

AFI DOCS 2016 Wrap Up

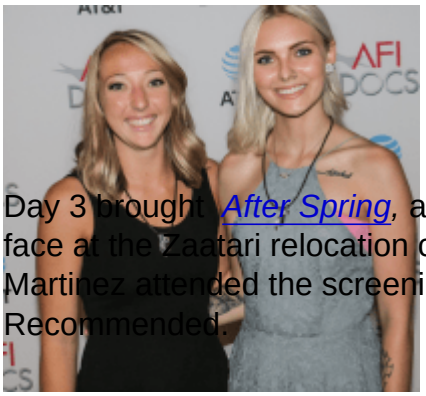
Description

With ninety-four films from over 30 countries the 2016 AFI DOCS had something for just about every documentary film lover. The Opening Night film dazzled the at-capacity audience at the Newseum with Alex Gibneyâ??s North American Premiere of *Zero Days*,a detailed account of claims the US and Israeli governments unleashed a sophisticated virus to thwart the Iranian nuclear enrichment program. The film also addressed the issue of retaliation and made for a lively conversation and Q & A following the screening. Highly recommended.

Kicking off the first full day, I had the good fortune of seeing seven short documentaries under the guise of *Shorts: Outside In*; *Tracks, The Great Theatre, Rotatio, Neige, Fundir and Chocolate Mountain Metal*, *Shorts: Outside In.* Warmly recommended.

Winding up a busy Day 2 at the Newseum, an interactive museum of news and journalism in downtown Washington, DC, *Newtown*, an emotionally, powerful look at the local community two years after the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre from acclaimed director Kim Snyder, and *Audrie & Daisy,* a story of two high school girls who were sexually assaulted in indefensible states and their vilification on social media with tragic consequences, were shown. Both are must-see films. Highly recommended.





Day 3 brought *After Spring,* a telling tale of the relocation of Syrian refugees and the challenges they face at the Zaatari relocation camp inside the Jordanian border. Directors Steph Ching and Ellen Martinez attended the screening and made themselves available to discuss the making of the film. Recommended.

Almost Sunrise, explores an alternative approach to the traditional diagnosis and treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Director Michael Collins chronicles the journey of two Iraq War veterans as they share a 2700 mile hike from the Midwest to the state of California to create an awareness of their trauma. Along the way, the two are warmly greeted and supported by fellow veterans and communities alike. Warmly recommended.



Unfortunately, due to an overwhelming demand for seats at the Guggenheim Symposium and Screening, I was not granted a place for the eveningâ??s conversation with Werner Herzog and Ramin Bahrani including clips from Herzogâ??s storied career and a screening of his latest work, *Lo and Behold, Reveries of the Connected World.* Nevertheless, I made my way over to Silver Spring, MD, AFI Silver Theater for *Cinema, Mon Amour,* a wonderful story of a Romanian family and their â??never say quitâ?? spirit as they work determinedly to keep open the last of Romaniaâ??s grand movie palaces.

Day Four began with a visit to the AFI DOCS Lounge for the Filmmakers Forum and the making of short documentaries. Quick and to the point, storytellers and the movers and shakers of the industry engaged in an informative format as filmmakers and producers provided guidance and probed the issues in todayâ??s filmmaking environment.

Full of vigor, the featured *Command And Control,*directed by Robert Kenner*,* recounted a 1980 nuclear accident with surreal details. Highly recommended.

