

## July 2-8 BABIES

FRI		5:00	7:00
SAT & SUN	2:00	5:00	7:00
MON-THURS		5:30 ONLY	

*Documentary; rated PG for a scene of childbirth and some nudity in a multicultural context.*

*Babies*—or *Bébé(s)*, the original French title—is based on such a surefire attention-getting subject that it's amazing it doesn't get used more frequently. This simple, almost elemental documentary from director Thomas Balmes is about babies—the most natural, honest, expressive performers in the world. One could be cynical: how could any film following one formative year in the life of a quartet of infants from different parts of the world (Africa, Japan, Mongolia, and the United States) be anything less than adorable? *Babies* could have settled for just filming infants as they grow into toddlers, letting them be cute and charming for 90 minutes. But Balmes is intrigued by culture as well as biology: he's selected four far-flung locations in which to observe how children grow up, learn, play, adapt, and develop the rudimentary skills that they'll need to become adults (socially and physically) in their particular world. The film has no dialogue or subtitles; no tricky, manipulative editing; and just a low-key, unobtrusive musical score. Matt Zoller Seitz, reviewer for Salon, called the film's style a "lo-fi aesthetic" that consciously eschews the "Ed Sullivan-style plate spinning razzle dazzle" of most current documentaries. Filmmakers often say that the subject is more important than the filmmaker, and in the case of *Babies*, that's true: the babies are front and center, acting naturally—they're the perfect documentary subject because they really don't "play to the camera." They're not always cute. The filmmakers allow audiences to detect for themselves the subtle ways in which babies from different parts of the world seem to share the same primal responses; the unspoken question is: how much of human behavior is hard-wired by nature and how much is trained by nurture? The film doesn't cast judgments on the child-rearing techniques of any country or culture—everyone does it differently. Summer blockbusters are typically stuffed with costumed superheroes battling evil with martial arts, lasers, guns, and grenades. *Babies* heralds a simpler heroism: the heroism of human resilience, the intense struggle to grow, to learn, to become independent—which we all forget by the time we're adults, but can appreciate anew with the assistance of life-affirming films like *Babies*.

## July 9-15 THE SECRET IN THEIR EYES

FRI		5:00	7:30
SAT & SUN	2:00	5:00	7:30
MON-THURS		5:30 ONLY	

*Rated R for nudity, profanity, rape, and violent images. In Spanish with English subtitles.*

When director Juan José Campanella's riveting drama won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film a few months ago, it was considered an upset—*The White Ribbon* was the more prestigious, well-known, "artistic" front-runner. Academy members voted with their hearts and picked the excellent Argentinean entry though stylistically it was more traditional than *The White Ribbon*, and not as disturbing or controversial. Which is not to say *The Secret in Their Eyes* is light: it centers on a brutal rape-murder that wasn't solved to the satisfaction of its chief investigator, Benjamin (Ricardo Darín). Twenty-five years later, he's determined to re-open the case and write a non-fiction book about it. Joining him is Irene (Soledad Villamil), who was a judge's assistant (and his boss) on the case; now she's a judge, and her reunion with Benjamin awakens a romantic spark between them. Their feelings had gone unspoken in large part because of their difference in social status and income. *The Secret in Their Eyes* is a subtle romantic drama and also a fascinating police procedural—no surprise that director Campanella brings vivid authenticity to the investigation scenes, since he's done a great deal of work in American television, for shows like *Law and Order* and *House*. He has a solid feel for how dedicated professionals work. He also likes contrasting personalities, like the interesting relationship between Benjamin and his alcoholic, semi-incompetent partner, Sandoval (Guillermo Francella), and between Benjamin and the victim's devoted husband (Pablo Rago). But the



film allows Campanella a greater scope and darker emotional intensity than his television work; it also allows him to demonstrate some Alfred Hitchcock-like chops such as a suspenseful chase scene in a soccer stadium, as well as more complex editing (the film cuts back and forth between the present and the past) that smoothly elucidates the theme of memory and trying to correct old mistakes. And the performers are all terrific, especially Darín and Villamil. They're not typical, model-pretty twenty-somethings. They're middle-aged, believably attractive, with faces that show character and life experience; deeper and more complex than the usual Hollywood leads, they earn a greater emotional investment in their relationship and the unpredictable outcome of their investigation. Deliberately paced but gripping throughout, *The Secret in Their Eyes* is a deserved award-winner and one of the best films of 2010.

## July 16-22 EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP

FRI		5:00	7:00
SAT & SUN	2:00	5:00	7:00
MON-THURS		5:30 ONLY	

*Documentary; rated R for profanity.*

A couple years ago, *L.A. Weekly* ran a story about an art exhibition showcasing the work of Thierry Guetta, one-time clothing store owner. For years, however, Guetta was a supporter of graffiti artists, accompanying many of them during their covert, illegal, often physically dangerous endeavors, all the while shooting endless videotape footage, ostensibly for a documentary he planned to put together (but never did). One of his subjects, a British graffiti artist known only as "Banksy," turned the tables and dared Guetta to publicly display his own work, while Banksy made a documentary covering the result. Guetta accepted the challenge with a fool's confidence, renting a former CBS television studio to use as an exhibition hall, sinking most of his savings into the venture, assuming the nom d'artiste "Mr. Brainwash," and shamelessly promoting his derivative, often awkward imitations of modern art. Surprisingly, many of Guetta's paintings sold for thousands of dollars. *Exit Through the Gift Shop* is actually two films: one is about Banksy, his work, and his philosophy of life and art; the other focuses on Guetta's exhibition and was filmed/directed by Banksy as a commentary on how art is defined today. Adding layers of complexity is the question of whether or not this film is itself a hoax. Banksy is always hidden in the shadows, a formless silhouette when the camera is on him, his voice disguised electronically. The artist's anonymity, coupled with Guetta's odd, strangely affected persona, have made some critics speculate that Banksy is Guetta, and Guetta's work is actually Banksy's. The film might be an elaborate gag, a subversive satire on art world pretentiousness. Watching *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, it's fun to try to figure out if this story is too ridiculous to be true or too ridiculous not to be. Regardless, it's one of the funniest, freshest, most engaging documentaries about Art ever made. Aply assisted by actor Rhys Ifan's deadpan narration, *Exit Through the Gift Shop* spoofs the pompous, self-important tone of "serious" documentaries, puncturing the snobbish idiocy of those who buy "art" as a status symbol. The elusiveness of truth supports the film's theme that Art resists any attempt to define it—and those who try are the easiest to fool. What's the best way, then, to appreciate a work of postmodern art like *Exit Through the Gift Shop*? Just sit back, watch, and laugh.

