

Brand identity onscreen in Bright Lights series

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ABSTRACT

For more information go to hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2015decfeb/fowler.html#grammar A FRIEND'S MEMORY The gay rights movement has accomplished reforms that would have been unimaginable on Oct. 7, 1998, when Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay man, was beaten, tortured, tied to a tree, and left to die in the woods outside Laramie, Wyo.

FULL TEXT

Whether or not Russell Brand realized he might need a makeover after his hellish "Paradise" (2013) and his dismal remake of "Arthur" (2011), he has since transformed himself into the anarchic activist that always lay under the surface of his best comedy. Ondi Timoner's "Brand: A Second Coming" examines that transformation as well as his previous incarnations as psychotic stand-up comic, sex addict, movie actor, onetime husband of Katy Perry, and anti-establishment gadfly.

There's even a little about some of the issues he crusades against, such as world poverty, the entitlement of the rich, and the stupidity of TV journalists. True, he does get a bit excessive when comparing himself to Gandhi, Malcolm X, and Jesus, but at least he doesn't claim to be as talented as Dudley Moore.

"Brand" screens Thursday at 7 p.m. as part of the Bright Lights series at Emerson College in the Paramount Theater. A discussion with Emerson visual and media arts professor Martie Cook will follow. Admission is free.

For more information go to web.emerson.edu/brightlights/event/brand-a-second-coming

Atticus lives on

Fans of Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" cherish a personal relationship with the book (though for some, Lee's recently published sequel of sorts, "Comes a Watchman," might have tarnished that affection). What lasting impact has the book had on the people living in Lee's home state of Alabama? The documentary "Our Mockingbird" by Watertown-based and Alabama-born filmmaker Sandra Jaffe focuses on a stage production of the book put on by black and white students and looks at the history of racial iniquity in the South, from the times of Jim Crow to the tensions of today.

The film will screen as part of An Evening With Sandra Jaffe on Friday at 7 p.m. at the Cinematheque, Boston University. Jaffe will be on hand to discuss the film. Admission is free.

For more information go to www.bu.edu/com/academics/what-we-do/film-television/cinematheque

Breaking the sound barrier

"I am trying to find a form which is the equivalent of the content, the nature of the material, and my own experiences," says Luke Fowler, the British avant-garde documentarian and musician featured in the Harvard Film Archive program Outside the Sound, the Films of Luke Fowler taking place on Saturday and next Sunday in the Carpenter Center, Cambridge.

The opening films "Grammar for Sound Part I" and "Grammar for Sound Part II" (both from 2009; both screening on Saturday at 7 p.m.) discard narrative structure for a kind of contrapuntal entanglement combining shots of random locations backed by found sound recorded by musician Lee Patterson. The result is to conventional documentary

what the Beatles' "Revolution Number 9" is to their "I Wanna Hold Your Hand." A challenging and perhaps transformative experience, the program will include discussions with the filmmaker, who probably can explain it all much better than the above.

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A FRIEND'S MEMORY

The gay rights movement has accomplished reforms that would have been unimaginable on Oct. 7, 1998, when Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay man, was beaten, tortured, tied to a tree, and left to die in the woods outside Laramie, Wyo. The outrage over this crime has never gone away, and in 2009 Congress passed the Matthew Shepard Act, which expanded existing hate crime legislation to include those victimized because of gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

But for some, like Michele Josue, a close friend of Shepard, the grief has not gone away either. To deal with the loss she made "Matt Shepard Is a Friend of Mine," a reminiscence of her friend's life, a reinvestigation into the details of his death, and a tribute to the change that his death helped initiate.

Available on DVD (Logo; \$17.95) and VOD. For information go to mattshepardisafriendofmine.com

Photo finish?

Though the US invasion of Afghanistan botched many things, it did introduce freedom of the press to the region. Liberated from the repression of the Taliban, Afghan photojournalism has flourished, but once the allied forces withdraw, those journalists will be left, like their country, on their own.

What might be lost should this fragile freedom be taken from them is shown in Alexandria Bombach and Mo Scarpelli's documentary "Frame by Frame." It follows four of these journalists as they travel throughout the country, often in danger, to record its variety, beauty, pathos, and resilience. Defined by tyranny and war for decades, Afghanistan takes on its own identity through their lenses.

"Frame by Frame" screens as part of the DocYard series on Monday at 7 p.m. at the Brattle Theatre. The filmmakers will answer questions afterward.

For more information go to www.brattlefilm.org/2015/11/30/frame-by-frame/

Neither fiction nor foul

They fall into the gray area between nonfiction and fiction, feature films that employ documentary methods and nonprofessional actors who re-create their own lives in their own world. The five films nominated for this year's Cinema Eye Heterodox awards are:

Philippine filmmaker Miguel Gomes's "Arabian Nights: Volume One (The Restless One)," the first of three films that adapt the tale of Scheherazade in a squalid contemporary setting.

Robert Machoian and Rodrigo Ojeda-Beck's "God Bless the Child," about five California kids left to their own devices when their mother disappears.

Sean Baker's candy-colored "Tangerine," in which transgender Los Angeles sex workers flaunt their indomitable style and joie de vivre.

Jafar Panahi's "Taxi," the latest example of the great Iranian director subverting his government's ban on his filmmaking by sneaking out a wry meta-movie.

And "The Tribe," a brutally honest film by Ukrainian director Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy in which a school for the deaf serves as a microcosm of everything that's wrong with the world.

The winner will be announced on Jan. 12 in New York.

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Credit: By Peter Keough Globe Correspondent

Illustration

Caption: Scenes from (top to bottom) Sandra Jaffe's "Our Mockingbird," Michele Josue's "Matt Shepard Is a Friend of Mine," and Alexandria Bombach and Mo Scarpelli's "Frame by Frame." Justin Cook Public Relations Diane

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