

requiem for a lost artifact nor a simple condemnation of their destruction. He explores notions of cultural heritage, commodified and kitsched-up religion, brutal intolerance, disorienting progress and, frankly, just how much the West doesn't understand about either Central Asia or Islam. With principals hailing from China, Toronto, France and the caves of Afghanistan, Frei deftly tells a rich and complex story in a way that's engaging and sad without being maudlin or overly sentimental. For a film that's "just" about a couple of statues being blown up, it sure does leave the viewer with a lot to think about.

— Jason Ferguson

Hand of God

Directed by Joe Cultrera

12:30 p.m. Sunday, March 26, at Regal

4 p.m. Wednesday, March 29, at Regal

Part of the movement toward disturbing family-history documentaries – like *Capturing the Friedmans*, *Tarnation* and *Awful Normal* (FFF 2004) – *Hand of God* chronicles the story of Paul Cultrera, who in the early 1990s began to speak out about a Catholic priest who had sexually molested him numerous times 30 years earlier. His brother Joe directed the movie, capturing Paul's surprisingly calm recollections of the early abuse and his crusade to publicize the church's gross negligence in keeping the pedophile on various payrolls (despite a myriad of prior molestations).

The chilling impact of Joe Cultrera's emotionally and physically draining polemic elevates it beyond a mere movie until it becomes, like the films mentioned above, an experience for the audience to partake in. Provocations and revelations abound as the film evolves from a portrait of a victim into a confrontational dialogue on church hypocrisy and necessity.

You get the feeling Joe was finding himself as a filmmaker at the same pace that Paul was finding himself as a misconduct-exposing activist: The second half of the film is so flawlessly composed that it's easy to forget the blemishes in the first act – the murky, incessant cutaways to overdramatic close-ups of cobweb-covered religious symbols and a tarnished photograph of the pedophilic priest. These diversions, meant to add tension, only distract from an inherently compelling tale that needs no stylized accompaniment.

These sequences, in which Joe tries to be Errol Morris, may fail, but when he simply becomes Joe Cultrera, his film is the most moving documentary since *Grizzly Man*.

— John Thomason

The House of Sand

Directed by Andrucha Waddington

5 p.m.

