

PREGNANT (2015)

REVIEW



Originally published in *The Underground Film Studio Blog*, October 19th, 2015 by Daniel Fawcett & Clara Pais

“For you know only a heap of broken images”
T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Pregnant is the second film by British underground filmmaker Fabrizio Federico, self proclaimed artist at war against the dead forms of cinema. Some of you might feel intimidated by this filmmaker’s mode of approach, boisterous self-promotion, lo-fi aesthetics and claims of the death of cinema but rest assured, *Pregnant* is not an attack, it is a gift and it is worth giving yourself the chance to receive it.

Pregnant is an exploration of the world shaped by social media and the struggle to live an authentic life within it. It looks at technological addiction, voyeurism, self-(un)awareness, spiritual stagnation and alienation, using the language of cinema to guide us through the experience of a consciousness seeped in this reality. It is a work of cinema that gives us a true expression of the modern condition.

The film begins with a shot of a VHS tape being put into a VCR, some static fuzz then a montage of still images: a gun wrapped in Christmas paper, Beverly Hills, a funeral, graffiti, celebrity mug shots, a man asleep in a room of computer screens; all click past as if we are browsing the internet, culminating in a shot of a man staring into the static of a TV, his face inches from the screen.

This opening sequence is followed by a scene in which two computer generated office workers chat, one tells the other a story about how as a child, he and his cousins coldly killed a flock geese with sticks and rocks. The awkwardness of the scene is heightened not only by the virtual scenario in which it takes place, but also by the violence that is described and the inherent inability of the characters to deal with it. This is followed by handheld shots of a house in an arid landscape over which we hear gunfire, then a man (played by Federico) runs away with his guitar into the desert.

The film moves back and forth between two main strands: sequences of modern life, where we meet and hear various characters trying to make sense of themselves and the world they live in; and sequences of Fabrizio, the wanderer in the desert.

The first strand presents to us a wasteland, a world full of individuals searching and grasping. Federico is attracted to those at the margins of mainstream society, whom he calls his 'street superstars'. In these people he seems to find an authenticity lacking in conventional actors and performers. He seeks out those who are open and can lay bare their story and experiences to the viewer without reservations, those who are maybe all too happy to have someone who listens to them on their own terms rather than patronise or judge them. They at times struggle to articulate what they are looking for, they know and feel that they must take charge of their lives and that the society in which they find themselves does not support their spiritual and personal needs but they are at a loss as to how to do this. In this sense, *Pregnant* presents a point blank portrait of modern Britain, sliced down the middle with its insides exposed.

Throughout, sequences unfold like the opening of tabs on an internet browser, they don't begin and end in a linear way, they are interrupted and we skip back and forth gathering snippets of information. There is always the sense that we haven't quite been able to grasp it all, that in the slightly frantic movement of the film some essential information has slipped through the cracks. This is a film created in the modern mindset, its short attention span leaps between experiences and associations before quite finishing what it was saying. Sound also plays a very interesting and important role in this, non-diegetic sounds and dialogue slip in over the images we are seeing, acting as an agent to reveal underlying connections and associations between them, but also introducing new thoughts as if a restless mind is already rushing ahead.

Meanwhile, Federico wanders through the desert, alone with himself in nature, a man lost but who has not given up, he is a seeker and he is searching for his own path. The wasteland of Celtic and Arthurian mythology is a cursed land where people live inauthentic lives, following the paths and conventions that are expected of them without veering off into the unknown to find their true callings. Federico, at least as he presents himself in this film, has had that calling, he is a hero knight at the start of his quest.

Through the course of *Pregnant*, Federico seems to suggest that we are too busy looking out to look within, too concerned with how we are seen by others and busy working on our image rather than doing the deep work on ourselves. Alienation comes from being separated from ourselves and missing that spine-tingling energy that fills your body when you follow your own path. Though social media is not the cause of this alienation, it certainly seems to accentuate it. It acts as a constant void of distraction that allows us not to have to do the hard work of looking at ourselves and taking responsibility for our impact in the world.

Pregnancy is referred to twice in the film, once quite early on by a father who recalls the tragic experience of his stillborn child and once later by a prostitute who is desperate to have a child of her own. This seems to be the major theme of the film, the longing for a birth, or a spiritual re-birth, but it presents a society in which the conditions are not right or not yet ready. However, it doesn't feel like a pessimistic film. In fact, by presenting us with all these seekers Federico seems to say that the new life has already been conceived, that we are pregnant with possibility and change will come. Creativity is at work and the act of making a film is already an expression of hope.

Pregnant is a sophisticated portrait of the modern world as Federico sees it, it is not a fixed statement and it offers no clear answers but it presents its exploration with skill, humour and honesty. It is a chapter in the journey of an artist who is probing into the chaotic layers of experience of the 21st century, seeking for truth and authenticity, and using cinema as his means to find them. We look forward to seeing more from him!

Find out more here:

<http://pregnantmovie.moonfruit.com>

<http://fabriziofederico.moonfruit.com>

For more articles and information about the projects of The Underground Film Studio,
visit: <http://theundergroundfilmstudio.co.uk>