

## Movie Review: BRAINWASHED: SEX-CAMERA-POWER

Posted by Lorinda Donovan | Oct 12, 2022 | [Movies](#), [Representation Matters](#), [Reviews](#), [Women Behind the Scenes](#) | 0



There are some things that become embedded in our minds from a very young age. Things that we know to be true, like 2+2 = 4. Or that the Earth is round and revolves around the Sun. But what we may not consciously realize is that other things become embedded in our minds as well – things that are not so innocuous and can even be downright dangerous. This is something I realized while watching the new documentary, [Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power](#), by independent filmmaker [Nina Menkes](#).

Menkes has also taught at both the University of Southern California film school and the California Institute of the Arts, where she developed a presentation for her students to show that the way that movies are designed and shot is gendered. That is, the way women appear in movies as opposed to how men appear is very, very different. And it's this largely predatory way of looking at women in cinema that directly correlates to job discrimination and pay disparity against women (especially within the film industry), and feeds into a culture that glorifies sexual harassment, abuse and assault.

**RELATED: [Watch the trailer for Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power here!](#)**

Using numerous examples from movies that span the entire history of Hollywood – everything from [Metropolis](#) (1927) to [Vertigo](#) (1958), to [Raging Bull](#) (1980), to [Blade Runner 2049](#) (2017), Menkes expertly breaks down individual scenes to show that the way women are clothed (or not, in many cases), framed and even lit more often than not turns them into objects. Objects who exist only to service the men whose leering gaze they find themselves under.



On screen: Rita Hayworth in *The Lady from Shanghai*, an example of gendered lighting. (Menkes List #4)

Nina Menkes in *Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power*

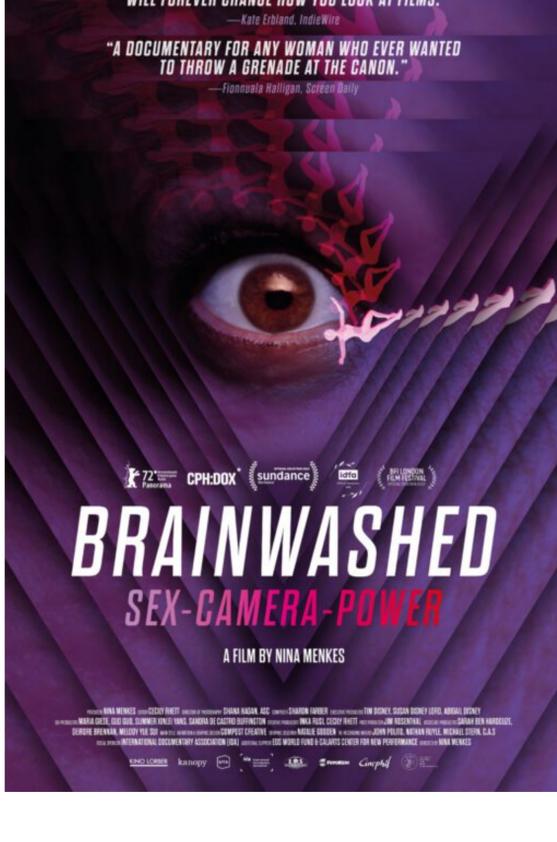
Menkes also interviews many female and non-binary filmmakers, actors and writers like film theorist [Laura Mulvey](#), who first developed the term “the male gaze,” and activists like [Maria Giese](#), whose work led to a [federal investigation into the major studios](#) for gross violations of Title VII (part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin).

Given all that, one might assume that *Brainwashed* is nothing more than two hours of male-bashing, but that's where Menkes is careful (one of the examples she examines is [Sofia Coppola's Lost in Translation](#) (2003)). It's clear watching and listening to her that Menkes loves movies as much as any of us. But to maintain her own integrity and sanity not only as a filmmaker but as a woman, it's imperative to point out what's wrong with the world and do what she can to fix it – but she can't do it alone.

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And that's what *Brainwashed* really is: a call to all those who find themselves in the enviable position of being filmmakers and especially producers – those who decide what we see. It's a call to thoroughly review and rethink the visual language of cinema, to ensure that going forward, women aren't just objects being gawked at and not taken seriously. It's a call to make sure that *all* voices are heard and given the opportunity to tell stories their way – and that can only be a good thing.

*Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power* will be released in theaters in New York and Los Angeles on October 21, 2022, and will be available on streaming platforms in December.



Directed by: [Nina Menkes](#)

Rating: NR

Running Time: 107 min

Distributed by: [Kino Lorber](#)



### SMILE Spoiler Review

This review was originally published on 10/3/22 MAJOR SPOILERS AHEAD for Smile. You've been warned. \* \* One of the official definitions of the word “smile” is “to look or regard with amusement or ridicule.” That definitely applies to the super-creepy facial expressions on display in *Smile*, the feature-length version of writer/director Parker Finn's festival ... Continue reading

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Originally and always at heart a Philly girl (yo!) -- art school grad, veteran of the film biz and currently a writer living in Flyover Country, North Dakota (yah, you betcha). But wherever I go, I'm a geek and a proud of it!



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