Life

Reel It In: 'Roger & Me'

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Welcome to Reel It In, a biweekly film column where I'll keep it real, literally, by discussing an often-underappreciated side of cinema: documentaries.

This week, we're going to be talking about "Roger & Me," the 1989 debut of documentarian Michael Moore. The film documents the economic and social turmoil that Flint, Mich., faced after General Motors closed factories in the city that employed approximately 30,000 people and Moore's attempt to get an interview with Roger Smith, the company's CEO.

Through his career, Moore has established himself as a documentarian with an incredible amount of bite; his documentaries focus on social, political and economic issues that utilize satire and frequently criticize the people in power for making decisions against the interest of the public. Since his debut, Moore's films have garnered international acclaim and earned hundreds of millions of dollars.

But Moore's first documentary exemplifies one aspect of documentary filmmaking that sets it apart from the rest: how deeply personal it is. Through Moore's work you can feel how angry he is about what happened to his home, and he wants you to feel that as well.

At the beginning of the film, Moore tells the viewer about himself. Moore grew up in Flint; his father worked for GM assembling AC spark plugs, and Moore tells us about how the company was the economic and social hub of the city that kept it running.

But this all changes when Smith announces that GM is going to be closing its factories in Flint and terminating thousands of employees so they can outsource the work to cheaper laborers in Mexico. So, Moore decides that he's going to try and get Smith to sit down with him for an interview to talk about why the decision was made when GM was already having one of its most profitable years to date.

As you'd imagine, this is easier said than done for Moore; Smith doesn't want to talk to him, and the film becomes a goose chase as Moore tries to intercept Smith any chance he gets, but he's constantly shut down. While Smith dodges him, Moore shows the effect that Smith's actions have on the community.

"Roger & Me" succeeds in this by showing every facet of this city, from the heartbreaking to the infuriating. In one scene Moore follows a former factory-worker-turned-sheriff's-deputy as he goes door-to-door evicting families from their homes, and in the next scene he films a party attended by wealthy Flint residents who downplay the effect that the factories' closings had on the city. Interviews with Flint residents who are struggling to make it to the next day are juxtaposed with Smith at a Christmas party talking to a crowd about how important generosity is.

Saying all of this may make it seem like "Roger & Me" is a miserable movie to watch, but Moore is able to intersperse a comedic edge into the film that makes you laugh at the absurdity of the situation. Moore films visits from politicians and celebrities who seem completely out of touch with what is actually happening in Flint and invites the viewer to laugh at them with him. Moore's unique framing makes the film much more breathable than it is otherwise. Moore wants us to be frustrated at what we see on the screen, but he doesn't want the film to feel like you're on a sinking ship.

But the documentary isn't without faults. One issue is how Moore portrays the timeline of events. Early on in the film, within weeks of the GM factories beginning to close, Moore includes footage of entire neighborhoods that have been emptied out as families were evicted from their homes. But the neighborhoods weren't like that at that time; that footage comes from months or years later, when the full aftermath of the closure was felt.

At another point, Moore says that at the same time Smith was giving a speech about generosity, a Flint family was being evicted from their home. Moore intersperses footage from these events, but there's a noticeable discrepancy in the footage: Moore is in both locations at once.

The truth is that while there was a family being evicted at the time of Smith's speech, it's not the family that Moore shows on screen.

A big difference between narrative films and documentary films is that documentary films purport to be truthful. What Moore is telling the viewer in "Roger & Me" is truth; neighborhoods were actually emptied in the aftermath, and a family was actually being evicted at the same time as that speech.

But is what Moore shows us truthful?

That's a more difficult question to answer. None of the footage Moore documented was fabricated, and Moore never says that the footage on screen is of the events he's talking about, but by manipulating the timeframe of the images on screen to fit the narrative he wants for the film, Moore deceives the audience. He doesn't have to say things explicitly because he uses the editing of the footage to imply, even when the implications are false.

However, deceptive editing does not take away the real impact of a CEO's decision that left 30,000 people out of work, and Moore understands that. "Roger & Me" doesn't feel like a standard documentary; it feels like it was created with authentic frustration and desperation, and that's because it was. Moore wasn't just documenting what happened in Flint. He was calling for help as a citizen of Flint and condemning the people who put aside the lives of thousands to get a larger paycheck.

Moore brings an anger to "Roger & Me" that can only come from someone who is so deeply rooted in the issues that he documents. This film is deeply personal, and that's what makes it work. Without Moore's unique touch that comes from being a member of the community he's documenting, "Roger & Me" would be a completely different film, and likely a much worse one.



Michael Moore (left) and Robert De Niro (right) together at the 2018 Critics Choice Awards in New York. Moore directed the documentary "Roger & Me."
PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL MOORE ON FACEBOOK

Dog House Subs: Is it worth ordering to-go?

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Whether you choose to call it a hoagie, grinder, po' boy, hero or wedge, Dog House Subs has clearly chosen its side for the argument. Selling cold and hot subs along with soups and salads, Dog House Subs seemingly appeared out of nowhere this semester as a sister location to the infamous Huskies Restaurant and Bar. After hearing of it by word of mouth, I decided to check out the new establishment and see what all the talk was about.

As of right now, the only way to order online is through an application called "Clover," which was relatively easy to navigate. Using the app, I ordered half of a Philly Cheesesteak, totaling about $10. There are no delivery options yet, but I hope they will choose to join third-party apps like DoorDash and Uber Eats soon. For now, you'll just have to make your way to their restaurant located in Downtown Storrs just as I did.

The interior holds a very minimalistic layout with no seating whatsoever, so you won't be able to eat inside of the establishment. I waited inside for a few minutes upon my arrival at the restaurant and was greeted with excellent customer service. After a short wait, I left the restaurant and excitedly found a place to sit and eat my sub sandwich.

The sub was noticeably big for just a half, which isn't a complaint in this economy! But unfortunately, unraveling the sub was the worst part of the experience. There were three layers: the bag that held everything in place, the Boar's Head-labeled deli wrap, and the villain of this experience, which arrived in the form of aluminum foil. This layer was sloppily pressed against the sub, unable to fully contain the ingredients held inside the bread.

You're probably starting to think, "whatever Sarah, stop being lazy and take off the aluminum." That was the issue. The aluminum wouldn't separate itself from my sub! Once I started gently removing the aluminum off the sub, little chunks were left behind on the bread and meat. I had to pick out tiny chunks of shiny foil from my sub, which was just plain annoying. It defeats the point of its fast and ready-to-eat concept when the sub is difficult to unravel.

The general taste of the Philly Cheesesteak was decent. On the menu, they made sure to proudly highlight that all meat and cheese came from Boar's Head, a premium food distributor. The shaved steak was on the dryer side, and there wasn't as much cheese on it as you'd expect there to be on a cheesesteak. The delicious fluffy bread was the highlight of the sandwich itself, as it was able to hold the contents of the sandwich together. It seriously held the fort down for this sub. Even after all this criticism, I devoured the entire thing, so it was most definitely edible!

Ultimately, there is one word that continues to ring in my head after experiencing Dog House Subs for the first time — decent. We must consider the fact that the location was just recently opened to the public, so they still have time for growth during this adjustment period. If you're looking for a place to grab a sandwich to go that isn't Subway, definitely check out Dog House Subs!



Dog House Subs, a new sandwich restaurant in Downtown Storrs, opened on April 16, 2026. Located Next to Huskies Restaurant and Bar, the shop sells sandwiches, salads and soups. PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI/GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER
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