, the film competes in the documentary category at this year's Sarajevo Film Festival.

The film opens with close-ups of worn photographic representations of eyes; from the filmmaker's deep history, her forbears observe her as she begins her voyage to their resting place. Jurincic captures this oceanic odyssey using a variety of disjointed compositions – the two women are glimpsed at a distance, via askance angles and reflections, or as silhouettes against the body of the ship. It initially feels like a curious decision but seems to take on resonance when compared to the repeated motif of portraiture that follows, creating a strange distinction between the ephemeral living visage and the petrified deceased one.

[Full Review](#)

KINOSCOPE



SAINT OMER

VERDICT: Alice Diop's superb fiction debut is a marvel of control and depth, using the trial of a Senegalese woman guilty of killing her infant to honestly explore the complexities of motherhood while foregrounding it all within France's racist currents.

Jay Weissberg, September 7, 2022

Issues surrounding motherhood are so charged that it's exceedingly rare to find a treatment that delves into the darker currents so nonjudgmentally: the fears of expectant mothers, informed by memories of their own imperfect maters, the notion that you're forever linked at the cellular level to another being, with all the beauty and terror this implies. That's a large part of Alice Diop's extraordinary first fiction feature, though it also feels limiting to reduce such a complex, 360-degree film into one broad concept. *Saint Omer* takes a simple court procedural format – a Senegalese woman in France is on trial for drowning her infant – and ever so slowly builds it into an overwhelming rumination on motherhood and racial expectations, not via the usual showy courtroom drama, which is all talk, but through silences and gazes as well as words.

Diop's documentary *We* challenged audiences to recognize the way people of color are unconsciously perceived in France (and by extension, Europe and the U.S.), where the urge to qualify descriptions, such as "articulate black woman" or "well-dressed black man" reveal a smothering blanket of racism that impacts daily lives. *Saint Omer*, based on the real trial of Fabienne Kabou, brilliantly channels this constant undercurrent throughout the clean, rigidly structured script, using the original case to interrogate perception, truth and the complex binds of motherhood.

[Full Review](#)



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PAST LIVES

VERDICT: A remarkably delicate, moving romance destined to be a major indie hit, boasting superb dialogue, terrific performances and an insightful understanding of how the what-ifs of life so often dangle around the perimeters of our lives.

Jay Weissberg, February 19, 2023

There's a scene about three-quarters of the way through *Past Lives* when a married couple talk in bed, he touching on his insecurities and she trying to make

him comprehend that their relationship is more inviolate than he's able to believe. The writing is superb, surprising us by how much it matches what we're thinking while being so true to these characters. Listening to Celine Song's dialogue, we're reminded by just how rare it is to hear honest adult conversations like this in film, ones that don't shout or grandstand but burrow into the emotions in the subtlest of ways. *Past Lives* is a remarkably delicate debut, a romance that plays on the borders of standard love stories but brings a rich understanding of how love shifts over time, and how the what-ifs in life so often dangle around the perimeters of our lives. The exceptional buzz generated in Sundance will only keep building, resulting in a well-deserved indie hit.

Much of playwright Song's own life is here, which makes sense given the acuity with which she writes these characters, but it's not only her avatar who gets such insightful treatment. She's beautifully captured the middle class immigrant experience and that perception of being part of two cultures, exacerbated by the ways our child and adult selves process a sense of self. Yet she gives equal weight to the one who remains at home, whose present life is less fulfilled and for whom what could have been remains a driving force throughout his life.

[Full Review](#)

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Doc Alliance Awards announced at the award ceremony of DokuFest in Prizren



Best Feature Film Award Winner, *Death of a City*



Best Short Film Award Winner, *The Cervix Pass*

The Doc Alliance Award for Best Feature Film, went to *Death of a City* by João Rosas. The film follows the demolition of an old printing workshop in the center of Lisbon to make way for luxury flats. What starts out as a work-centred film turns out to be an evocative account of the director's relationship with his hometown and the people who build it – a polyphonic narrative made up of their stories of labour and migration, shining a light on the violence and destruction that hide under the progress of our cities.

The jury commended the director “for an intelligently politicised work and its salutary portrayal of the lives of the people therein, an incisive and moving exploration of the face of modern Europe.”

The award includes a 5,000 EUR endowment.

The Doc Alliance Award for Best Short Film, went to *The Cervix Pass* by Marie Bottois. In the style of militant and feminist films of the time, she documents the insertion of an intrauterine device inside her own body.

In her film, the director refers to the founding of the MLAC (Movement for Abortion and Contraception Freedom) in France in 1973.

The jury praised the film's “ability to organize a moving and playful coexistence between life and cinema. Marie Bottois combines in a remarkable

way political and cinematographic rigor, courage and humor, frontality and delicacy.”

The award includes a 3,000 EUR endowment.

Disturbed Earth, a feature-length documentary by Kumjana Novakova and Guillermo Carreras Candi, received a Special Mention by the jury. The film was nominated by DokuFest, this year's guest festival of Doc Alliance.



Special Mention, *Disturbed Earth*

The winning films were selected by a jury of three film professionals with different experience in the industry: Jonathan Ali, a programmer and curator (Locarno Film Festival, Open City Docs, True/False Film Fest, Sheffield DocFest and Third Horizon Film Festival), Anna Berthollet, CEO at Lightdox (sales and distribution) and programmer Arnaud Hée (Bibliothèque publique d'information du Centre Pompidou).

For more, [click here](#)



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