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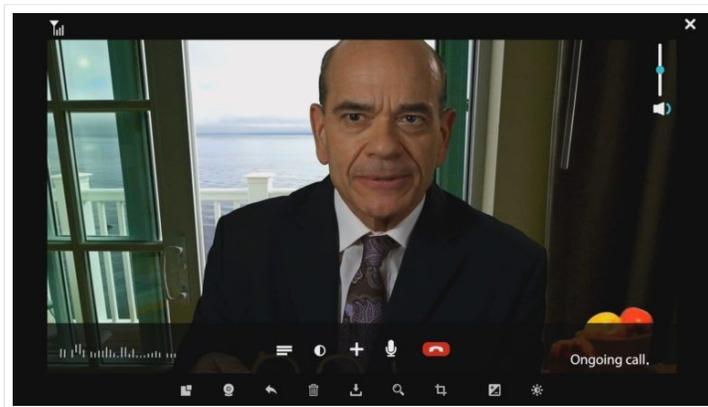
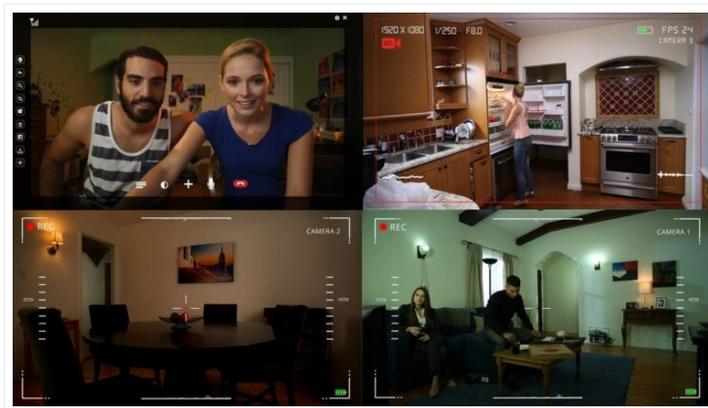
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Indie Film Review "Occupants"

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First, the Recap:

What is it to live another life? As we make our way through time and the exitance we've been blessed to have, do we still not ponder what it would be life if our lives had turned out differently? Even to catch a glimpse of an alternate path is an enticing thought. But,

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would we love or fear the vision presented? For one documentary filmmaker named Annie ([Briana White](#)), this will become an all-too-real question. Initially setting up a home documentary experiment called "30 Days of Clean Living" with her more than reluctant husband Neil ([Michael Pugliese](#)), Annie sets the goal to film the couple as they go through the self-cleansing diet, with cameras placed in key areas of their home.

A journey into the unknown, the pair launch into their new pattern of daily routine, much to the ongoing but mild and somewhat playful discontent of Neil. However, events take a turn for the surreal when, as Annie is reviewing footage for her documentary, it becomes evident that certain scenes are not taking place in their reality, but a parallel one where the couple's life is not so happy and carefree. Not believing what they're seeing at first, Annie and Neil consult Petersen Research Institute parapsychologist Dr. Alan Petersen ([Robert Picardo](#)), who confirms the findings. Soon, it becomes a borderline obsession for Annie and Neil to watch their doppelganger's lives. However, it also becomes eerily apparent the other side is watching, and reacting, too.

Next, my Mind:

Exploring themes of voyeurism, human curiosity and obsession, questioning one's current life vs. another, and the dangers of interfering in situations where one shouldn't, this 81-minute indie feature film from director [Russell Emanuel](#) and writer/co-producer [Julia Camara](#) is most certainly a very slow burn, but a worthwhile one to endure and find entertainment from for fans of a clever mix of sci-fi, thriller, and perhaps even a little horror element thrown in for good measure. Let's face it, we've all had one moment or another when we've "viewed" other people's lives and wondered "what if that could be me?". Therefore, this film simply takes that concept literally and runs with it, only with a decidedly more creepy approach and impactful finale as only fiction can present. What begins as a totally harmless and fun adventure slowly devolves into, at first, mere inquisitiveness and wonder at the events unfolding before further cascading into a building preoccupation with the couple's counterparts to the point of influence and direct trespassing into their world, with results that, to say the least, are not all "happy-happy, joy-joy". It is like watching a reality show whose participants end up watching their own reality show, and visually the film carries itself as such.

White does well here in her role as Annie, a plucky, successful documentary filmmaker whose quest is to rope her ever-so-surprised and disinclined hubby into her newest film about the two of them doing a 30-day cleanse. Enthusiastic to a fault, Annie's momentum and initial results with the project take a huge turn when realizing that she has footage of the two of them in a uniquely divergent actuality. It very much becomes the driving force from this point on, only to end up causing Annie to take steps she shouldn't, all leading to a potentially uncertain, and unsettling, conclusion. Throughout, White does a fine job at portraying Annie's attitude going from one of totally innocent fun to dangerously compulsive while still maintaining a sense of the character's good intentions simply getting skewed. White's believability in it all is also much to the actress' credit.

Along the same line of thinking, Pugliese's performance is likewise a study in straightforward, uncomplicated dramatic form for his role as Neil, a perfectly normal, average guy whose notions about being filmed for Annie's current project isn't exactly high on his list of exciting things to accomplish. Of course, he goes with it, having amusement throughout teasing her, and managing to at least begin to convince Annie that perhaps this cleanse wasn't the greatest idea. However, that's when things take their turn with the new universe Annie discovers through existing footage, and suddenly Neil is drawn in just as much as she is. He tries to be a bigger voice of reason, though, when it comes to Annie's choices to make attempts to shape events they've witnessed, and his role in the endgame here becomes perilous to his own well-being, the changing demeanors he faces well enacted by Pugliese.

The prime supporting role here is found via Picardo's Dr. Alan Petersen, the founder of a paranormal study-based institute who makes brief appearances via video chat with the couple, warning them about their endeavors in interacting with the other universe. There's really not a large scope to Picardo's role, but as the great character actor he is, he does perfectly fine with what he's given. Plus, I cannot help but mention [Jennifer Durst](#), who gets a supporting turn as "Evil Hands". In total, "Occupants" will most likely resonate mainly with the still popular "found footage" fans as well as those who appreciate indie cinema for its quirks, experiments, and lower budget undertakings. As mentioned above, it's about how much we may find discontent with our own life and desire to live another—but then possibly discovering the grass isn't always greener, and that some gateways are best left unopened.

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

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