



FILM

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- Annie Buckley on *Driving Men*
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- Nicole Lanctot on *What We Do Is Secret*

Movie Mogul

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Left: Gene Mogul. (Photo: Rhoda Blate Mogul) Right: Susan Mogul and Ron Schneck on road trip.

FREUD IS AN unlikely touchstone for a feminist film—unless the doctor appears in costume as a punching bag—but Susan Mogul takes such incongruities in stride. The video artist and filmmaker's new feature-length work, *Driving Men*, teeters charmingly between art-house cinema and Hollywood flick, all the while provoking questions about the slippery nature of identity, memory, and subjectivity. Freud's ghost seems to haunt the film from behind the wheel of a shiny new convertible.

In this film, Mogul (nearly) tosses aside the erotic-neurotic ethos of much of her previous work and dives headfirst into autobiography. The film opens with lighthearted music and footage that recall vintage road movies, but the levity is quickly undercut by a voice-over that explains, in clear, simple language, a car wreck that the filmmaker experienced as a young woman. The accident was fatal for the driver, her boyfriend, and the emotional fallout for Mogul is the singular trauma that informs the film. Using her subsequent relationships as a starting point, Mogul invites men—former lovers, friends, and family members—to be interviewed on camera, though it is quickly apparent that they are not the ones on the couch. In a series of disparate conversations, Mogul rides shotgun with her interlocutors, discussing past romances, the Jewish diaspora, societal mores, and, repeatedly, why she, a woman in her fifties, never married.

The emotional tenor of this latter topic at times threatens to maroon more subtle, repressed themes. At one point, while the filmmaker attends a reunion, a photographer asks members of the Mogul clan to pose together in family groups. The scene and voice-over could have been snatched straight from *Sex and the City*; over her smiling image, Mogul asks rhetorically, "But I am not a family—where do I stand?" Throughout, Mogul poses more questions than answers, allowing her driving partners to define her. She is variously described as "intense," "funny," and "like a balloon filled with helium." Several men point to her incessant need for documentation, which one perceptive friend describes as a search for something she doesn't really want to find. This sense of seeking ripples through the hilarity, heartbreak, and homecomings that constitute the events of *Driving Men* and fluidly stitches questions about the shifting constructs of woman and man, identity and truth, into a poignant love story.

Driving Men has its North American premiere at Los Angeles Filmforum on Sunday, August 17, 2008.

— Annie Buckley

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