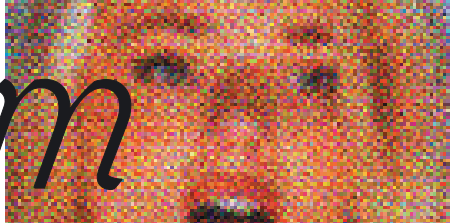


L.A. REVIEW *of the Moving Image*

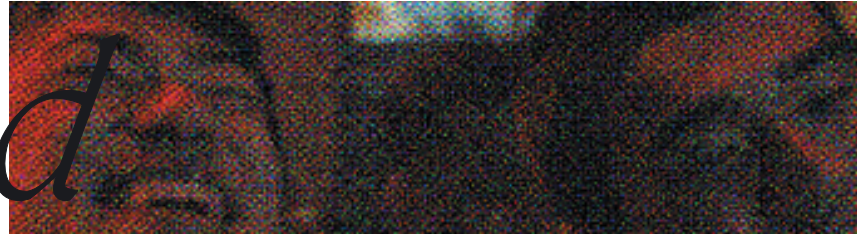
ISSUE 0 — SUMMER 2025

 *Romy Mars and the "Real Girl"*
The Code 

www.RachelOrmunt.com 

 *Conclave*

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Happyend 

EDITOR'S NOTE

Watching Ourselves Watch

Over the past decade, the geography of creative life in Los Angeles has shifted. New art galleries, museums, black box theaters, independent bookstores, pop-ups, and other venues have rapidly emerged. However, L.A.'s spirit in film and filmmaking has not diminished—it's simply dispersed. The gravitational center of film culture has moved eastward and beyond.

In a city long shaped by the studio system and premiere theaters, moving-image culture now emanates through artist-run cinemas, living room screenings, rooftops, garages, cemeteries, bridge walls, guerrilla file shares, Twitch streams, and group chats. Its social infrastructure is less centralized, more fugitive—yet still astonishingly coherent.

If L.A. once told its story through the mythmaking machine of Hollywood, it now finds resonance in the small, shared rituals of watching and rewatching, editing and sharing, gathering and reacting. It finds identity in the everyday ways moving images continue to organize desire, community, memory, and struggle.

To track the moving image in L.A. today is not to follow red carpets or release calendars. It is to trace how we gather around shared screens: how narrative cohesion is circulated, recut, remixed, and recoded into new forms. The moving image is not only what Los Angeles produces—it's how it dreams, how it argues, how it remembers.

L.A. Review of the Moving Image is dedicated to this inquiry. We approach the moving image—whether film, video, projection, stream, or clip—not simply as content, but as encounter. Our interest is not only in what appears onscreen, but in where it's shown, how it's talked about, and how it reshapes the people and publics around it.

Romy Mars and the "Real Girl"



by Mariah Flores — A teenage girl in a slouchy baby blue top talks into the front-facing camera of her iPhone. She's hovering over a kitchen countertop, vodka pasta ingredients just out of frame. At first glance, it's another TikTok "storytime." But the details come fast and strange. She's grounded because she tried to charter a helicopter on her dad's credit card. She's embarrassed to admit she googled the difference between onions and garlic. Cut to a silent clip of her holding a Grammy award. Her name is Romy Mars, daughter of Sofia Coppola and Thomas Mars, and this is her first public post.

Her parents didn't want her to be a "nepo baby." The public account she is using is against their wishes. Being grounded is capital punishment in the teen world; *how much worse could it get?* A shallot is presented to the camera and its onionness is questioned. She points the camera at her babysitter's boyfriend. He invents the word *fiasca* (the feminine alternative of *fiasco*) to describe Romy's helicopter antics. A meme is born. The video gets deleted but not before duplicates spawn, causing it to live in virality far past its intended expiration date. Life finds a way.

It was a rare nepo baby moment that didn't pretend to be earned: the charm, the pacing, the messiness, the humor, the honesty. Romy didn't conceal her privileges; she brought them front and center. And in doing so, she disarmed critics before they could realize who she was. It was a debut we hadn't yet witnessed. You couldn't oust her as a nepo baby, she did it herself already.

A select few of us are born into fame, assigned an avatar that feels unrelatable to the masses, and burdened with the shifting expectations of a public that sees generational fame as an unfair advantage. To enter the world light-years away from normalcy is both a blessing and curse of being a nepo baby. Most artistic ambitions, or "joining the family business" as Zoë Kravitz calls it, are often met with skepticism. It's seen as an affront to the imagined meritocracy the entertainment industry claims to operate under.

