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DOCUMENTARY



## TIFF13 Review: The Dog (2013)

Posted by Brandy Dean September 12, 2013 0 Comment 1179 views

Remember Sidney Lumet's masterpiece *Dog Day Afternoon*, with Al Pacino playing gay bank robber John Wojtowicz, who just wanted some cash to pay for his lover's sex change operation? Being that Lumet's film was a true story, there must have been a lot more that happened before and after that hot summer afternoon heist, right? That's the subject of the biographical documentary portrait *The Dog*, from co-directors Allison Berg and Frank Keraudren. Turns out there was some stuff before and not a whole lot after.

John Wojtowicz started life as a nice Italian boy who married the first (biological) gal who came along and went to war in Vietnam. Close living in 'Nam with other dudes triggered a recognition in Wojtowicz that he was gay and set off a complicated chain reaction that led to his second marriage to a man (followed by a third to another man later). *The Dog* provides some of the early background with archival footage and contemporary interviews with Wojtowicz, and tracks along with post prison travails.

Certainly Wojtowicz's life story is an interesting one, but just as certainly he was never in control of it. He states unequivocally at the beginning of *The Dog* that he's a pervert whose libido knows no bounds. That's questionable Brooklyn posturing but his involvement in the New York's early gay political movement seemed to be more about pickups for Wojtowicz than social change. And while many wanted to view his bank heist as a radical political act, it's pretty clear it didn't go that far for him – always a hopeless romantic, he really just wanted to get cash for Ernie's surgery.

*The Dog* is a complete portrait, going much farther than most bio-docs. Berg and Keraudren spent a lot of time with Wojtowicz (and his mother Terry, the beating heart of both the film and Wojtowicz's life), and we see him across many years, right up until his wasting death from cancer in 2006. But it's a bit of a head scratcher. While Wojtowicz certainly has a kind of hapless charm, he's not exactly insightful, introspective, or even likable really. He does however kind of Forrest Gump his way through a

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meaningful era of social history, making an indelible mark without meaning to or ever figuring out what it even meant to his own life.

### Screening Times for The Dog

Saturday September 7 Scotiabank 3 6:30 PM

Monday September 9 The Bloor Hot Docs Cinema 11:30 AM

Sunday September 15 Scotiabank 3 9:00 PM

### A Gallery of Images from The Dog



### Watch The Dog Trailer



The Pretty Clever Films TIFF13 Coverage is brought to you in part by MUBI, your online cinemetheque.



ALLISON BERG FESTIVAL COVERAGE FRANK KERAUDREN THE DOG TIFF13

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## About Brandy Dean



Social media consultant, blogger for hire, and lover of classic movies and silent films.

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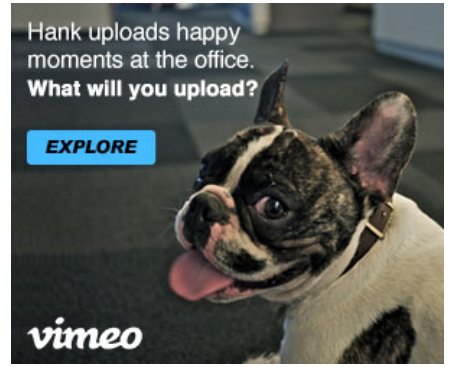
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