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| Valhalla and Other Jails of Intrigue |



Movie Rating

Directed By: Jacob Strunk
Written By: Jacob Strunk
Length: Approx. 70 minutes
Starring: various talent
Official Movie Website: [Seven Miles West of Town Productions](#)
Contact Email: [Info](#)

June 2005

Review by: Bill Nagel

Each film on this compilation was technically superb. The lighting, the sound, the editing, everything. The entire compilation was nearly flawless. There was only one exception; it was quite possibly the most boring thing I have ever witnessed. Now don't get me wrong. I love a good art film as much as the next guy. Give me an experimental stream of consciousness any day. Give me Dziga Vertov, give me Rene' Clair, I can take them, I like them. Just don't give me another art school film about how life is really boring and routine.

The second film on this compilation probably best describes the entire group. The film, *A Shadow Before Sunrise*, follows the day to day routine of a mortician as he talks to clients, smokes, drives home, smokes, watches TV, smokes, goes back to work and smokes again. There is a great special feature on the DVD where the filmmaker, Jacob Strunk, talks about his craft and takes a minute to explain this particular film. In it, he says people always, (I'm paraphrasing here) people always try to formalize events in their lives. Weddings, birth, death, etc, we all try to formalize them and we miss the deeper meaning in our lives. So this film follows one man throughout his routine life. But something happens in this man's life. He meets a woman and, as Strunk explains, his routine deteriorates. He has made a connection with another living being and breaks out of his formalized life, but unable to handle the change, he crumbles.



SCREEN SHOTS

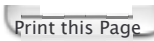
That's great. I buy that as a concept and I'm sure many others do as well. And maybe to get the point across that his life is boring and routine we must watch him smoke countless cigarettes (I recently quit smoking so this was hard for me) and we must watch him stare at nothing everyday. I have only 2 problems with the concept, first there was no perceived connection between these people. He stared at her and later fantasized about being with her naked. They had a brief disjointed conversation and he almost touched her, but that was all. I never would have known there was a connection if I hadn't watched the extra features. The second problem was that in order for a film to work (in my opinion) you must get the audience to feel what the characters are feeling. If you want the audience to feel your character's boredom, well that's easy, and you don't even need good lighting. The problem however, is that you end up with a bored audience that concentrates on that rather than the point of the film.

That being said, I would recommend this film. If you want to see an artist at work. If you want to see how a skilled filmmaker can meticulously create a scene and create a mood using the bare essentials of light and shadow. If you want to see skilled actors actually work at feeling and becoming their characters. If you want to hear the background, hear the actors move, squeak and ruffle their clothes. If want no musical score. If you want to see single takes that can last 5 minutes or more. If you want any of these things, then see these films. They are really quite good. And there is also a music video that kind of peps things up a little.

- 3 Little Guys -

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