Romy's foray into the spotlight has, so far, proven to be an antidote to the negative effects of nepotism. The public loves her. The media adores her. Plenty of articles have dissected what makes her arrival

You couldn't oust her as a nepo baby: she did it herself already.

different. A self-aware, "untrained" nepo baby on social media is refreshing. Despite celebrity parents and the helicopter charter attempt that grounded her, people find her relatable. She's a teen experiencing the same punishment many other teens have served. Her TikTok is a wholesome act of rebellion that appears to be normal. Like what a "real girl" would do.

A couple of other "real girl" public figures come to mind, Princess Diana being one of the most notable. Her public persona embodied contradiction. She was poised yet vulnerable, famous yet fragile, royal yet somehow like "one of us." Her emotional transparency stood in stark contrast to the rigid formalities of an impermeable royal family. Off-duty, she wore sweatshirts and bike shorts, further feeding a narrative the public could project onto. Her authenticity didn't come from direct access to her, but from the feeling of intimacy she cultivated. Emma Chamberlain updated the "real girl" mythos for the digital age. Her early YouTube videos (unpolished, self-deprecating, and often chaotic) felt like a breath of fresh air in a landscape plagued by hyper-curated influencers donning unattainable aesthetics. The less she cared about fame, the more she attracted it. Anti-influencing instilled confidence in her audience. As her viewership grew, she explored existential quandaries that come with being a person in the public eye. Her candidness about the discomfort of fame and the absurdity of self-branding didn't lessen her appeal. It became her brand.

The performance of authenticity isn't new. Brands, artists and public figures rely on it to build trust. But in the digital age, it's become a

delicate balancing act, as audiences not only expect authenticity, they scrutinize it. During the *Hunger Games* press tours, Jennifer Lawrence became the poster child for the "down-to-earth" celebrity. She fell, she cussed, she burped. Ordinary behavior for most people, but from a movie star expected to be media-trained, it felt endearing. At first, the public loved it. But as headlines kept pushing this narrative, its charm curdled from "real girl" to "suspiciously curated" to just "annoying."

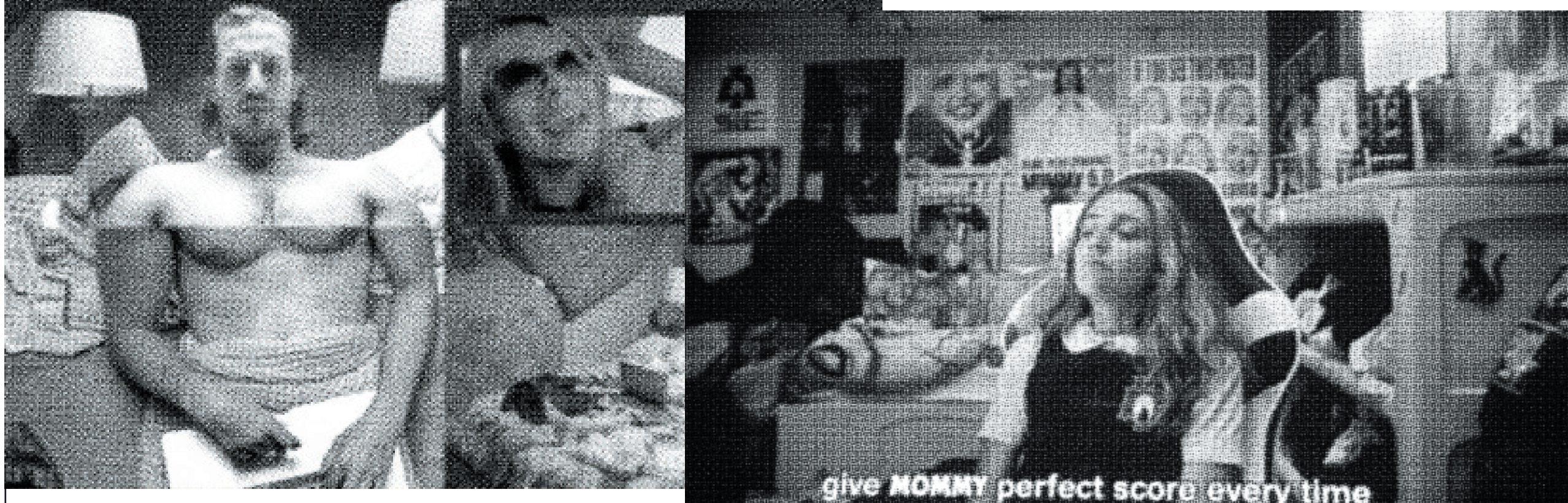
Sometimes, if you lean too hard into authenticity, you fall over. What matters is how covert the performance is. In Lawrence's case, the media's concerted efforts to make her feel relatable went a degree too far, shattering the illusion of realism. It's not that the public hates being marketed to exactly, they just hate *knowing* they are being marketed to.

