



REVIEWS

In recent years, many films produced in the U.S. utilise a specific film genre to critique social and political issues. "The Hunt", for example, is a film that uses the struggle between the American liberal left and conservatives to mock those hypocrites who are deemed to be "politically correct". And the films "Get Out" and "Antebellum" are both uses horror films that tackle the issue of racial discrimination.

This French independent production "Safari Park" also followed this path, telling a "dystopian" story in the near-future space and time in the form of parodying a reality TV show. The setting is a bit like "The Hunger Games": the government exiles the dissidents and other criminals in a safari park, and use them as prey, and cooperates with TV stations to recruit citizens to participate in the hunting game. Under totalitarianism, entertainment is politics.

What set Safari Park apart from other "dystopian" movies is that it does not have a righteous protagonist. It does not follow a tried and tested formula of having a revolutionary leader, of a hero charm who against all odds managed to breakdown the original totalitarian system. And the audience can leave the cinema with a peace of mind. Instead, the "simulation" style of "play" breaks away from the narrative conventions of mainstream commercial films. What the audience sees is from the point of view of the "hunter" and lenses embedded in the eyes of the "prey". The audience watches this "hunter game" under the guidance of the narrator of the show - hence from time to time the audience will be told that "It is not illegal to kill in the name of the state."

On the hunted side, some are real villains, and some are political prisoners, united in gangs or revolutionary organizations; they also fight against each other. The audience can watch these "prey" through aerial cameras but also through the miniature lens in their eyes. This is the ultimate surveillance of Orwell's "Big Brother" in "Nineteen Eighty Four"-not only they surround you from everywhere, but they are directly inside your body, making people their own watchers.

However, the most ironic aspect of this reality show lies in the seemingly distracting "interludes", including the self-introduction of several hunting participants, and the carefully designed "advertising time." These seemingly irrelevant content sets the scene of the future society imagined by the creators: conspiracy of consumerism and authoritarian politics, and the combination of entertainment machines and surveillance technology. The hunters come from the leisure class of the middle class. They emphasize life attitudes and health preservation, claiming to pursue equality and love peace. After they successfully hunted down the "criminals," they would lift up their cameras to take selfies, just like those people who take selfies after hunting down wild animals. This scene is France in the play, but it can also refer to any country.

Because of the narrative point of view, the audience may not feel as close to the action as in other works of the same type, but it also keeps the audience at a distance from all the characters in the film, giving them the opportunity to reflect: If I were in such a society, Will I enjoy this TV show? Am I more like those hunters, prey, or TV station staff?

The late media research scholar Neil Postman mentioned in his famous book "Amusing Ourselves to Death" that the nightmare of the future society will probably not be the "Big Brother watching you" in "Nineteen Eighty Four" The form is the kind of superficial enjoyment and entertainment in Huxley's Brave New World. And the "brain-dead game" presented in "Safari Park" is the crystallization of these two totalitarian systems -everyone has become the big brother, entertaining to death together."

- **Bruce Lai**, Ph.D | Film critic for Ming Pao Newspaper and The New Lens (HK)



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I think the French media satire "Safari Park" is great. Michaël Massias' film is about prisoners serving their sentences in an outdoor area on their own in order to relieve the prisons. Five candidates have five days to plow through the fauna of the Safari Park and shoot as many prisoners as possible. They are accompanied by a camera team - based on TV reality shows. The film is not for the faint of heart.

I like «Safari Park» because it targets TV Reality Shows like "Jungle Camp". I think we filmmakers have a social obligation to produce and show films that deal with critical issues of the time and that address what is going right and what is wrong in our society.

- **Oliver Langewitz** | Director and Producer | Independent Days Festival Director

Safari Park is one of the best films I have seen since coming to Paris in February 2020. I was surprised by the very honest depiction of contemporary French society. People may not associate France with reality shows but the majority of new television productions are in the format of either (1) talk shows (2) reality shows (3) more talk shows ! So using this reality show format can not be more relevant I think.

The characters are also very representative of the people I meet in everyday life Paris. I have seen many comedies films in France , but none of them made me smile as much as this film.

Safari Park is a very important film. It deserves an engaged audience !

- **Gina Wong** | Director and Producer | Hong Kong PUFF Film Festival Director

