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## Indie Film Review "Meme"

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**First**, the **Recap**:

Abject disconnection and the revelatory discovery of self. They sound like contradictory ideologies, yet seem to become things to experience hand-in-hand when it comes to realizing just how distinctly separated we are in a relationship entire one-sided. Even as that inherent longing to have that special someone near gnaws at your soul, the total apathy given by the other person while you make best efforts becomes laborious and numbing, with seemingly no end in sight. Such it would appear to be the case for a once vibrant young woman named Jennifer ([Sarah Schoofs](#)), a struggling graphic designer dealing with both two annoying clients Lorraine ([June Dare](#)) and Marcus ([Alex Bone](#)) as well as the ever-dissipating romantic vibe with her boyfriend Tommy ([Shivantha Wijesinha](#)).

Trying to find solace in discussing the mess that is her life with best friend Lesley ([Lauren A. Kennedy](#)), Jennifer strives to maintain any semblance of normalcy with Tommy, who is far more obsessed with burying himself in his love of VHS movies, a passion shared not with Jennifer, but with his friend Kyle ([Chaz H. Cleveland](#)) and an attractive gal pal Carrie ([Kitty Ostapowicz](#)), whom Jennifer's wariness of knows no bounds. Unexpectedly finding a particular VHS movie and popping it in to watch one night, its overt mash-up quirkiness completely engulfs her, sending Jennifer on a journey to find out who made the film and it's meaning, but along the way, becomes something more—an eye-opening adventure in realizing herself, her potential, her worth, and a new direction she never saw coming.

**Next**, my **Mind**:

What could have been your average tale of a broken relationship, self-doubt, and battling alcoholism gets a definitive indie makeover plus unique execution that ventures into the experimental/idiosyncratic/darkly humorous veins and sends the viewer on an unconventional adventure of one young woman's fight for identity and value in this feature film debut from up-and-coming writer/director/producer/editor [Sean Mannion](#), whose previous short film efforts have already illustrated a bold consistency for putting forth the creatively obscure. At first, one might tend to get a tad "lost" in the film's quirkiness and strangely philosophical delivery, painting the unconventional picture of its lead character's trials and trail to personal revelation, shown in a somewhat slow burn fashion that did cause this critic some initial pause.

Yet, in bearing with the narrative as it unfolds, you begin to appreciate the oddity of its technique and style, all while becoming more and more invested in seeing Jennifer ideally achieve what we hope is a better state of being as well as gaining the kind of appreciation she's been longing for. The path to this is a VHS tape-



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based movie, which in itself adds this peculiar angle yet hugely relevant driving force behind the actions we witness, and the ultimate culmination viewed at the film's finale is highly satisfying and hope-filled despite the relatively melancholy tone that pervades the circumstances overall. Yet, does this not illustrate the very nature of human existence, that innate striving for significance we all seek, with the underlying struggles faced very grounded and relatable throughout. Visually, the film is solidly shot, with a stark feeling to it that perfectly suits its grander themes effectively.

It all keeps making me understand the aims independent filmmakers continue to pursue in making stories that cause us not to just be entertained, but have to face our own faults, not to put us down, but rather to make us realize the merit of being better at cultivating the kinds of interactions and companions around us that will be those who encourage more positive focus and inner solace, which I felt very much ends up coming through in this effort, even if the catalyst isn't human at all, but a VHS relic. It also shows, as we should all frankly know already, that the journey isn't easy, and we might often get hurt along the way. But, those who truly wish the best for us and want to see us overcome our obstacles, even when constantly of our own making, will stand by us firmly and provide that tough love when needed, also facets brought out with acute meaning for Jennifer's character here.

Schoofs is, overall, deftly impactful while being both heartbreakingly, inspirationally vulnerable and equally steadfast in her role as Jennifer, a driven young woman who really is trying to do nothing but locate what has become ever-elusive success in life, wanting nothing more than even some basic fulfillment and sense of accomplishment in every area she's put her energy and time into. However, between ungrateful corporate clients, a boyfriend who really doesn't genuinely acknowledge her presence anymore, and alcoholism, much has seemed hopeless, only finding a little comfort in her best friend Lesley. Once she randomly discovers the VHS tape that sends her on the quest for its origins and meaning, the last thing she might have expected occurs as mentioned above, she actually discovers herself. It's a potent and realistic journey, beyond the eccentricities, and Schoofs just embodies the character with beautiful poise and purpose.

Wijesinha effectively brings out a similarly astute performance in his role as Jennifer's boyfriend Tommy, really a freeloading, apathetic, disconnected lover more than a distinctly committed boyfriend who loses himself more in seeking out and watching old VHS movies with friends than investing wholly in Jennifer as he should. Despite her best efforts, Tommy's ignorance of what she is trying to regain between them, while causing her to have to face jealousy due to his close friendship with Carrie, only creates one potential outcome, yet in it occurring, actually manages to get them both on a more apropos level of understanding and mutually beneficial direction, as Tommy reaches a new place of appreciation for what she's become that actually appears sincere. Throughout the film, Wijesinha presents a wonderfully understated demeanor and believability with the character that makes you both hate him at times, then sympathize, at least a little, all effectively enacted by him.

Primary supporting roles arrive from Dare and Bone, whose irresistibly deadpan delivery as Jennifer's unreasonably demanding business clients Lorraine and Marcus becomes one source of lighter-hearted hilarity via their character's causing Jennifer such overt frustration, Kennedy as Jennifer's BFF Lesley, totally channeling Zooey Deschanel from "Failure To Launch", who sticks by her friend through thick and thin, sharing in her joys and more frequently sorrows, Cleveland as Tommy's pal Kyle, who mainly hangs out and enjoys the same obsessive love of VHS tapes that Tommy does, and Ostapowicz and Tommy's other friend Carrie, a girl who becomes a tad more interested in him than Jennifer wishes, and who doesn't seem to mind regardless.

Additional turns are found here from [Rory Lipede](#) as Lesley's roommate Andrea who isn't quite as thrilled with how Lesley supports (perhaps enables?) Jennifer at certain times of distress, and [Matthew Addison](#) as Craig, a borderline hippie free spirit whom had involvement with the VHS movie Jennifer is researching, [Toni Cioletti](#) as Dr. Danielle Blackmore, yet another person appearing on the enigmatic tape, along with [Lauren Shaw](#), [Corinne Fisher](#), and many other appearances. In total, with its multiple thematic tangents and despite a few overt moments of nudity and language I could have done without per my own personal content preferences, "Meme" marks a decidedly convincing indie feature film debut for

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Mannion & Co., giving us an always welcome character-centric, well-balanced ensemble drama that once again reminds us of just how flawed and wonderful we are as people while likewise challenging us to find our passions, overcome our demons, and see life in a more fundamentally positive light.

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

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