



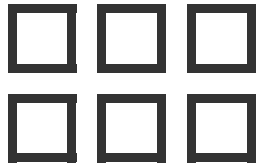
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Allen Theatre to show award-winning indie-film "Meme"



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By [Matt Reigle](#)[Things to Do](#)  17*4 min read • 208 views and 26 shares • Posted February 19, 2019*

This Saturday night, Annville's Allen Theatre will be offering an opportunity that local cinephiles won't be able to pass up: a screening of the award-winning independent film, *Meme*.

[Meme](#) tells the story of Jennifer who stumbles across a bizarre tape in her VHS-obsessed boyfriend's collection. Transfixed by the content of the tape, she sets out to find it's creator while navigating the trials and tribulations of her relationships and her work as a freelance web designer.

The film's director, [Sean Mannion](#), says that the inspiration for *Meme* came nearly six years ago.

"The initial inspiration that kicked off me writing it was walking out of *Spring Breakers* in 2013 and thinking I'd really like to make, not content-wise a movie like that, but structurally a movie that would be like that."

Mannion then combed through story ideas he had compiled over the years while making short films and found several ideas that he realized could fit together.

"I had an outline for a sequel to *Videodrome*," says Mannion,

referring to David Cronenberg's 1983 film starring James Woods about a television executive who encounters a strange broadcast signal depicting macabre images of violence. "I've always been a big fan of that movie and I had this loose sequel to it, and I thought, 'why don't I take this story that plays with my interest in analogue tech and relationships between people, and between people and technology,' and it started to grow out of there."



Full trailer for *Meme*.

Further influence came from Mannion's encounters with a subculture that would have an enormous impact on the primary plot of the film: the world of VHS collecting.

"I had encountered a group of VHS collectors, which I think is a little bit more known now, but at the time I didn't know

people were doing that, and I found out there is this whole community of people who are doing it that are very passionate about this format that a lot of people have considered dead.”

The influence of this bygone piece of technology is prevalent throughout the film. Footage that has been processed through VHS and then re-digitized is seen throughout the movie in the in the form of cutaways, special films-within-the-films, and faux-beer commercials that Mannion shot specifically for *Meme*.

The instantly recognizably lo-fi appearance of the VHS-stylized sequences have the ability to conjure up nostalgia for a time when it was important to “be kind and rewind” before dropping your rented tapes off at Blockbuster.

Mannion shot the film of over the course of about a year from November 2014 to October 2015 in Brooklyn and Queens, with a budget so modest that Mannion jokingly refers to *Meme* as a “no-budget” film.

While the finances may have been modest, the investment of time and talent invested by the crew that Mannion assembled through his years of making short films was not.

“There was a lot of very generous people who gave their time, gave their talent, and they did a better job for it,” says Mannion, “[The film] doesn’t happen without that.”

Meme features a non-linear narrative structure that Mannion says was strongly influenced by Steven Soderbergh’s 1999 film, *The Limey*.

According to Mannion, the original script was written non-linearly, but reworked to a more traditional linear structure in an effort to make it easier for the cast and crew to follow the film’s overall narrative.

When it came timer post-production, Mannion started out editing the to the linear version of the script, before he and producer Carolyn Maher, decided that the original draft’s non-linear style of storytelling is what would be best suited for the film.

Meme had its premier last June in the Art of Brooklyn Film Festival where it [took home the award for “Outstanding Narrative Feature.”](#)

After appearing in more festivals and doing some showings in the New York area, Mannion decided it was time for *Meme* to hit the road and encounter a wider audience.

Although to some it may seem odd that a touring independent film would see Annville as an inviting stop, to Mannion, it was a perfect fit.

"I could've done a lot of screenings in New York, because there's lots of indie theaters in New York," says Mannion, "but I didn't just want to stay in New York state, I wanted to get out, and Pennsylvania was a place that was close to where I'm at, so it works for me budget wise, but it's beyond this New York bubble, if you will."

While searching for places to show his film, Mannion came across the [Allen Theatre](#) and thought that it would be an ideal venue to showcase his film.

"When I looked at old photos that people have from being there or being out front of it, I really loved the marquee," says Mannion.

The theater's aesthetics will certainly add to the vibe of attending an independent film screening, but Mannion also noted another reason for stopping in Annville: the fact that it's home to Lebanon Valley College.

While showing the film at a festival in North Carolina, Mannion realized that most of the people who were coming

up to talk to him after the film were college students.

“That’s who we want; that’s who we want to target,” says Mannion.

Another component of the tour’s strategy in attracting the audience is simply the fact that a tour like this is even stopping in Annville in the first place.

Mannion grew up in Anchorage, Alaska and noted that living in a city that is so far off the beaten path, not many touring events make it to town.

While Annville and Lebanon County are by no means as isolated as Alaska, it is true that tours like this don’t come through town all that often, which Mannion sees as an opportunity to offer those in attendance something special.

“It would be really easy for me to do screenings in big cities, but I’d much rather go to some college towns, and go to some very arts-interested and arts-focused towns around the country, and bring this little movie that I made, this little independent movie that I made to those people and say ‘Hey, here’s this; I hope you like it.’”

Mannion will be in attendance for the screening of *Meme*, which will take place on Saturday, February 23 at 11 PM at the Allen Theatre. Tickets are \$7 and come with a digital copy of the film along with special features.

(If the 11PM start time wasn't a giveaway, it should be noted that *Meme* is intended for mature audiences.)

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