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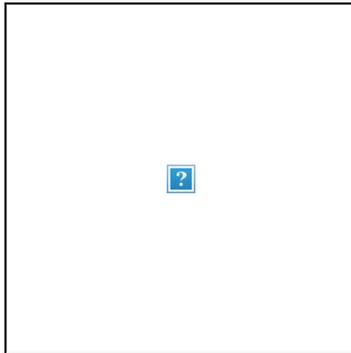
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A scene from Over the GW.

MOVIES ATLANTIC FILM FESTIVAL PICKS

Over The GW: Rehab revealed

Submitted by Ron Foley Macdonald on 09.4.07 at 4:17pm.

Amidst the hidden gems of this year's Atlantic Film Festival is the gripping New York City rehab drama Over The GW. Written and directed by Nick Gaglia and based on a true story, it's a powerful disturbing story set amidst the unregulated and rather dodgy sector of practical behaviour modification.

The GW stands for the George Washington bridge in the Big Apple, where a single mom sends her out-of-control teenager in a desperate attempt to get him off drugs through a rigorous 30-day retreat. His stay ends up being 2-and-a-half-years; meanwhile his sister gets sucked into the same vortex and ends up at the same rehab.

The Rehab is run by a charismatic cult-like leader named Dr. Hillier. His playbook consists of constant humiliation and control. The 'clients' are treated like infants and are encouraged to rat on each other. The film takes a definite docu-drama tone, with interviews from the separated parents explaining their reaction to the brutal process seen on screen.

Shot in what appears to be an eternal twilight of winter, late fall and early spring, Over The GW suggests that the Rehab outfit regularly extends its clients stays to collect money from either the parents or the social welfare system.

Because writer/director Gaglia is far more interested in plot and situation rather than character, we see - quite terrifyingly - how a whole system works instead of dwelling on the teenagers as people.

The result is a powerful and disturbing film that - despite being softened only a bit with a mildly happy ending - is an edge-of-your-seat thriller that fearlessly takes on a contemporary subject that everyone has heard of but no-one is truly familiar with. Ripping along at barely 75 minutes, it's a American indie flick well worth catching.

Over The GW, written and directed by Nick Gaglia, Seventh Art Releasing, USA, 2006, 76 minutes.

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