



Fantastic

Offer Egozy

Producer Offer Egozy, Rukmani Bachal. **Production companies** OJEFilm1 (New York, USA), Burning Ghat Cinema (Los Angeles, USA). **Written and directed by** Offer Egozy. **Director of photography** Jamie Urman. **Editor** Carlos Marques Marcet. **Sound design** Yotam Ysharlev. **Costumes** Peggy Noland. **Make-up** Marlo Pino.

With Alexandra Anthony (Jane), Persephone Apostolou (Rhonda), Eddie Kehler (Shaw), Sam Littlefield (Sten), Henry LeBlanc (Donald), Susan Harmon (Aldrich).

DCP, colour. 76 min. English.

Premiere 18 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

“Bang!” – white on black. A man in a shiny velvet one-piece stomps through a sunny garden, enters a house and walks back out again. The swaying camera seems to share the sheriff’s discomfort. Is the dead man in the house a certain Duncan Ross, or is it Hilary, a painter from New York who is pretending to be Duncan Ross?

Bakersfield, California. A telegram from the missing painter brings together Jane, a former lover of his, and Rhonda and Sten – the latter a co-laborator? Sheriff Shaw attempts to uncover the potential conspiracy. So much to the story then, since the announcement soon comes that “The plot is now resolved and other parts of the movie can breathe easier.”

Offer Egozy’s remarkable debut was shot on 35 mm and strings together individual scenes into a rich tapestry, creating atmospheres that increasingly replace the plot of the detective story. As the criminal case drifts further into the background, the editing, acting, costumes, camerawork and props continually work towards flaunting the story’s artificiality, its synthetic nature, its obvious construction: a film noir deeply rooted in film history that continuously deconstructs and re-assembles itself.

Marie Kloos

Like a walk through a weekday museum

This movie tries to present the raw material of film noir – hard-boiled plots, existential confusion, femme fatales, crooked cops, and the idea that figuring things out is of utmost importance – in a form that allows for a relaxed and dynamic kind of engagement (the kind of engagement that I most enjoy when watching movies). To that end, I excised common film tools – suspense and action; settings and clothing that are easy to identify; close-ups that show just how characters feel; creation of performances through editing; plotting that is clearly explained. In place, I tried to arrange the actors, characters, dialogue, emotions, plots, colours, and feelings, as separate threads – each able to be engaged with or ignored – not a part of a totalizing story.

It is designed to feel more like a walk through a weekday museum – a peaceful place to experience a variety of expressions: the arrangement of galleries; the selection of particular images; the whispered conversations of fellow patrons; a certain painting; a casual glance from a security guard. A reality that is slower, less demanding, more intricate, and operating in a register sensitive enough to imbue small, unexpected, unplanned activity with dramatic importance. A person's twitch as her friend's hand moves closer to her than she expected.

In this milieu, unmoored from traditional film story anchors, meaning takes on a significant importance. Not just the meaning of the movie, but meaning as a more fundamental property of life. Each character in the film is looking for it, as are the actors, filmmakers, and, I expect, the film audience. The position of the film is that this meaning is not to be found in coherence or in stories, but in a way of looking at the world that has some comfort with meaning's absence – and some appreciation for the whimsy, absurdity, and vulnerability that results. A way of looking that can reckon with the tendency for understanding, knowing and cohering to continuously slip in and out of existence.

In making the film, then, I abandoned the conceit that it matters what happens to fictional people in fictional situations. Instead, I focused my attention on the relationships between the actors themselves and the kind of intimacy they get to experience when they speak pre-written words knowing exactly what they will hear back. As well, I focused on the connection between the filmmaker, whose thoughts, ideas, emotions, motivations underlie nearly all the activity that occurs on screen, and the audience, whose expectations, desires, and approval similarly lurk behind the document. In this way, then, the movie fits in the filmmaking tradition that claims to document reality as it happens, rather than to create spectacular fictions.

In the end, then, I tried to create an object that does not seek to merge audience members with its characters, to sweep anyone away with its story, or overwhelm a mass with its visceral action. My intention was to create a space interested in intimacy and beauty, and the strange ways we pursue and experience such things both inside and outside a theater.

Offer Egozy



Offer Egozy was born in Israel in 1977. He studied Film at Yale University and the University of California, Berkeley. He is a writer and director based in New York. He has directed numerous short films, and *Fantastic* is his first feature-length film.

Films

2004: *Observing Rene and Elaine* (7 min.). 2005: *Examples of Boundaries and Penetration* (11 min.). 2006: *Aqua* (8 min.). 2009: *Fantastic* (10 min.). 2011: *Dream a Little Dream* (12 min.). 2016: *Fantastic*.