

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS & VIEWS

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Documentary Follows Incest Victims from Darkness into Light Innermotion: The Dance of Incest (Not Rated) – Three stars

by Michael W. Sasser
Film Critic

Many people today probably feel that society's war on sex crimes in the United States is a successful venture. After all, sexual predators are punished for the entirety of their lives in a way that murderers are not; their identities made public and being forced to practically wear a scarlet letter. Daily talk shows are filled with survivors of child sex crimes discussing their experiences and recoveries.



Yet, for all that exposure, incest—the sexual exploitation of children by older family members—remains a subject where historic taboos remain very much in place: and in this case, not the taboo against incest itself—but rather, against talking about it.

Producer/Director Sylvie Rokab of Miami's gripping documentary, *Innermotion: The Dance of Incest* (In the Light Production, Inc.) spotlights members of a local dance/theater troupe made up of incest survivors, who through powerful productions around the United States, simultaneously advance their healing and empowerment efforts and enlighten audiences about the nightmare of incest.

Over a dozen years ago, *Innermotion* was founded by Sharon Daugherty, M.S., as a means for incest survivors to express themselves through dance, movement and to a lesser extent, theater. Rokab's documentary follows *Innermotion* and several of its members over a course of course of four years: from the time some are still adjusting to the idea of emotional expression through movement to when the troupe takes a powerful step ahead in their production ideas.

Innermotion: The Dance of Incest alternates between members discussing their real life violations and recovery process, sequences from performances, and disturbing but not graphic dramatic reproductions of some of the survivors' particular tales. There is also some insight from a sexologist, but compared to the power of the actual survivors' words, such staid, informational perspectives offer little to the otherwise powerful film.

It is here where Rokab—an award-winning filmmaker—demonstrates her mastery. Many documentaries in recent years have begun to suffer the same fate of Hollywood productions, self-indulgence. Witness Michael Moore's insertion of himself into his own work and playing fast and loose with facts. Rokab here is the unseen seer. She cleverly recognized that there was nothing she could add as a filmmaker that would have the impact of the Innermotion members themselves. As with good storytellers in any medium, Rokab permits her material to speak for itself.

And speak for themselves they do—these brave, featured survivors. Through their personal stories, we come to understand that while there is much in common amongst victims of incest, there are also no hard and fast rules on how people respond to such horrendous violations. Some of the most powerful moments of the film are when members recollect to their school days and how each of them handled their internal pain: some pushed themselves to excel, others sought attention by misbehaving, while still others simply detached from the world. Commonalities—shame, betrayal, silence, repressed anger, self-loathing, sexual issues, substance abuse, etc.—certainly are revealed. But in the differences in each and every story is the true scope of the horror that is incest really revealed. Incest victims aren't all the same, don't experience everything in the same fashion and, most importantly, homes where incest takes place also do not all resemble one another. It was also most important that men are included in Innermotion, as male incest to this day remains even less in the public consciousness than females' victimization.

Through Innermotion performances, members experience a cathartic release. While the film would have benefited from extended scenes of troupe performances, there is enough material to garner why. Those viewers who do not understand the connection between emotion and movement – the way feelings can be interpreted through movement, will find Rokab's film a primer. These are such powerful emotions, that their physical manifestation is easily recognizable.

Over the course of the documentary, we see Innermotion members share their experiences and feelings through dialogue and performance, as well as witness their personal growth and that of the bond between them. Daugherty's idea that people can experience dance as healing, that performance can be part of the healing journey is fleshed out in vivid and touching ways. Silence was the source of so much pain for incest survivors, that breaking that silence – representing it in dance and theater again and again, is itself a powerful healing tool.

Audiences clearly connect with Innermotion, as revealed by interviews with them and the fact that the troupe performs all over the country.

Still, despite its subject material, Innermotion: The Dance of Incest does not focus on maudlin victimization not steely-eyed empowerment, but rather the different journeys people take to recovery and the role that the troupe and what it represents plays in those journeys. Interestingly, the final cycle of the film revolves around the core Innermotion members at a retreat discussing their collective boredom with their previous production, their sense that maybe each is ready to either move on or try something different. A consensus is reached, and the group sets about creating a new performance piece—a comedy about incest.

Now one might think that a comedy about incest would be a difficult line to walk. Yet, as revealed in the film, the comedy performance is an extension of the logical progress made by its members. After years of recovery, buoyed by their participation in Innermotion, its members are ready to move out of the closet of victimhood and continue their progress through the healing power of laughter. A risky venture, none-the-less, audience reaction is terrific, the production connects with it while simultaneously educating, and the Innermotion troupe is re-energized. Daugherty poignantly points out that people being able to laugh and find humor in the dark comedy of incest is a sign that people are better educated and more sensitive to the issue—it is time for it to come out of the closet. And in their own ways, each featured Innermotion member makes a personal journey from out of the dark and into a healing light.

Few documentaries are able to foster a dramatic loop, but Innermotion: The Dance of Incest accomplishes just that. Combined with its earnest and brave portrayals, it is a powerful piece of filmmaking: not heavy-handed, but rather evolving organically. This film takes us on a journey of recovery and from the safety of our seat, grants us rare insight into the lives of incest survivors, what they must overcome, and how rewarding it is to the human spirit to witness them do just that. That

Rokab accomplishes this with such a deft hand accentuates the experience five-fold.

“ Innermotion: The Dance of Incest” will be shown as part of the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival on November 15, at 3:30pm at Cinema Paradiso, 503 SE 6th Street in Fort Lauderdale. For information or tickets, call 954-525-FILM or visit www.fliff.com. For more specific information on the film, visit www.innermotionfilm.com.

PHOTO IDS

1. Innermotion: The Dance of Incest