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PRESENTS

WEB JUNKIE



RUNNING TIME: 74 MINUTES

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

China is the first country to label internet addiction a clinical disorder. WEB JUNKIE exposes a Beijing rehab centre where Chinese teenagers are being "deprogrammed".

LONG SYNOPSIS

China is the first country in the world to classify internet addiction as a clinical disorder. WEB JUNKIE is a feature documentary, which identifies Internet Addiction and spotlights the revolutionary treatment used in Chinese Rehab Centers.

Internet addiction is now a global issue. An increasing number of people, especially young adults, are using the Internet more than ever before. The film delves into a Beijing treatment center and explores the cases of three young Chinese teenagers from the day they arrive at the treatment center through the 3 months period of being held at the center, and then their return to their homes. The film follows both the underlying issues related to the disorders, as well as the manner and treatment the patients receive. Prof. Tao Ran established the world's first Internet Addiction clinic, and he promises to cure children of so-called Internet Addiction, an ailment that has grown into one of China's most feared public health hazards.

The program admits children between the ages of 13 and 18; they are forced to undergo military-inspired physical training and comply with monitored sleep and food standards. Throughout their stay at the clinic, they are patrolled by the military guards who protect the children's quarters, which like prison cells are surrounded by gates and fences. Despite such conditions, parents voluntarily send their children to the treatment center and relinquish personal involvement. There is no one-on-one therapy, and the children's emotional needs are met with group therapy sessions twice a week. The treatment is very expensive, and parents often have no choice but to borrow money in order to afford to send their child to the clinic. For them it is worth it --steering their kid away from this addiction and redevelop their real life communication skills is a top priority.

WEB JUNKIE provides a microcosm of modern Chinese life, examines inter-generational pressures, and takes a hard look at one of the symptoms of the so-called Internet age.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

SHOSH SHLAM

Shosh is the director and producer of "Last Journey into Silence" (2003 - Channel 1 Israel, Canal Plus Poland), a story about Holocaust survivors in mental institutions in Israel, which won best Documentary at the Lublin Film Festival , the best Documentary Honorable Mention at Haifa International Film Festival, was nominated for "Golden Sheaf" in Yorkton Canada and won the "Columbine Award" for Best Documentary. Her next film, "Be Fruitful and Multiply" (2005 - Channel 2 Israel, ZDF Germany) is a story about women's oppression in the ultra orthodox society. Good Garbage (2008 - channel 2 Israel, RTL Europe, CBC Canada) describes the struggle for survival at the garbage dump in the West Bank, where Palestinians (most of them children) earn their living from the garbage of the Jewish settlers. The film won an award for Best Documentary at the Shanghai Film Festival in China, FICA Film Festival in Brazil, and an award for Best Cinematography at the Israeli Documentary Forum Awards. Recently, the film was chosen by Michele Moore for a screening at the Travers City Film Festival. Shosh holds an MA in Comparative Literature from Bar Ilan University. She is also a graduate of the Theatre Department at Tel Aviv University, and studied at New York's School of Visual Arts.

HILLA MEDALIA

A Peabody Award-winning director and producer. Hilla has received three Emmy nominations, and won the Golden Warsaw Phoenix, as well as the jury awards at FIPA, and Fauto doc. Hilla's most recent film "Dancing in Jaffa" premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, won the editing award at Docaviv and the "Honorary One Future" award at Munich Film Festival. Dancing in Jaffa is expected to have its theatrical release in 2014 in the US, France, and Germany and is participating in Sundance Institute Film Forward program. For her documentary "After the Storm" (MTV), Hilla won an Audience Award at the Woodstock Film Festival and the Crystal Heart Award at Heartland Festival. Past projects include "To Die in Jerusalem" (HBO), "Happy You're Alive" (ch1 Israel) and "Numbered" (YES) which won the Silver Hugo at Chicago International Film Festival and "Best Debut Documentary" at the Israeli Documentary Awards. Hilla holds an M.A. from Southern Illinois University and is a co-founder of New York based kNow Productions.

NETA ZWEBNER-ZAIBERT

Neta is a film and television producer and co-founder of New York based Know Productions. She most recently produced Dancing in Jaffa, which premiered at this year's Tribeca Film Festival and was picked up by Sundance Selects/IFC for theatrical release in 2014 and will also be release theatrically in Germany and France next year. The film was executive produced by Morgan Spurlock, LaToya Jackson and Nigel Lythgoe and won the editing award at DokAviv and the "Honorary One Future" award at Munich DokFest. Dancing in Jaffa is supported by Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation, Film Independent, The PUMA Creative Catalyst Award, and more. Neta also produced "Numbered", which was awarded the Silver Hugo Award at the Chicago Film Festival and "Best Debut Documentary" at the Israeli Documentary Awards. Additionally, Neta has produced a variety of other films, TV shows, commercials, and art projects. She holds a Master's of Communication Arts in Public Relations and a Bachelor of Arts in Government, Diplomacy and Strategy.

