

# WELCOME TO **FILM PANIC** #6

For some time now we have wanted to publish an issue of FILM PANIC Magazine which is dedicated to a single film, to gather together in a single publication production diaries and interviews by those involved in making it as well as essays by critics, placing side by side the words of the artist, their collaborators and those who analyse the completed films. Our hope is that rather than pinning the film down to a single perspective we can assist in opening up different ways of engaging with the work and in turn different ways of thinking about cinema in general. So when on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 we received a message from Rouzbeh Rashidi inviting us to play the lead roles in his new feature film *Phantom Islands* we took this as the perfect opportunity to create the first of our 'Making Of' issues.

We have now been collaborating with Rouzbeh for several years on various projects, our first project together was in 2015 when we invited him to play the role of the Inspector in our surrealistic biblical tale *The Kingdom Of Shadows*. While he was with us on location in Portugal he also took the opportunity to shoot a couple of short sequences for his own film, *Trailers*, and we have been continuing these exchanges, collaborations and cinematic contaminations ever since. It was clear from our first meeting that we shared many of the same ideas about the production and exhibition of films and that our aims for The Underground Film Studio and Experimental Film Society are very similar. In 2016 we announced the official partnership of our organisations and this issue of FILM PANIC is the latest of our projects together.

We are not actors but we have often performed in our own films, usually playing very small roles or simply appearing onscreen as ourselves, so performing in *Phantom Islands* was our first chance to really dig into what it takes to embody a character and live inside their skin for some time. We have a deep interest in exploring the possibilities of performance for camera, in our own films we have often experimented with different ways to direct actors and are particularly interested in developing a language of performance that incorporates a wide range of techniques and styles. Being a part of *Phantom Islands* gave us a chance to put to work a lot of our personal ideas about performing and test out these processes through the act of doing it ourselves.

Rouzbeh has a passion for all cinema, every kind of film from every country, every era and every corner of cinema has an interest to him, his films draw upon these wide-ranging interests and as he often remarks he is a cinephile first and a filmmaker second. The central subject of his films is the medium of cinema itself, his fascination and obsession with it and also the sense he has that it can never really be understood, that cinema is something mysterious and uncanny. His filmmaking practice is dedicated to continuously investigating, breaking open and putting back together

the conventions of the medium. Rouzbeh has now made over 30 feature length films and even more shorts, his recent access to funding has allowed him to build upon his previous achievements and venture into new and more ambitious projects. In *Phantom Islands* one can see the strength of the craft and confidence that he has gained from his many years of experience, allowing him to create a film that is deeply personal and growing out of a refined sensibility and technical skill.

Much of Rouzbeh's work is deeply mysterious and even at times confounding but that is not to say the films do not welcome you in as a viewer. In *Phantom Islands*, it is the beauty of the images that entices us but the beauty is only one dimension of this experience. The other side is horror: the horror of the main characters who are going through a wordless breakdown, tormented, troubled and confused; and then there's the horror that seems to be experienced by the film itself with its regular cuts to black, dark interruptions to the picturesque landscapes. The film too seems to be having a breakdown – cinematic forms unravel and conventions are shattered into pieces but this is not a force of destructive elimination, it is more an approach of the fascinated scientist with the desire to look closer, to hold in his hands the fragments of cinema's past, to move them around and piece them back together again. As viewers we too become like scientists faced with a mystery, the answer to which is not something you can be told, it is simply an experience for you to go through and discover for yourself.

In this issue you will find our personal production diaries, which we wrote during the shoot, a terrific new interview with Rouzbeh conducted by his long-time collaborator Maximilian Le Cain, plus several insightful essays and responses to the film by film scholar Adrian Martin, film critic Fergus Daly, as well as aemi's Alice Butler and Daniel Fitzpatrick.

Thanks for reading,  
Daniel & Clara  
x