That's partly why Romy Mars's graceful stumble into the fame she was born with has been so well-received. Since her viral helicopter fiasco, she's released three singles. Behind this new musical venture, there appears to be no calculated campaign, no team, no training. What we see is a girl lip syncing to trending audios (including her own), hanging out with friends, posting the occasional unfiltered rant. TikToks with her mom as a background extra and cameos from Jacob Elordi and Adam Driver keep her followers anchored to her reality. Even when she hints at the existence of a "team," her comment section rejects the idea that anyone else could be pulling the strings.

People don't just tolerate Romy, they fully project onto her. She's a model for what the public wants a nepo baby to be: self-aware, unserious, unfiltered, unmanaged. A masterclass in performing normalcy, collapsing the distance between the viewer and the alienating spectacle of inherited fame.

In celebrity culture, authenticity often operates less as proof of "realness" and more as a feeling. Romy Mars offsets her privilege with a practiced self-awareness, weaving in evidence of girlhood through glimpses of mother-daughter dynamics and showing us what's in her school bag. And while it's hard to believe that her hypervigilant parents would let her step into the spotlight untrained, that's the version of the story we choose to believe.

The more interesting question isn't whether or not any of it is actually real, but why we're so fixated on *feeling* that it is. ☺



Happyend → Neo Sora and his crew achieved great, natural performances from his young cast—hard to do. Set in the near-future, *Happyend* positions teenagers against the all-too-familiar backdrop of climate change, xenophobia, and ever-encroaching surveillance.

"THERE IS NO TECHNO ON A DEAD PLANET"—a protest sign that's one of my favorites. I found it online several years ago (don't know where it's from), and now it lives in this movie's universe.

I've never heard of ¥0\$UK€ ¥UKIMATSU either; used to great effect in the film's opening. I wish that part had lasted longer and we saw more of the music research club in action. But the absence of those desired moments (and of other key memories) is one of the film's strengths—and one of the more intriguing moves.

The Q&A was led by Kogonada, joined by Sora, editor/producer Albert Tholen, and producer Aiko Masubuchi. Kogonada was peak Kogonada, breaking down every shot he loved in his trademark way... I felt trapped—it lasted sixty minutes, I think—but he still managed to draw out some insightful answers. One of note: the story of how Sora met ¥UKIMATSU at one of his shows as a fan, which eventually led to his inclusion in the movie. Turns out he's also a huge cinephile. Cute. ☺ Bijan S.

Happyend receives a wider release in L.A. on June 20, 2025.



The Code / www.RachelOrmont.com → AI was all fun and games when you were giggling and kicking your feet, sending your friends pictures of you at the Met Gala with an unprompted third arm: like some Anna Wintour cosigned Hindu goddess. But now your parents are probably going to fall for a perfectly rendered video of you tied up in some dingy basement, and their retirement savings will be wired off to pay some overseas ransom. Unfortunately, being held hostage isn't even glamorous anymore; it's gotten Temu-ified by AI. As the pressure valve of deceit starts to build, the only response is to reject irony and embrace sincerity.

With Eugene Kotlyarenko's *The Code* and Peter Vack's *www.RachelOrmont.com*, we see a version of the truth but it's built with the ironic master's tools, or something like that. Both were made in the pandemic and try to show us how that time actually felt.

Eugene has truly refined his signature screencapture language in *The Code*. We're not just getting a split screen of reasonable iPhone scrolling—it's overstimulation by design. Symphonic intercuts of hand-held footage by the actors, security footage—i.e. probably 1 billion cameras—and whatever's playing on the characters' phones are all presented in *Brady Bunch*-style grids. It honestly felt comforting—maybe because I guess I can't watch anything unless Temple Run is

playing underneath the main event. I didn't even have to go on my phone at all while watching this.

This schizophrenic viewing mirrors the accelerationist development of our relationships with our screens during lockdown. You start watching a YouTube video, getting bored, switching tabs, check Instagram, get a FaceTime mid-scroll sesh, zone out of the convo, read an email while their frame is still floating in the corner—then remember you were watching a YouTube video in the first place.

Cut off from the raw randomness our brains still crave from the outside world, we reach for stimulation through screen-shuffling or by starting conflict with our loved ones as a proxy for closeness. Through all of this impressive multiscreen editing, main characters Celine and Jay are stuck in an impotent, strained relationship. They inflame the situation by secretly snooping on each other's phones and filming documentary footage of one another. Even with digital access to each other's most intimate moments, they remain flaccid and distant IRL—especially as Jay spirals into paranoia under constant surveillance. Celine remains stagnant in her IRL intimacy, but she still finds time to share her efforts with her online audience. I especially liked her TikToks with text-to-speech voiceovers—tutorials on downloading spyware onto her bf's phone or drugging his food with a molcajete—Nara Smith for girls stuck in the gf' phase. As their digital intimacy increases, their human intimacy decreases.

