

Tabloid

By Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Society

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Some of you may have heard of Joyce McKinney--that is if you were reading trashy tabloids more than 30 years ago! Oh don't be so snooty—you know you've sneaked a glance at "those terrible papers" while waiting in the supermarket checkout line! You looked a little longer than you should at headlines about minor mishaps of the stars or recent monumental screw ups from has beens. But how come you never see a headline about a monumental screw up of a nobody from yesteryear. Enter Joyce McKinney, crowned Miss Wyoming back in... oh, who cares. She is the subject of a new IFC Films documentary called Tabloid, and she made her mark not as a beauty queen but by kidnapping the man of her dreams and evading authorities for years.

As IFC Films puts it, Joyce's "labyrinthine crusade for love takes her through a surreal world of kidnapping, manacled Mormons, risqué photography, magic underwear, and celestial sex-until her dream is finally realized in a cloning laboratory in Seoul, South Korea. Tabloid is a vivid portrayal of a phenomenally driven woman whose romantic obsessions and delusions catapult her over the edge." And boy does that about sum it up.

You feel Joyce's enthusiasm today as she retells the story from 30 years ago of how she tried to save the man of her dreams from an apparent Mormon cult in the U.K. Her eyes light up as she recounts being caught by police, put in jail, and escaping while on bail back to the U.S. Director Errol Morris made excellent use of film and photo images that captured the spirit of the tale without trying to dramatize it with look-a-like actors or reenactments.

The cutaways were stylish, although some of them may have been too jolting or dizzying. The characters were well placed, told their sides of the story well, and gave you a full picture of one beauty queen's epic fail! But in the end, you pitied the main character yet couldn't truly identify with her. How many of us would have gone to the lengths she did for a partner who clearly was only "sort of" interested in her? Okay so maybe some of us can relate to that more than others--but when you see the lengths she went to you'll be hard-pressed to find application in your own life or reflection in the life of someone you know.

Still Joyce is an eccentric that is very entertaining to watch—as are all of the other characters. So if you're into trashy tabloids, or just into watching the ranting of a mad woman who was in the headlines for weeks, see this film.