

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

No Tongue

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, June 26th, 2019

In almost every regard and every area except maybe life itself, I am a great believer in the axiom *less is more*. For myself personally, I find this to be especially true in film. I went once to see a huge blockbuster film—the sort that I would not ordinarily ever go to except that for this one I had created the choreography—and I literally fell asleep. With few exceptions (eg: the films of Terri Gilliam and Jean-Pierre Jeunet) less choice, less score, less overall information is for me much more appealing... it seems to create an opening that allows space for the viewer to *think* and *feel* for herself rather than being hit over the head or directed to a specific reaction. So often I find work like that, actually in almost every area of the arts, to be more about calling attention to the creator of the work rather than to the work itself... almost like a little kid saying “*Lookie what I can do!*”

So when I saw documentary filmmaker Christina Burchard’s **No Tongue**, a music video for Qasim Naqvi, I was especially moved. It is spare and astonishing, allowing the viewer to bathe and soak in the beauty of the music, the lighting, and the remarkable mover Matthew “ET” Gibbs. I love the location – what appears to be the interior of a quonset hut—the door of which is rimmed with either red light or sunlight shining through the outline of its opening, one of the singular, simple, and notable features of the film.



No Tongue opens with a beautiful shot in extreme close up at a rare angle of Gibbs with his mouth open, his hand searching around his teeth. As he pulls them away from his mouth, the hands themselves begin finger tutting ever so slightly, along with the gentle first sounds of the music initiating the beginning of the film. What ensues is simply more of the same, going from what appears to be day to what appears to be night, with specific cuts at different angles and framing sizes, of Gibbs and his unbelievable bone breaking moves inside the limited space. There are moments where it hits an apex, but without any drama, simply a pulsing red light somewhere in the background of the darker night like shots, and the honesty, humanity, and amazing ability of the mover. But for me personally, that says it all. And what more is there to say? Our humanity, our aliveness in this moment in this thing called life is *everything*.

I am so pleased to say that I had Christina as a participant in my most recent ScreenDance class in Los Angeles. If I helped with even one iota of inspiration for this beautiful dance film/music video, I am thrilled.

Watch and *enjoy*.

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