If *The Code* is a quirked-up romcom that offers us a more naturalistic portrait of the pandemic, www.RachelOrmont.com is a Ryan Trecartin-esque sci-fi, absurd and abrasive. It's more challenging to watch, but maybe that's the point. It felt like the perfect facsimile for being in the trenches online. Even in its most abstract and fantastical moments, it still captures the time we all got internet poisoned during the pandemic; like, remember when colleges used Roblox simulations so 2020 graduates could pretend to walk across a stage?

We're bombarded with references to esoteric online communities and meme formatting in every frame: bottom-text captions, shitpost typography, and glitchy overlays. Vack rounds out the simulation of being trapped in an iPad with a memetic soundscape: echoes of "bruh," "plug," and Looney Tunes action SFX punctuates every beat. Framed in all this chaotic accoutrement, Rachel grows up in captivity. Her only social interaction is with an uncanny Asian girl AI named Poorspigga and she spends her days taking online surveys about a popstar named Mommy 6.0, with whom she has a parasocial relationship with.

Betsy Brown plays Rachel with a voice somewhere between Smeagol and *Little Nicky*. It flirts with the edge of caricature, but what could be dismissed as flat or affectless performance starts to feel like a form of grotesque revelation of what we've become online. Betsy's performance isn't polite: it's jarring, punk, cringe. It shows what happens when you never learn social graces—or forget them in isolation.

I was lucky enough to see www.RachelOrmont.com twice at Lumiere Music Hall. The second time, my best friend brought her low screen-time bf (I've seen the iPhone data—a commendable 20 minutes a day). I could tell that the movie was not hitting for him, and by the end, he ended up yacking from the migraine, puke cushioned by all the uneaten popcorn at the bottom of the trash can. I think he was illiterate to the references, but more importantly, I don't think he was

attuned to the feeling of being online, let alone the vibe of being in this particular corner of the Internet. He OD'ed on the brainrot. With all its loud internet aesthetics and schizotypal abjection, the film alienates much of its audience but still leaves them with an impact.

Even at its most strenuous, Vack lands on something honest. Sure, Rachel's best friend's name hints at a racial slur, everyone's wearing an anime costume, and there's a 9/11 poster on the wall—but we built this reality brick by brick. It's what we deserve.

Dogma 25 signaled a shift, and ever since, "true" filmmakers are searching for meaning. Kotlyarenko and Vack left us with something visceral. These films don't just depict the pandemic—they replicate its texture: overstimulated, screen-lit, disembodied, desperate for touch. We're called out for LARPing being-alive in isolation—when really, we were just inert, glitching avatars. ☺ Sydney Pugh

Conclave → A political satire of 21st century liberalism. A bunch of Democrats (or Starmerites, Macronites, Trudeau bros, or whichever of the global centrist fashion) and the descendants of *fascismo italiano*, all dressed in pristine red and white, vie for the papacy to set in stone what is to be Catholicism tomorrow. Too set on protecting the institution, a liberal faction of cardinals forget—or purposefully neglect—their duty to all of God's children. The film could prove to be a defining ghostly impression of the Biden era: egoist do-gooders insisting on their progressive ideals, but too proud and traditionalist to make a real stand against bloodthirsty conservatives. If only it were more incisive; I'm not sure it'll remain as memorable as it should.

A single, later moment stands out: the sequestered conclave, after several failed votes and rounds of gossip behind closed doors, can't help but notice the sound of the outside—a white noise of wind, people gathered on the streets, and life upon holy ground. Like Biden in defense of Israel and Obama at war with terror, there's no time to consider real life when lives are at stake. They resume their vote on a small piece of cardstock, of which is to be burned into a smokestack later on. Business as usual. ☺ ellie sunlight moon



The Phoenician Scheme → An ode to Wes's daughter and message of hope and protection for when she learns about imperial violence, et cetera. **Caught by the Tides** → B-roll is what's real life.

Friendship → 100-minute *ITYSL* episode with a toad scene that makes it worth every second before it. **Magic Farm** → Sometimes, the poison comes from within. **Sorry, Baby** → An earnest portrayal of the traumatic life cycle that only a comedian could write. **Black Bag** → Feels like TV, but that's so Soderbergh. **Christiane F.** → The tide that pulls you away from your mother, the promise to find yourself elsewhere, tomorrow, or in another. ☺

SCENE NOTES APPARATUS 03

by Clara Ribot —

There is something close to religious devotion in how the films circle around crowds, strange transformations, auto-hypnosis, and mass delusion. *Apparatus* is a short film screening series that orients around these ideas.

