

Documentaries about families, fastballs, and other matters

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ABSTRACT

Price is one of the pitchers interviewed by Jonathan Hock in his documentary "Fastball," which had its Boston premiere at Fenway Park last October as the closing film of the GlobeDocs Film Festival. "Rebel" screens March 22 at 7 p.m. in the Bright Family Screening Room in the Paramount Theater, 559 Washington St. It is part of the Bright Lights film program and is a special presentation of the MIT Women Take the Reel series.

FULL TEXT

Cambridge and Boston have been home to many of the great documentarians - Fred Wiseman and Errol Morris are just a couple of the more familiar names. Of all these filmmakers, Alfred Guzzetti has perhaps focused most intensely on the nature of relationship, memory, and, as he puts it in voice-over in his 2011 short, "Time Exposure," "the way film puts before us the flow of time." A retrospective of his work made over a period of five decades -- "Points of Departure . . . Alfred Guzzetti" -- will screen at the Harvard Film Archive March 20-April 10.

In "Time Exposure" he tracks down the location of the South Philadelphia street his father photographed in 1938 and ponders the chain of causality that links that image with the filmmaker he would become. It serves as a kind of epilogue to his seminal documentary feature "Family Portrait Sitzings" (1975). In that film Guzzetti traces his family history through the recollections of his great-uncle, his grandmother, his paternal grandfather's cousins, and his own parents. The latter are seen talking with him as they sit on a sofa in their home in front of a wall-sized mirror. The mirror does not reflect the man with the camera, an absence that makes his presence felt all the more.

"Family Portrait Sitting" screens on March 20 at 7 p.m. with the director present. "Time Exposure" screens on April 10 at 7 p.m.

Go to www.hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2016marmay/guzzetti.html#family.

Portrait of the 'Genius'

Like Guzzetti's films discussed above, Banker White's 2014 documentary, "The Genius of Marian" (co-directed by Anna Fitch), also examines the nature of families and memory. But "Marian" focuses on how memories fade; White's subject is his mother, Pam, who suffers from dementia.

It is a case of tragic irony. Pam's mother, Marian, a talented painter, was also stricken with the disease. Pam had dedicated herself to writing her mother's biography, also titled "The Genius of Marian." But then Pam, 61, started showing symptoms of her illness, and now the book will never be finished. Her son's film, however, a subtle and moving juxtaposition of the two lives, does justice to both.

Available on Netflix on April 1.

Go to www.geniusofmarian.com.

Throwing heat

Boston is a town that likes a good fastball, as can be seen by the success, fame, and popularity of aces such as Roger Clemens, Pedro Martinez, and Curt Schilling - and, hopefully, new acquisition David Price.

Price is one of the pitchers interviewed by Jonathan Hock in his documentary "Fastball," which had its Boston premiere at Fenway Park last October as the closing film of the GlobeDocs Film Festival. In it, Hock offers an in-depth look at the fundamental weapon in a pitcher's arsenal. He presents a history of the heater, profiles the greats who threw it, and examines the physics behind the perfect pitch.

Other stars in on the discussion include active players Justin Verlander and Andrew McCutchen and legendary greats Hank Aaron, Nolan Ryan, Bob Gibson, Goose Gossage, and Derek Jeter. Kevin Costner, who isn't a pitcher in real life but plays one in the 1999 film "For the Love of the Game," does the voiceover narration.

Available on VOD on Friday.

Go to www.fastballmovie.com.

'Rebel' with a cause

History is full of the exploits of many eager patriots who have lied about their age to serve their country, but not so well known are the cases of women who lied about their gender.

One of a suspected thousand such cases was that of Loreta Velazquez, who initially joined the rebel cause to be close to her husband, an officer in the Confederate Army. She donned a uniform and some dashing whiskers, and taking the name Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, went on to a distinguished career as a soldier and a spy. It ended when she was wounded and an army doctor discovered her real gender.

Not much has been written about Velazquez, aside from her own memoir, the prolixly titled "The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army." Is that because of the gender bias of official history? In her documentary "Rebel" (2013), Maria Agui Carter uncovers the details of Velazquez/Buford's life and speculates as to why her story and that of many others like her have been forgotten or ignored.

"Rebel" screens March 22 at 7 p.m. in the Bright Family Screening Room in the Paramount Theater, 559 Washington St. It is part of the Bright Lights film program and is a special presentation of the MIT Women Take the Reel series. The director will be present at the screening. Admission is free.

Go to web.emerson.edu/brightlights/event/rebel.

No longer inconceivable

For gay couples, getting the right to marry affirmed by the Supreme Court was a great victory. But after marriage comes the challenge of having a family. Adoption is an option for many, but Jessica Antonellis and Lexy Casano, the married couple featured in Lizzie Gottlieb's documentary "Romeo Romeo," wanted a child who was biologically theirs.

It proves a daunting endeavor. The documentary follows the two as they ponder the possibility of artificial insemination and whether or not the donor should be someone they know or a stranger. Then they must overcome the red tape, the financial and psychological costs, and the potential complications. Their story ultimately proves relevant for the millions of other women, gay and straight, who for various reasons opt for the same procedure.

"Romeo Romeo" airs March 22 at 8 p.m. on PBS as part of the "America ReFramed" series.

Go to www.worldchannel.org/programs/episode/arf-s4-e408-romeo-romeo.

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Credit: By Peter Keough Globe Correspondent

Illustration

Caption: David Price in Jonathan Hock's "Fastball."

DETAILS

Subject:	Documentary films
Publication title:	Boston Globe; Boston, Mass.
Pages:	N.10
Publication year:	2016
Publication date:	Mar 17, 2016
Section:	Arts
Publisher:	Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC
Place of publication:	Boston, Mass.
Country of publication:	United States, Boston, Mass.
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	07431791
Source type:	Newspaper
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	1774049060
Document URL:	https://proxy.emerson.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/documentaries-about-families-fastballs-other/docview/1774049060/se-2?accountid=10735
Copyright:	(c) The Boston Globe Mar 17, 2016
Last updated:	2017-11-23
Database:	Boston Globe

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