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SBIFF
THE
Showcase
FILM SERIES

Note from Roger â?? Notes on Blindness

Description

Dear Cinephiles,

Notes on Blindness is like no other film youâ??re likely to see this year. It traces one manâ??s difficult journey and emerges with a reflection on the human condition thatâ??s as **uplifting** and edifying as it is simply moving.

Below find the New York Times Review which named it Criticâ??s Pick. It plays throughout the week; tonight at 5:00pm, tomorrow at 7:30pm, and Thursday/Friday/Saturday at 11:00am at the Riviera Theatre.

See you at the movies!
Roger Durling

â??Notes on Blindnessâ?? Is John Hullâ??s Trip From Darkness to Light
By Stephen Holden â?? The New York Times

In 1983, John M. Hull, a professor of religion at the University of Birmingham in England, lost his eyesight and began the agonizing personal journey to hell and back that he describes in the magnificent documentary â??Notes on Blindness.â?•

Adapted from Professor Hullâ??s memoir, â??On Sight and Insight: A Journey Into the World of Blindness,â?• the film, using mostly his words, describes with extraordinary eloquence, precision and poetic sensitivity his physical and psychological metamorphosis as he felt the world retreat until it seemed mostly out of reach.

Not only his vision faded, but his visual memory to the extent that he felt his past disappearing as well as his future. At his lowest point, he was overwhelmed by a profound loneliness and isolation, a sense of being forever cut off and trapped in darkness.

The spine of the film â?? the first feature directed by Peter Middleton and James Spinney â?? is an audiocassette diary that Professor Hull kept for three years and published in 1990 as â??Touching the Rock.â?• A decade earlier, while awaiting the birth of his first son, Professor Hull became alarmed by black discs interfering with his vision and underwent a series of unsuccessful operations to correct the condition. In 1983, he went completely blind and by September of that year, he began forgetting what his wife and children looked like, except their images in still photos. â??I knew that if I didnâ??t understand blindness, it would destroy me,â?• he says.

One of his first responses was to amass a collection of recorded books related mostly to his academic career. But behind his determination lurked fearful dreams and fantasies. In the most vivid nightmare, restaged in the film, he is in a supermarket aisle as a torrential wave rounds a corner and rushes toward him. A low point came at Christmastime 1983 when he suffered panic attacks and decided he could never accept blindness. He describes a desperate sense of being enclosed and â??entirely alone.â?•

But he was not alone. By his side until his death in 2015, at the age of 80, was his wife, Marilyn. The couple are portrayed by Dan Skinner and Simone Kirby, who lip-sync his words with such impeccable precision and delicacy you quickly forget theyâ??re actors. The intensity of their bond is evoked in a

scene of the pair slow dancing to the Mamas and the Papasâ?? recording of â??Dedicated to the One I Love.â?•

Shortly after this nadir, Professor Hull was roused from his despair by the sound of rainfall, which gave a shape and texture to his environment, and he began using the tape recorder to document his interactions with his wife and children, as well as his inner thoughts.

Because he was born in Australia, he decided that reconnecting with his roots might provide solace. But the trip was a disaster when he discovered that his homeland had changed so much that the comforting sense of familiarity he expected was not to be had. He struggled to communicate with his aging parents, and to rediscover a landscape that he thought he remembered but didnâ??t.

Returning to England, he felt re-engaged with the world and determined to live not in nostalgia but in reality, and to accept his blindness. After a profound spiritual revelation and sense of renewal, his despair miraculously lifted and he was filled with joy and appreciation of the fullness of life.

â??Notes on Blindnessâ?• avoids the sentimental pitfalls of a documentary this personal. Its overt religiosity is minimal. The tone of the narration is so wrenchingly honest that the film never lapses into self-pity or relies on mystical platitudes.

(Source: http://www.sbiff.org)

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