We program by approaches to a subject, not necessarily subject matter—minimize uniformity in tone and mode of production, without sacrificing flow. The goal: to show that short films can be anything... even good! This 03 edition's theme is funneling: information, distraction, metacraft, and cake.

The following was adapted from an introduction that was never presented.

Marcus Batto pieces together footage from YouTube, social media, Yelp, Google reviews, etc., to create portraits of spaces and the people moving through them. He has a knack for catching a specific glance, a certain outfit, a moment of missed connection—something that punctures the chaos of the crowd and becomes quietly unforgettable. His next film, a work-in-progress reconstruction of the day of Michael Jackson's death, will screen at Now Instant Image Hall in June.

• **Works shown:** *Elevators* (2021), *event setup + breakdown* (2025), *XTC Ride n Style Services* (2022)

• **See also:** Otto's work

Otto Ohle is a filmmaker and curator based in Hudson, New York. Also working with found footage, his shorts have a personal effect, scored by a fluttering rhythm that blends documentary and fantasy seamlessly. By repeating techniques like crossfades, titles, and floating text bubbles, Ohle creates something diaristic without narcissism—genuine without giving too much away.

• **Works shown:** *Demons and Angels* (2023), *there are some questions that cannot be answered by google* (2022), *dream (it's bedtime)* (2023)

• **See also:** Marcus's work

lamovingimage.com

RERELEASE RECAP Revenge of the Sith

by Summer Hartman

Revenge of the Sith, an American epic space opera. Natalie Portman makes me sad. The Chancellor is scary boots. And I could watch that end sequence of Anakin's poor limbs catching fire on repeat like it was the first porn seen by man.

In fact, I have. On loop. In someone's boyfriend's Greenpoint apartment: getting stoned, repeatedly sighing and exclaiming, "God, it's so fucked up."

Star Wars, as a franchise, is not science fiction—the philosophical and scientific questions aren't the point; they're eggs left to be cracked by us, while we parse through the beauty on top. Most people, I think, aren't recognizing the eggs, let alone using them properly. Hence, *Star Wars* falls into the category of "epic," not "sci-fi." We aren't being taught a truth. We're being made to feel.

Dive into Reddit threads about *Revenge of the Sith*, leave disappointed by how base most people think.

"Well, Anakin had to go to the dark side—i restored balance."

"How could he go against his own love for Padme?"

"He wasn't seduced, he was tricked!" "The Jedi system is broken."

Lame interpretations. I won't debate them. I just wish people could sit with their discomfort long enough to feel something deeper. Like shame.

Shame vs. guilt (culturally, individually) is one of the clearest indicators of whether a character (or a nation-state) preserves itself through collective enlightenment or individual fear.

The U.S. is a guilt culture. My cracked claim: the Galactic Republic represented the West's global reach pre-Reagan. Post-Reagan, we got honest and ugly. We're now in our Galactic Empire era. There's little resistance—our leaders watched the same movies we did.

This parallel applies to many empires, but this is the one I'll tell you about.

Few people online give proper weight to *Star Wars* as a criticism of U.S. imperialism. In the late '70s, most "intellectuals" were hopeful America might lean into its guilty conscience. But 1981 came, and we had to reassess.

So, how do you stop someone from collapsing into residual guilt or

Ian White returns with *Perham*, a follow-up to *Termite*. Another dystopian narrative that's as much about ambience and horizons as its central mystery. Landscape horror blends with wry existentialism in Ian's compact, atmospheric shorts.

• **Work shown:** *Perham* (2025)

• **See also:** Marcus's work

Kesiah Manival is a Portland-based filmmaker whose animation background adds a certain awareness, where the quality of light reflected in water or the feeling of a minute passing is as intentional as each cut or framing choice. When I asked how to describe this film in the program, she said: "Based on the evening of October 20th, 1988." I'll let the reader do their own research. Her upcoming projects include the documentary *Duchene* and the narrative short *Punk Film*.

• **Work shown:** *For Tracy West* (2025)

• **See also:** Xavier's work

Fiona Kane made this narrative film, steeped in the language of genre. Everything—from the cadence of the lines to the banality of the scene—best exemplifies the funnel/hypnosis experience that this program spirals around. It's rare for a filmmaker to have the taste and conviction to make something this disorienting. If you absolutely have to make a narrative, it should at least feel like a half-remembered dream.

• **Work shown:** *I Want THIS HAIR FOREVER* (2025)

• **See also:** Ian's work

Every program needs one short that operates on its own level—not in terms of quality, but specificity. **Xavier Rotnofsky** grounds the screening in what I'd call the "where you were" kind of moment: "I remember where I was when I first saw *Calabazas 1/26/20*." It's a film that's as notable for what it is as for how it's made (same thing, kind of). It's online—find it, and try not to look away from the overwhelming strangeness of the world.

