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BRFF 2020 Short Film Review "The Hindwing"

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By Kirk S. Fernwood

First, the **Recap**:

Increase. Expansion. Multiplication. Growth. When applied to the area most often associated with these terms, the arena of business, it's seen as a good thing. It becomes the representation of success and, ideally, a benefit to the culture around it. However, when said words are reference to and describe the onset of consequences due to an invasive species and its effect on the natural world around us, they become a death knoll and a source of frustration. So when the unwanted advances of the insect known as the bark beetle spread from their roots into foreign countries, an ongoing war began, mainly to fight against them, but also becoming a symbol for our own inner wars that sometimes need just as much vigilance and care aimed towards them. One filmmaker chose to visualize this war. Join with her now.

Next, my **Mind**:

As indicated above, this fourteen and a half minute short from Lebanese writer/director/producer/animation Christine Kettaneh, screened at the 2020 [Berlin Revolution Film Festival](#), first takes its documentary approach and animation-based visuals to focus strictly on making a strongly executed but informational and compelling argument about the invasion of bark beetles into the filmmaker's home country of Lebanon after they jumped the sea from their North American and European native lands and began an onslaught of Lebanon's greenery. Highlighting the literal physical indicators of their presence, the images

relate to the beetles and the outbreak they can represent once finding a new region to chew their way through, causing the irreparable damage to trees weakened by climate change and other factors.

Showcasing the aftermath of said attacks and the methods by which they wreck their havoc, Kettaneh has a particularly personal reason for pointing the finger at these obtrusive bugs, as their nasty foliage-munching tendencies caused her to “witness the felling of my family’s monumental tree” at their home. The film therefore takes on its form as an answer to what she felt in having to see this occur, making the effort both an expression of anger towards invasive pests and their destructiveness, but also as a re-visiting of the site of tragedy, taking this notion and then applying it in an expanding fashion to become a larger portrait of reality as it relates to the film’s theme.

However, what then makes this a step above, perhaps, your standard documentary effort is that the exploration then turns from the natural world as it relates to the beetles and the tress, and turns to us as human beings, having to be “pruned” within when we’ve allowed things in our lives to become just like said creatures, boring into us and damaging or even destroying us. It’s a statement that’s both tangible and intangible, these core struggles we face that stifle our growth from the inside, threatening to overwhelm and even figuratively “kill” us, just like the beetles in the trees, even though their efforts do most often literally wither their hosts to death.

We attempt to “medicate”, to fight off what is eating us away, but then if not possessing enough awareness and understanding of it, the malady develops resistance to that which we try to utilize to eradicate it, possibly ending up having to stand back and actually admire that which we cannot conquer, or at least not within greater assistance than we can muster ourselves. This really does mirror the bark beetles and their tree-based plan of attack, and the fact that Kettaneh addresses these concepts from both the angle of those and the personal battles we fight is beautifully creative, evocative, and quite sobering when we see the current pandemic that is another type of “bug”, COVID-19. The timing of this film and the existing crisis bears almost scary parallels, even though of course this wasn’t intended per se. Again, timing.

The animation mixed with actual photographic imagery very much makes this film the astute and inventive piece of filmmaking it is as well, once more emphasizing the every evolving scope of indie cinema and the artists contained within its community that desire to share their work while also being able to provide necessary, timely, and pertinent messages we need to hear, hopefully to be spurred to better comprehension and propelled to action. In total, “The Hindwing” takes on inner stability vs. instability in the context of a beetle’s hidden wings and turns it into a commentary not just about our natural world, but about the condition of our own hearts, souls, and minds.

As always, this is all for your consideration and comment. Until next time, thank you for reading!