

Film Review - EURO FEST
European International Film Festival
St. Petersburg, Russia
Received Via Email: May 23, 2019

FINALIST

My Name Was January

Directors: Elina Gress and Lenee Son

Producers: Alex Sangha and Ash Brar

25 minutes 45 seconds

Canada

The documentary film *My Name Was January*, directed by Elina Gress, Lenee Son, is dedicated to the tragic fate of 26-year-old transgender January Marie Lapuz, who was killed in her home in New-Westminster (Canada).

January lived a very difficult life. She was an immigrant from the Philippines. To earn a living, she was forced into survival sex work. She was also a good singer and dancer. She was practically a cult character in the local LGBT community. She had many friends and admirers.

The film consists of the interviews with people who knew January closely. Thanks to their stories we can create in our mind an image of a living person who recently lived close to these people. The most touching episode is the conversation with January's mother. She still calls January as "he." Impossible to watch without tears during the mother's monologue. She looks devastated and deeply unhappy. But in a few minutes later we find out that this woman is not January's birth mother. It turns out she adopted January in the Philippines.

The film contains a lot of touching and emotional moments. The most memorable moments is documentary footage with January. We see a cheerful and pretty woman who is a pride favourite.

The filmmakers do not have an agenda in this work. They are interested in the private story of a common person who died but remained in their memories.

If you look away from the main theme of the film, it turns out that after death, we all somehow continue to live in other people's memories. This gives reason to think about this virtual immortality. At the very least, there is an incentive to be a good person. January was just such a person. She left behind bright and good memories.

Watching this film we involuntarily think that even Western free society has a problem of acceptance of "other". January was transgender and a sex worker. She had to lead a risky life. Was this lifestyle the only way to make a living?

After watching the film we have many other questions. January was an immigrant. Did this fact prevent her from building any career in Canada? How has her death influenced Canadian society? Watching the movie we involuntarily compare this situation with such conservative countries where the problem of transgender people is silenced. For example, the transgender people in Russia are initially living in a marginal position. But the situation with January shows that the problems of transgender socialization also take place in western countries.

This film shows people that transgender people are the same people as others. And public institutions should help them adapt to society.

This story was filmed with great skill and it leaves a lot of thoughts and questions after viewing. Even if you see January for the first time in this movie and never heard about her until this moment you would be imbued with sympathy for her as a person and you will have empathy for her tragic fate.

THIS FILM REVIEW WAS EDITED FOR CLARITY.