• **Work shown:** *Calabazas 1/26/20* (2021)

• **See also:** Kesiah's work

unprocessed shame?

Anakin feels like a funny read on Gen X: a moralistic upbringing, shattered by betrayal and heartbreak—then radicalized in search of purpose, leaving love behind. A lot of us can find our fathers here.

And behold, I found Kanye West! There's something funny about the Kanye & Jay Z pattern. If you follow it long enough, it loops past Anakin & Obi Wan and ends back at the Bible. Messianic liberator versus fallen prophet.

Everything you do yeah yeah it's been done before, everything you say yeah you said that yesterday.

The issue with pattern-seeking is that it always leads to the same universal truth: nothing.

Those who search for patterns as answers—our dear fallen angel Mr. Skywalker (e.g. Kanye, your ex, my dad)—often end up clinging to the security of falsehood.

I could go on biblical tangents, but that would just leave breadcrumbs for Mega Churches to use when espousing spiritual warfare.

Just watch *Revenge of the Sith*, watch *Zeitgeist*, snort something; you'll be very close to enlightenment, which, of course, will lead you nowhere.

We must be careful with what we say. I'll end with an anecdote to show you just how careful we must be.

After seeing *Revenge of the Sith* in theaters last month, I turned to my companion: "Was AI around for screenwriting in 2005? This script is so abysmal!"

We shrug. Google eagerly confirms my suspicion: Yes!

Cute but not what I'm looking for. I added "reddit" to the query. And again, I'm vindicated!

Revenge of the Sith: the first film written by AI.

It takes a few conversations of me spreading the lie before someone more internet-savvy gently lets me in on the joke. They meant the C3PO & R2D2 were scripted. r/movies is full of fibs.

The moral? Check your sources. Anakin should've, too.

I wish I could've told him. Isn't that tragic? But now we know together :) Isn't that romantic? ☺





ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

UbuWeb / I.K.U.

by Kyle Pak

It must have been that psychosexual, pixelated poster that led me to UbuWeb «www.ubu.com». Or was it a Kenneth Anger film? Either way, I'd struck gold. I'd been hunting for several hard-to-find films and many were readily available in Ubu's Film & Video section. The layout is peak 2005: simple, red Tahoma font.

A vortex of avant-garde and well-established directors, mixed with films by artists whose work has been projected in museums.

In this labyrinth, your eyes glaze over a list of hundreds of directors—I look for familiar names.

My eyes wander for Korean directors I've never heard of:

Han Ok-hee, an early experimental female filmmaker whom I've been looking for.

A new find is a director by the name of Kyung-mook Kim. It felt illegal.

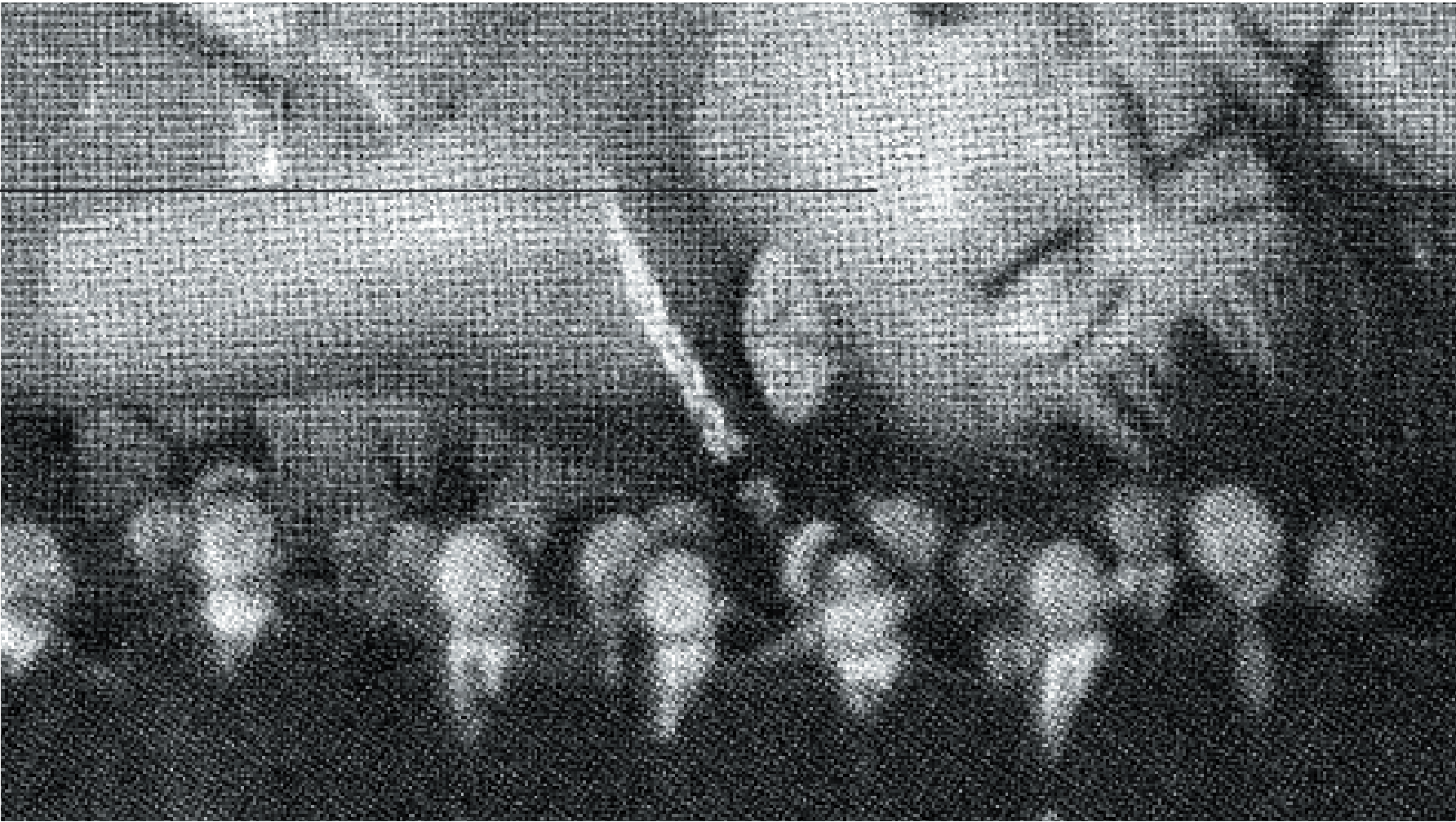
His one available film is borderline snuff/fetish porn—