## July 23-29 MID-AUGUST LUNCH

FRI		5:00	7:00
SAT & SUN	2:00	5:00	7:00
MON-THURS		5:30 ONLY	

*Unrated; contains some alcohol drinking and tobacco use. In Italian with English subtitles.*

"Mid-August" probably doesn't mean much to American viewers but "Ferragosto" (Aug. 15) is an Italian holiday similar to Labor Day. For Gianni, the film's protagonist, every day's a bit like Labor Day (or Ferragosto): he's a laid-back, middle-aged slacker who seems to want nothing more out of life than to take care of his elderly mother and enjoy a glass (or two) of wine. It's not only esteemed screenwriter Gianni Di Gregorio's first directorial as-

signment, it's his first big acting role—and he pulls it off like a seasoned pro, generating warmth, good humor, and patience in his characterization of an aging momma's boy who has to accept more responsibility when rent problems force him to share his flat with three more elderly ladies. Playing housekeeper, cook, nursemaid, den mother, and dance partner to this cranky quartet starts to wear down even Gianni's easy-going temperament, but he perseveres in delightful, amusing fashion. *Mid-August Lunch* is as gentle and unassuming as a breezy summer's day, but it's also filled with unpredictable bits of characterization, offbeat dialogue, and delightful performances from the non-professional cast. The film is shot with a deliberately rough style, using handheld camera and minimal musical cues on the soundtrack, giving it a raw, unpolished look that keeps the movie from voyaging too far into sweetness and sentimentality. In terms of plotting, not much "happens" in *Mid-August Lunch*, yet this brief, endearing film successfully captures so much truth: the fear of aging, the need for communication and companionship, the search for meaning in one's life, the challenge of breaking out of one's old patterns of (self-destructive) behavior—so many weighty themes, but nothing is spelled out in big capital letters, just offered in fragments, hints, and undertones. This is the kind of film that, when it's over, doesn't seem at first to "add up to much"... yet lingers in the memory, taking on added resonance as the viewer remembers the various scenes and small, fleeting moments. A sort of cinematic stealth missile, *Mid-August Lunch* has sneaked up on audiences around the world, capturing major awards and winning the hearts of even the most cynical critics. This charming film is as light as an appetizer but there's a feast of human comedy and life-affirming drama here for the discriminating palate.

**July 30-August 5**  
**PLEASE GIVE**

FRI		5:00	7:00
SAT & SUN	2:00	5:00	7:00
MON-THURS		5:30 ONLY	

*Rated R for profanity, nudity, and sexual content.*

Some critics have called *Please Give* a "New York movie," but the film has universal appeal, making the grabby, loquacious, desperate world of Upper West Side apartment dwellers oddly accessible. Catherine Keener and Oliver Platt play Kate and Alex, antique store owners who specialize in ugly 1950's kitsch furniture. Kate, Alex, and their daughter Abby (Sarah Steele) live next door to Andra (Ann Guilbert), a constantly complaining elderly woman tended by her two granddaughters, Mary (Amanda Peet) and Rebecca (Rebecca Hall). Kate and Alex try to befriend the old woman, especially Kate, who has a massive liberal guilt complex. She's the kind of person who doesn't just give money to a homeless person—she fixes him dinner. But Kate and Alex also covet the woman's apartment, hoping to annex it after she dies. It sounds callous and selfish, but in the pressure cooker that is New York, it's just survival. But *Please Give* isn't an outsider's film, mocking New York stereotypes; Holofcener genuinely likes people and gives everyone a chance at redemption. As she demonstrated in earlier films like *Lovely and Amazing*, she does exceptionally well with female characterization (not a given just because she's a female director!). Holofcener mines comedy out of the stuff of ordinary life, including those big mistakes and embarrassments that mortify us when they actually occur but often amuse us later (sometimes much, much later). It's a tightrope-walking act, because sometimes turning human foibles into humorous material just makes viewers cringe. In Holofcener's films, we occasionally shudder, but with a smile of recognition—and more often with a cathartic laugh. Keener and Platt are wonderfully deft performers, constantly verging toward the edge of parody but never descending into cartoon caricatures. They are always real, even when they're at the end of their tether. Likewise, Ann Guilbert has an opportunity to go over the top, to be too mean and unlikeable, but she carefully modulates Andra's egotism and manipulative behavior so it never becomes too unbearable. The ensemble cast is terrific, helping Holofcener achieve a delicate balance between pain and humor that makes *Please Give* one of the smartest, wittiest comedies of the year.

You'll find the latest information about current films and showtimes at [www.salinaartcenter.org/cinema](http://www.salinaartcenter.org/cinema), along with a downloadable version of this flyer.



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**films** July 2-August 5

**CINEMA ADMISSION PRICES**

Primetime Admission:	\$6.00 SAC members
(before 6pm)	\$7.00 non-members
Regular Admission:	\$7.00 SAC members
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