

SHORT FILM PREVIEW: “THE THEORY”

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The Theory is the latest short film from award winning and Dalston-based writer and director Eva-Marie Elg. Swedish-born Elg, often referred to as ‘Emie’, has become known for her unconventional use of narrative and imagery, but *The Theory* has been received as her ‘straightest’ film so far.

The film follows a day in the life of an aging man who has lost his family and is in a state of frustration and denial. Starting in the style of a documentary the man is interviewed about the death of his family while carrying on with his daily routine. As the day unfolds so does his mourning. The interviewer’s voice over describes the sad details of his life: he still buys enough food for four people and his job as a night watchmen is down to his inability to interact with other people.



By the end of the film we have seen the man descend into madness. Watching family home movies

provokes him into a rage and he begins destroying his living room, only to wake up for his night shift, put the room to rights and tenderly kiss a family photograph, which had previously lay strewn on the floor. This seems to be part of the routine, and in a *Groundhog Day* fashion he is trapped in it.

The film is extremely uncomfortable and claustrophobic. Sound effects like the ticking of a clock and whirring of a projector subtly highlight the character's loneliness and quietly anxious existence. The actor playing him may seem slightly too overwrought at times and while this could sometimes be classed as overacting, it works well here in portraying him as socially inept due to grief.

Denial and loss seem to be themes that Emie is fond of using, as one of her previous films 'Recognize myself' follows roughly the same story. Both films also surround male protagonists, which make the portraits of their upset and anger all the more awkward. The film, however, also produces an air of mystery as certain details, such as how the man's family died and whether he had an involvement in their deaths, go unexplained, allowing the audience to develop their own theories.



director

Eva-Marie Elg

"Relationships really interest me, especially love relationships, because they have so much depth to them, in terms of the stages you go through, and what happens when it goes a bit more destructive. I like destructiveness in people", says Emie.

The film is dedicated to Emie's mother, who died of cancer early this year during the making of *The Theory*. The death had a profound effect on the direction of the film and put even more emphasis on the nostalgia and loss felt by the main character.

"It made me stronger, because I felt like this actually means something. I knew exactly what I wanted. It had a really good impact on me for some reason."

Nostalgia is a theme in other films from Emie. Her preferred format to shoot in is film, which often creates a nostalgic atmosphere in itself, and she usually uses 16mm. However, due to financial reasons

The Theory is shot predominantly in digital. It has been effective in this case though, as the stark reality of the digital picture of the man in his daily routine contrasts well against the soft, blurry home movies, shot on super 8mm film.

Emie's next project with her production company, Happy Endings Productions, is a sequel to the comic book short, *Sleeping and Dreaming of Food*, showing that she can work with different genres and media. But for now, *The Theory* is a personal and professional achievement and raw portrayal of an old man's regret and grief.

Words and photography – Evie Jeffreys

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