Shit, I could not finish.

It was then that I realized Ubuweb has the power to host work that YouTube and mainstream platforms won't dare touch. And this intrigued me.

UbuWeb is a space where rules can both be broken and made, and I will continue to dig for these films, these feelings, hoping to find something I didn't know I needed.

→ *I.K.U.* (2000) There hasn't been a JAV quite like this. Taiwanese-American director Shu Lea Cheang delivers the experimental sci-fi feature set in a future Japan where robots shapeshift to harvest data through sex: TECH. TECHNO. ROBOTS. ORGASM. ☹



Concessions (Concessions)

by Vivian Fu

Realistically, what sucks about movie theater hot dogs is that they give you the condiments in packets. I don't want to fuss with three packets (mustard, ketchup, relish) in the dark. Ideally, they'd have squirt bottles, similar to butter flavoring stations. Because of this, it's often simplest to defer to chicken nuggets or tenders, which usually come with a small container of a single sauce. Less opportunity for error.

Hot dog at the Egyptian is solid but the nuggets are better. Popcorn is fine, but not a must. I always need a soda at the movie theater, and while I get the logic, I hate that the cup holders are on the bottom left of the seat in front of you instead of in the armrest. I'm always anxious I will drop my soda searching for the holder in the dark.

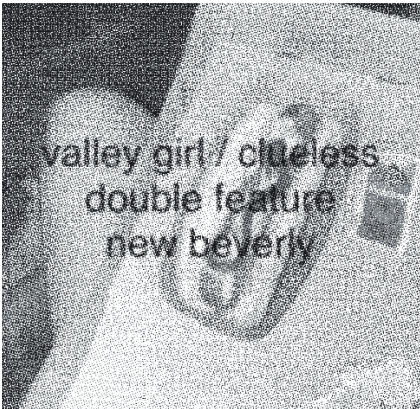
Hot dogs at New Beverly and Vista are preferable to the microwaved White Castle burger. Although I respect Quentin for his choice to serve this burger, I dislike it. But, everything else about their concessions is perfect. Vista doesn't have Coca-Cola, which is also a choice I

respect, because I don't dick ride for Coca-Cola.

Does the Los Feliz 3 have hot dogs? I don't remember-will have to try sometime. Same with the Lumiere, which I rarely go to, but I do recall they have fun popcorn seasonings, which is always appreciated. Does Now Instant have hot dogs? I know they have popcorn that is devoid of butter and seasoning and feels really healthy, particularly because it comes in a tiny bag seemingly made for babies.

On the subject of fun popcorn seasonings, we have Vidiots. I have never gotten the hot dog because I just plan to go to Walt's for a more beautiful hot dog: before or after the movie.

