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NEWS

New York Times: "Free to Follow His Heart Right Back to 'Star Wars'"

"Mr. Lucas did not conclude his 'Star Wars' epic with his 2005 film 'Revenge of the Sith,' the third in a trilogy of prequel movies that grossed more than \$1...

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SEEN

Margaret Cho!

Bay Area native and fan magnet Margaret Cho greets the frenzied faithful en route to the Castro for a screening of **Sordid Lives** during Frameline32.

BLOGS

Interviews. Guillaume Canet and Harlan Coben.

"Hitchcock's 'Wrong Man' scenario gets an invigorating French update in *Tell No One*, a long-winded but gripping thriller based on American author Harlan Coben's bestseller," writes Nick Schager in *Slant*, reviewing "a ... [From *The Latest from GreenCine Daily*]

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CALENDAR

"The Animation Show 4"—July 4-10

Mike Judge curates the said-to-be-incredible independent animation in this festival (we believe them, btw), which includes new faves from Matthew Walker (**Operator and John & Karen**), Bill Plympton, Corky Quakenbush...

[more](#)**SF Docfest, hitting you where you live**

By Robert Avila

Reality, generally considered over-rated by the moving-going public, is the unapologetic core of SF DocFest (Sept. 28-Oct. 10). But from its inception in 2001, SF Indie's (almost) annual documentary showcase (they skipped 2003) has eschewed the dry, serious, good-for-you associations which supposedly plague the genre, emphasizing the idiosyncratic, odd, outré, subcultural, even the sub-subcultural (cf. this year's attention-hound, "Wiener Takes All"); all the while slipping in some solid social and political fare when, so to speak, nobody's watching. These more substantive, high-fiber docs, however, can turn out to be among the best surprises, admirably contributing to a sum of films invariably stranger than mere fiction.

In this year's satisfying slew of urban, suburban, New Urban, anti-urban, and sprawl-mall films, the reality conceit is one that Canadian filmmakers Gary Burns and Jim Brown take for all it's worth. In their sleek and sly exposé of suburban dystopia, "Radiant City: A Documentary about Urban Sprawl," shades of Albert Brooks lurk in the Don DeLillo shadows that slowly gather around the real life of the Moss family, a seemingly typical suburban household whose customs and mores unfold before the documentarians' inquisitive camera with deftly understated humor, and in increasingly uncomfortable proximity to various personal problems and quirks.

As a self-effacing dad, control-freak mom, and their two kids (a wonderfully sardonic but good-natured brother and sister) provide freewheeling conversation regarding the attractions and drawbacks of track-home living, interviewed experts limn the logic and import of mushrooming suburban monocultures. Among the elites who plan, describe, bemoan, or otherwise sum up the environmental and existential reality of our protagonists, the snarky James Howard Kunstler (*The Geography of Nowhere*) intervenes with cool urban authority and words like cartoonification. "What you're seeing here," he explains, "is the greatest misallocation of resources in the history of the world."

"Community," chimes another suburbia watcher, "is shorthand for cluster of houses with people inside them not talking to each other."

But today's inhabitants of suburbia are knowing subjects, with a philosophical approach to its tradeoffs — one sometimes laced with ironic detachment as they navigate the gridlocked expressways, empty sidewalks, and anonymous inward-facing abodes of this middle-class world. As still another commentator notes, these people know the critique of suburbia backwards and forwards yet choose to live there anyway. Life, so to speak, goes on. The Moss boy climbs to the top of a cell phone tower to narrate the view into a digicam. Mom meticulously arranges the magnets on the family's detailed refrigerator calendar. Kids in a dirt lot play "Escape from Mexico" with paintball guns. And Dad spends free time in rehearsals for an amateur production of a musical — about suburbia! — that he found on the Internet. ("It's kind of like Stephen Sondheim meets 'Rocky Horror Picture Show' meets 'The Simpsons,'" he offers.)

Sure, life goes on. But for how long? "Radiant City" has a pretty straightforward answer for all its genre-bending. Part of it comes along in some unhealthy statistics that show up in animated inter-title sequences (including the slightly brow-raising fact that traffic accidents and deaths are three times more common in the suburbs than in the

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Brown and company

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