

Arts

Also recommended

Make More Noise!

Suffragettes in Silent Film

This 75-minute compendium of BFI archive footage edited by Douglas Weir proves more cutting and inspirational than the Abi Morgan-penned movie *Suffragette*, also in the festival. It's not so much the precious documentary shots of demonstrations at Whitehall — the grimacing, moustachioed police, the indignant boyfriends — that draws you close to the protesting women, but more the clips from public information films warning of the dangers of too much freedom. One of the punishments for female immodesty in 1910 was "six weeks in trousers". As the camera pans across the faces of the poor creatures forced to march the streets in comfy tweed breeches and gloriously voluminous dungarees, the handkerchiefs held up to their faces (supposedly covering their shame) occasionally flutter to one side to reveal jaw-splitting grins. The power of this joy, this hilarious disdain. Never did smiles strike so true.

Embrace of the Serpent (pictured)

A Colombian-Argentinian-Venezuelan co-production directed by Ciro Guerra that uses no fewer than nine

languages seamlessly in its 122 minutes. With the real-life journals of two European botanists as inspiration, it takes us down the Amazon, first in 1909 and then 1940, in the company of the two white explorers and a native shaman, last remaining member of his tribe. The black-and-white photography has a clarity and handsomeness that softens and lulls us. The changing river, the various priests and mad kings, the hallucinatory plants eaten, a heart-stopping confrontation between a jaguar and a snake — this is a head-lolling psychogeographic odyssey.

Hand Gestures

The most simple, ruminative of documentaries, Francesco Clerici's *Hand Gestures* takes us to a historic bronze foundry in Milan where the camera seems to quietly float as we watch artisans at work on one bronze sculpture: cutting and melting, pouring and shaving, encasing and baking. The washing of hands and drying of rags, the blowtorches and endless rain in the yard, the quiet cigarettes; no voiceover, no explanation.

The film won an award at the Berlin Film Festival — expect many more.

