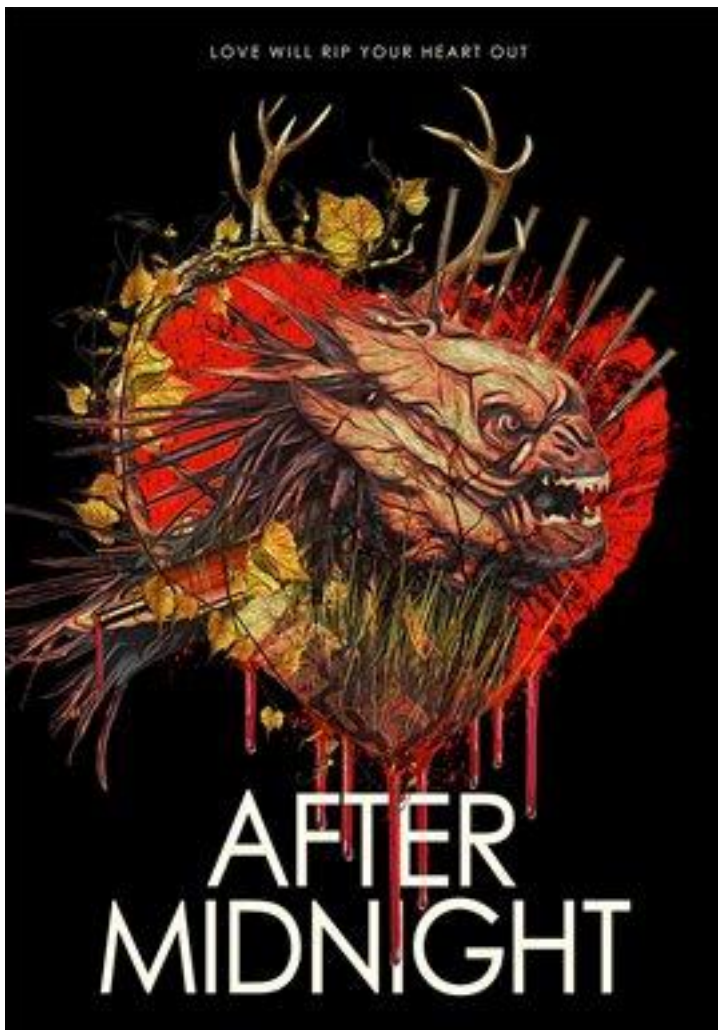


[Reviews: Ex Libris & After Midnight](#)



by Craig J. Clark

[Ex Libris: The New York Public Library](#) (Frederick Wiseman, 2017)

Got a lot of time to fill? Then Frederick Wiseman is your man. Over a career stretching back more than half a century – from 1967’s [Tuticut Follies](#) (filmed at the Massachusetts State Prison for the Criminally Insane) to 2018’s [Monrovia, Indiana](#) (filmed after Wiseman’s visit to Indiana University in 2017) – Wiseman has directed dozens of fly-on-the-wall documentaries on all manner of communities and institutions, both public and private. Of those, a whopping 42 are streaming on [Kanopy](#) and the majority have a running time of at least two hours, with a handful clocking in at more than three.

Ex Libris is one of the latter, but since it’s about the largest public library system in the country, it more than justifies its length. From board meetings to author events to outreach programs and even a look behind the scenes at the main branch’s massive sorter system, *Ex Libris* is a great reminder of all the things libraries do for their communities and the hard work that goes into keeping them going. Also, right now it’s one of Kanopy’s “Credit-Free Viewing” selections, so if you choose to immerse yourself in it, it won’t count as one of your play credits.

[After Midnight](#) (Jeremy Gardner & Christian Stella, 2019)

The last film I saw in theaters before stay-at-home orders were put in place, *After Midnight* is a monster movie that doubles as a relationship drama. Or is it a relationship drama disguised as a monster movie? The long, unbroken take in the back half wherein estranged couple Hank (writer/co-director Jeremy Gardner) and Abby (Brea Grant) air

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their grievances and then some while awaiting the arrival of the monster Hank has been fighting off single-handed every night for a month tilts *After Midnight* in the direction of the latter. There's more than enough monster action in the front half, though, even if local cop Shane (producer Justin Benson) remains steadfastly skeptical about its existence and Hank's drinking buddy Wade (Henry Zebrowski, the film's MVP) is unhelpfully susceptible to conspiracy theories.

Following the dictates of a low-budget monster movie, Gardner and co-director Christian Stella keep their creature off-screen for the most part, but its presence is palpable throughout, from the deep scratches in Hank's front door to the patch of blood it leaves behind when he manages to wound it. All the while, Gardner and Stella cut in flashbacks to Hank and Abby in happier times, which make plain why her absence is as distressing for him as the creature's nightly assaults.

After Midnight is now available [on Hoopla](#).

Posted by Paula G.O. on May 18, 2020 [Think Library](#)

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