

## SLIFF '11 REVIEW: 'PIG'

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What make us who we are? Is it our family and friends? Is it our memories of our past? Or is it the future that lies ahead of us? For a lot of people, the answer could be all of the above. It's a complicated issue when you begin to think why you are who you are. Many people will agree that every single person and event that has been incorporated in their life since day one has helped form who they have become. However, what if you wake up one morning not knowing any of those people or events. Your memory is blank. Would you want to search out those individuals and rediscover those occurrences? Would you want to find out who you are?

Henry Barrial's 2011 film *Pig* poses these exact questions. A confused and helpless "man" (Rudolf Martin) wakes up in the middle of the desert with a hood cloaking him. His hands are bound behind him and he's at a loss in remembering everything that has happened prior to this moment. Soon after passing out from heat exhaustion, the man finds himself in the care of a woman and her young son. Upon further investigation, the man discovers one possible clue to his identity: A piece of paper with the name "MANNY ELDER" written on it. After some detective work by the hospitable woman, the man travels to LA to visit the Manny Elder they uncovered. What follows is a downward spiral of mystery and intrigue, as the man soon meets multiple different people with conflicting stories and hidden agendas.

Not a lot more can be said without ruining the journey that the film takes you on. That is exactly the joy of *Pig*: It's a paranoia fueled journey that leads the struggling hero into unknown and devastating territory. Barrial unfolds the story slowly for us the viewer so that we're just as lost as the "man." This isn't necessarily a bad thing. One of the most effective elements of this science-fiction thriller is its ability at keeping the audience guessing till the end. Aside from a smart and yet simple script by Barrial as well (once a psychology major), Rudolf Martin is captivating as a man searching for answers. In a lot of ways his subtle performance recalls Guy Pearce in *Memento*. His pensive expressions always makes him seem like he's struggling inside without saying a word. The only downside to his performance and the story in general is that it stays at the same tone and pace for the full 87 min. running time. Instead of the tension rising and falling, *Pig* instead sticks to one note: A state of non-threatening confusion. As a result the film tends to wear a little thin in the last third before the intriguing finale.

Though you would assume it would look very generic having it set in LA for the majority of the film, the unique locations give the film a very out of time European feel. This is just one of the many ways that *Pig* doesn't let a meager budget get in the way. With some low budget films, you are going to have the obvious technical problems. Here, *Pig* is at fault as its sound mixing is extremely uneven at times. Even with some minor complaints, there is a lot to applaud here. As previously mentioned, the point here is the journey the film takes the viewer on. *Pig* exhibits some interesting ideas and presents them in a subtle sci-fi structure. It acts more as a platform for its theories than a stirring genre film. Yet, if your willing to follow down the twisted path put forth, the end result is quite promising. In a story about a man attempting to discover his past life, the character is simultaneously creating a new one. Would you want too back to your old life if you discovered something in it you didn't like? Thought provoking ideas such as this one linger long after the final reveal takes place. Even if it's a little tedious at times, *Pig* invites you to question your own past decisions and your journey moving forward in life.

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