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DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Technology has become the architect of our intimacy. We communicate in a new language of abbreviation in which letters stand for words and emoticons for feelings. We are increasingly connected to each other but oddly more alone. In intimacy, we have found a new solitude. The complexity of the internet can be difficult to illustrate as it is a result of culture but simultaneously shapes it.

Similarly, Internet addiction is both a personal and social phenomenon. It is a universal issue that is becoming progressively all encompassing as the boundaries between the real and the virtual become increasingly blurred. Through this process, we could not help but feel that something is lost in the physical, 'real', everyday lives of those living in the western world. This phenomenon, these feelings are what inspired us to take this journey.

WEB JUNKIE is an emotional voyage that examines the results of internet addiction and its effects on families and interpersonal relationships, while examining the cultural and emotional effects of this type of treatment. In addition, the film also deals with the way that Chinese society, its culture of hyper-competitiveness, seeks to control what they perceive as the extremely negative effects of the internet.

WEB JUNKIE exposes the virtual world, the ways that it transcends cultural boundaries and influences the evolution of culture. Will these techniques be successful? Is this militaristic treatment effective or advisable? Is it possible to 'cure' these young kids? Will they be able to handle life outside the virtual world? And on the topic of human rights, is it enough that the government requires only the parent's agreement in order to hold these children against their will? These questions were our guide throughout this process and directed us while we were making the film.

CREDITS:

Directors	Shosh Shlam, Hilla Medalia
Producers	Hilla Medalia, Shosh Shlam, Neta Zwebner-Zaibert Jeremy Chilnick, Morgan Spurlock, Dan Cogan, Jenny Raskin, Eve
Executive Producers	Enslar
Director of Photography	Sun Shaoguang
Editor:	Enat Sidi
Composer	Ran Bagno

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Director's Q and A:

1. How do you know if someone is a web junkie?

An Internet addict is defined in China as someone who uses the Internet for more than 6 hours a day for activities not related to school or work. In the US it is not considered an addiction and problems related to over-use of the Internet are measured by behaviours.

The kids in the centre are using the internet for days and nights, they drop out of school, they don't have friends in reality anymore, and so their parents are completely desperate, bringing their kids to the centre as this is their last resort.

2. Why is this an issue in society?

China was the first country to label "Internet addiction" a clinical disorder.

Certainly these kids are escaping reality. As with any other addiction, there is a need to look closely as to what the causes are of this need to escape

In China, some of these causes are the results of the One Child policy and a strict, conservative education system. The relationships inside the family of these kids are challenging as well. However, it's hard to determine what came first and caused the other

Certainly there are youth all over the world who are over-using the Internet. The challenge is that the Internet is an integral part of our everyday lives and we are all using it.

We were reminded of how universally resonant the issues of the film are when, after some screenings of the film in different places around the world, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers of internet-addicted boys and girls sharing with us their personal experiences.

3. What did you learn about the web junkies you filmed?

One of the things all of them had in common is loneliness. In the film, Nicky says: "When I feel lonely, I go online and there is another lonely person, who sits on the other side of the computer..."

The kids in the film are for the most part playing war games like War Of Warcraft. Youth all over the world are playing these same games, which are social games, players are playing and chatting with other kids.

Another important issue we discovered was the way these kids arrived to the centre. Most of them were tricked by their parents who often drugged them and they would then wake up behind bars.

4. Do you think rehab is the solution for internet addicted teens? If so, why? What else do you think would help?

Prof Tao, the head of the centre, claims a 70% success rate. Tao believes that the west should learn from the research done in China, the first country in the world to declare Internet Addiction a clinical disorder.

It is important to mention that we are filmmakers and not psychologists and we don't have the tools to check it.

There is still no real global consensus among experts about the issue, and in the DSM (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), Internet Addiction is not declared yet and, since 2013, is just listed in the appendix.

What is clear is that this issue is a global issue and not only in China. With millions glued to screens and electronic devices, the overuse of technology is becoming a universal concern. While treatment methods may vary, one way or another, we will need to find effective ways to moderate our use of technology and provide help to those who need it.

5. After making this film, how do you think that technology is altering our lives?

The boundaries between reality and the virtual become increasingly blurred, we are beginning to see how reality is compromised and people are losing their footing. The Internet has created a deep change in human relationships: We are increasingly connected to each other but oddly more alone. The human need for relationships is changing and the issue of over-use and dependency on technology is a universally pressing issue.