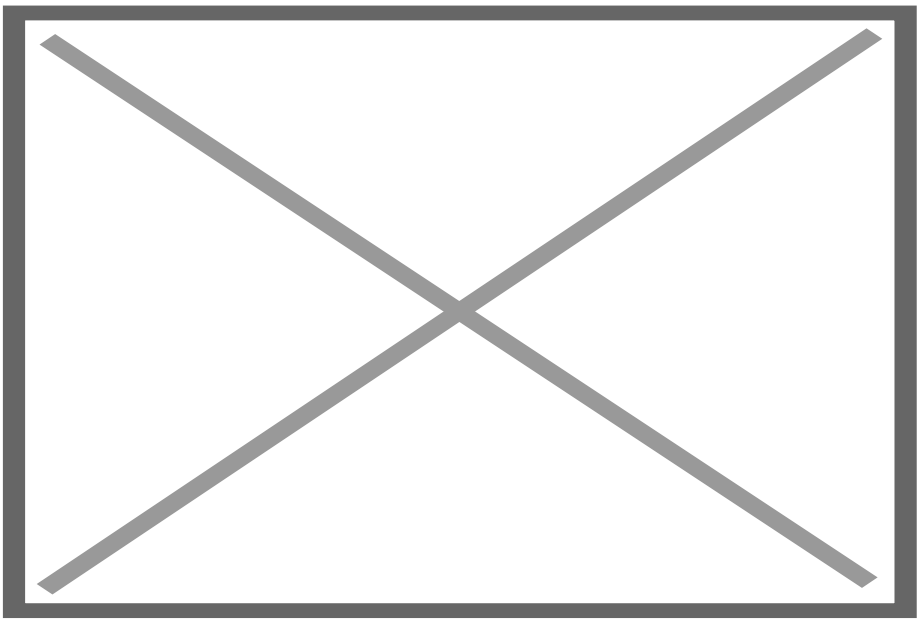


Next, I dropped in on Vanessa Gouldâ??s *Obit,* an insiderâ??s guide to the world of whoâ??s who in the annals of lives lived through the eyes of the legendary New York Times obituaries desk. *Obit* reveals a unique form of journalism and the idiosyncrasies of the writers and editors who create and compose these celebrations of extraordinary lives lived. Warmly recommended and my personal favorite!

Closing out the evening again at the Newseum with a Spotlight Screening of *Check It. Check It,* a mesmerizing look at an inner city, Washington DC, gang composed of gay and transgendered teens who allied themselves together for protection and survival out on the streets of the nationâ??s capitol over a three year period, was directed by Toby Oppenheimer and Dana Flor. Over the course of the film, the *Check It* gang comes to the realization that while surviving is critical so is leading a productive and useful life. Warmly recommended.



Day 5 kicked into gear with another visit to the AFI DOCS Lounge for Part Four of the Filmmakers Forum. I arrived early and met Discoveryâ??s Gina Scarpulla. Unbeknownst to me, Ms. Scarpulla and her team at Discovery are pioneering virtual reality in film. Virtual headsets, known as lunchboxes were made available before and after the forum. See my full write up here: AFI DOCS Filmmaking Forum on Virtual Reality

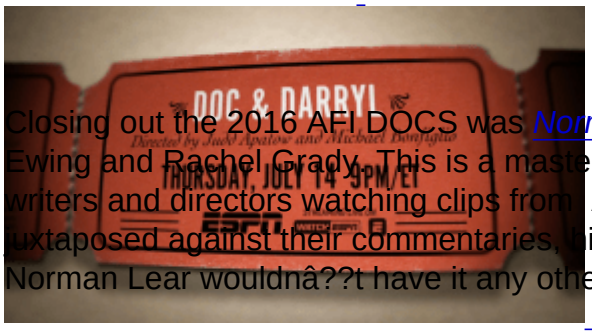


Next came the *Chicken People*, directed by Nicole Lucas Haimes. *Chicken People* delves into the worlds of the contestants and their contenders, pure bred chickens, as they vie for best fowl at the Ohio National Poultry Show and the title of Super Grand Champion. Warmly recommended and A Donâ??t Miss!



Doc & Darryl, a soon-to-be-aired ESPN 30 for 30 film, depicts the trials and tribulations of the 1986 Major League Baseball World Champions New York Mets and the meteoric rise and setbacks of the teamâ??s two most talented players, Dwight â??Docâ?? Gooden and Darryl Strawberry. The film was ow and Michael Bonfiglio. See my write up: *Doc & Darryl*





Closing out the 2016 AFI DOCS was *Norman Lear: Just Another Version Of You*, directed by Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady. This is a masterpiece of television history. Breathtaking images of actors, writers and directors watching clips from All In The Family, The Jeffersons, Maude and Good Times juxtaposed against their commentaries, highlight this cinematic gem. Another must see film! And I know Norman Lear wouldnâ??t have it any other way. Highly recommended.



Norman Lear , center, on the red carpet with filmmakers Heidi Ewing, right, and Rachel Grady, left, b

This was my first AFI DOCS. Set in our nationâ??s Capitol, the festival ran smoothly. Two venues were in downtown Washington, DC, and were within walking distance of one another. Also, both venues were easily accessible by the Metro and had plenty of shops, coffee bars, sports bars, and restaurants nearby. The third venue was in Silver Spring, Maryland, home of the AFI DOCS Silver Theater and Cultural Center. Again, plenty of shops and nearby eateries and fairly easy to get to by Metro. The Washington Post calls AFI DOCS â??The nationâ??s leading documentary film festival.â?• I couldnâ??t agree more.



Until next year, Iâ??ll see you at the movies!

Category

1. #AFIDOCS
2. AFIDocs
3. Documentary
4. Feature Film
5. Featured
6. Short Film
7. Spotlight Screening
8. World Premiere

Tags

1. Actor
2. AFI DOCS
3. Cinema
4. Director
5. Documentary
6. Educational
7. Festival
8. Film
9. Newseum
10. Producer
11. Program
12. Q&A
13. Red Carpet
14. Tribute
15. Washington D.C.

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