AMC hot dog is adequate. The tenders are more substantial if you are looking to eat your dinner at the theater, whereas the hot dog is great as a snack. Although I said I don't dick ride for Coca-Cola, maybe I was lying because I do dick ride for the AMC Coca-Cola machine, where you can turbo-customize your beverage. My favorite is Diet Cherry Vanilla. No caffeine if I'm catching a late movie on a school night. ☹



Films for the Longest Light

The Summer Solstice (June 20) marks a shift inward. With Mars in Virgo (June 17) beforehand, sharpen your focus on repair and realignment before softening into a reset of intimacy and tenderness with the Cancer New Moon (June 25). When Venus enters Taurus (June 29), let your voice return: steadier, warmer, yours.

These films are postcards sent from a summer that never ends: sun-blasted, pool-soaked, road-tripped, or half-asleep with longing. Check your moon sign but also Venus.

Aries Moon, "Burnout to Bravery"

Beau Travail (1999) — Sun, sweat, and silence; masculinity melting under heat.

Taurus Moon, "Stability to Surrender"

Columbus (2017) — Crickets chirp through the stillness, architecture, and intimacy of shared silence.

Gemini Moon, "Noise to Intuition"

Frances Ha (2012) — Slipping through black & white friendships like dappled sunlight on pavement.

Cancer Moon, "Shell to Hearth"

A Brighter Summer Day (1999) — The quiet weight of family through the flickering light of adolescence.

Leo Moon, "Performance to Presence"

Fish Tank (2009) — Dancing for no one, waiting to be seen in a world that only mirrors her defiance.

Virgo Moon, "Control to Capacity"

La Ciénaga (2001) — The slow erosion of households in heat; tone Chekhov, humidity Bergman.

Libra Moon, "Politeness to Intimacy"

Somewhere (2010) — Drifting actor & his daughter find themselves by the empty pool at the Chateau.

Scorpio Moon, "Defense to Exposure"

A Bigger Splash (2015) — Sexual tension and secrets in a volcanic Italian island villa.

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Anthony Tran

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ellie sunlight moon

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† **Mariah Flores** watched *all of Romy Mars' TikTok* in her bed (*Thai Town*) on May 29th, 2025 and *The Virgin Suicides* at the David Geffen Theater (Academy Museum) on Jun 1st, 2025.

† **Vivian Fu** watched a double feature of *Valley Girl* / *Clueless* at the New Beverly on Sept 10, 2021 and *Barbie* at AMC The Americana at Brand 18 on Jul 23rd, 2023.

† **Summer Hartman** watched the 25th anniversary re-release of *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* at AMC Burbank 16 on Apr 28th, 2025.

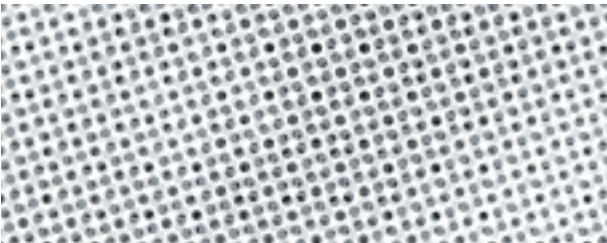
† **ellie sunlight moon** watched *Conclave* at the AMC Burbank Town Center 8 on Dec 14th, 2024.

† **Kyle Pak** watched *I.K.U.* on UbuWeb on Nov 9th, 2024. Stream at: «ubu.com/film/cheang_iku.html»

† **Sydney Pugh** watched *The Code* on May 6th, 2025 and *www.RachelOrmont.com* on May 27th 2025, both at the Lumiere Cinema.

† **Clara Ribot** presented *Apparatus 03: FUNNEL* at the Earl on May 27th, 2025. Follow for their 04 edition at: «instagram.com/apparatus.screen»

† **Bijan S.** watched *Happyend* for the closing night of Los Angeles Festival of Movies at Vidots on Apr 7th, 2025. Watch ¥ØU\$UK€ ¥UK1MAT\$U's Tokyo Boiler Room set at: «youtu.be/T1tcUfUhr5U»



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Pitch us something tweet-length or more. Criticism here favors entertainment and voice over precision and verdict.

We publish reviews of films released in 1999 or later: prioritizing upcoming releases, then current ones, and finally past films. Even better if they've been seen recently in a theater east of the 405.

But we're flexible. For everything else, anything goes. We care as much about the seat as the scene.

Sagittarius Moon, "Escape to Embodiment"

Y tu mamá también (2001) — Class, sexuality, and yearning unfold on a road trip toward the sea.

Capricorn Moon, "Restraint to Receiving"

20th Century Women (2016) — Guidance isn't given, it's modeled: between rooms, glances, and passing records.

Aquarius Moon, "Detachment to Devotion"

The Beach Bum (2019) — Absurdist freedom seen through neon lenses.

Pisces Moon, "Diffusion to Communication"
All These Sleepless Nights (2016) — Non-linear interweaving of parties, fleeting light, and emotion without edges.