

Cameraperson

Cert 15 USA 2016 102 mins

Crew

Director /
Cinematography Kirsten Johnson
Film Editing Nels Bangerter /
Amanda Laws
Consulting writers Doris Baizley /
Lisa Freeman

Cast

Kirsten Johnson herself
Roger Phenix himself

Synopsis

A boxing match in Brooklyn; life in postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina; the daily routine of a Nigerian midwife; an intimate family moment at home.

These scenes and others are woven into the tapestry of footage chosen by the film maker Kirsten Johnson as a memoir and exploration of her twenty-five-year career as a documentary cinematographer.

Through a series of episodic juxtapositions, Johnson examines the relationships between image makers and their subjects, the tension between the objectivity and intervention of the camera, and the complex interaction of unfiltered reality and crafted narrative.



Booking Information

Distributor: Dogwoof
DVD/Blu-ray bookings:
020 7253 6244
info@dogwoof.com
www.dogwoof.com
Available: now



Reviews

.....this scrapbook of footage drawn from Johnson's 25 years as a documentary 'cameraperson' shuffles and throws up fleeting moments that together form an exploration of how art and 'real life' interact, how memories form and what it means to bear witness.

As it weaves through her filming experiences in her native United States, in Nigeria, Liberia and Rwanda, in Bosnia and Afghanistan – sometimes providing full context for interviews or observational material, sometimes letting the audience wonder or guess – the film emphasises the human element in cinematography.

Johnson's footage is rarely beautiful; this is no sizzle reel of magic-hour lens flare or startling symmetries. Rather, she has opted for moments in which her camera jiggles, fails and bumps into things. Behind it, we hear her sneeze, gasp, curse and cry – and frequently just not know what to do next. To behave, in other words, not as an impartial, impassive human camera, nor as an artist constantly fired by divine inspiration, but as a working person and emotional being.

At least as much as it strives to show us Johnson's personal working practices and individual character, *Cameraperson* reminds us that the fluidity and cohesion of a film is as illusory in documentary as in fiction filmmaking – not the reproduction of a complete, naturally occurring and 'true' narrative, but the product of a long chain of choices, biases, compromises and chance occurrences.

Hannah McGill, Sight and Sound, January 2017

The excellent *Cameraperson* is a brilliantly conceived audio-visual memoir by cinematographer Kirsten Johnson... offering very little context, and no explanatory narration, her voice comes through instead in literal form via her off-camera interactions with her myriad subjects and directors and, more figuratively, through the images she shoots.

The effect is entrancing: an expressionistic portrait of the itinerant lifestyle her career dictates and a subtle exploration of the ethics and practices involved in documenting the world in a truthful way.

Alistair Harkness, The Scotsman, January 2017

FILM FACTS...

- ☆ The film premiered at Sundance in 2016, and has since received many awards on the festival circuit, including the Grand Jury Award at the Sheffield Doc Fest.
- ☆ New York born Kirsten Johnson is a graduate of FEMIS (the French National Film School). Her very long list of documentary cinematography credits include Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* and the Oscar-winning *Citizenfour*.
- ☆ When not shooting Johnson teaches the class in "Visual Thinking" at the NYU Graduate Journalism Department, and often leads workshops for young camerapeople and documentarians in Middle Eastern countries