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Virgin Tales

Posted on [October 12, 2012](#) by [Ariel Fournier](#) | [1 Reply](#)



Dir Mir-jam von Arx

For the Wil-son fam-ily, every lit-tle girl gets to be a princess for a day. But it comes at hor-ri-fy-ing cost. The patri-arch of the fam-ily, Randy Wil-son, founded the Amer-i-can cus-tom of purity balls: cer-e-monies where daugh-ters dress up in gowns and promise their fathers that they will remain vir-gins until mar-riage. The film focuses on Randy and his old-est unmar-ried daugh-ter Jor-dan (22 years old).

The film is pre-dictably dis-turb-ing, not because the fam-ily has hid-den secrets or are hyp-o-crit-i-cal mon-sters, but because they really do embody their own twisted Chris-t-ian ideals. The mood in the Wil-son home is suf-fo-cat-ing. Von Arx described the feel-ing of film-ing the Wilsons as “claus-tro-pho-bic” and it is comes across in the movie. Their entire exis-tence is wrapped up in gen-der norms that are so restric-tive being a woman is a full time job for the Wil-son ladies. Jor-dan waits to meet her hus-band while she teaches other young ladies to embody grace and man-ners at work-shops she orga-nizes. And every god-damn (sorry, I mean gosh darn) thing the fam-ily does is marked by some strange cer-e-mony they invented for the occa-sion, always pre-ceeded by exhaust-ing beauty prep.

Von Arx some-times seems to reach a lit-tle when stat-ing the polit-i-cal impor-tance of the Wilsons, but their story is no doubt impor-tant when you con-sider how many peo-ple in Amer-ica are either just like the Wilsons or aspire to be. Per-haps most shock-ing of all is how sym-pa-thet-i-cally the fam-ily is rep-re-sented in the

movie. They are constantly reaffirming how much they love each other and they are principled, even if their principles are grotesque to most liberal-minded audiences. The audience was obviously at once horrified and drawn in by the Wilsons. Despite a pointed and often mocking Q&A discussion of the documentary, when Von Arx announced that after the film wrapped Jordan did indeed marry the man of her dreams, the crowd cheered.

If you missed [Virgin Tales at VIFF](#), a shorter cut will air on CBC television on October 20 on the Passionate Eye.

Posted in [Film](#).

One thought on “Virgin Tales”

1.



mary said on [November 4, 2012 at 9:00 am](#):

I watched this documentary on CBC last night. It truly was creepy. The scene during the ball when the father places the ring on his daughter's ring finger made my skin crawl. I truly feel for these girls and, indeed, the boys. The message is that dad owns your body until he sees fit to hand it over to another guy, but only if he agrees to marry you. Ew. The scene of the couple speaking about the first year of marriage was very telling as well. They seemed to be saying we thought we knew and liked each other but now we find we don't but we accept that we are stuck because of our beliefs. How truly sad. I fear for my daughter's future if this "movement", if it can be called that, truly takes hold and gains traction. Thank goodness we live in Canada.

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