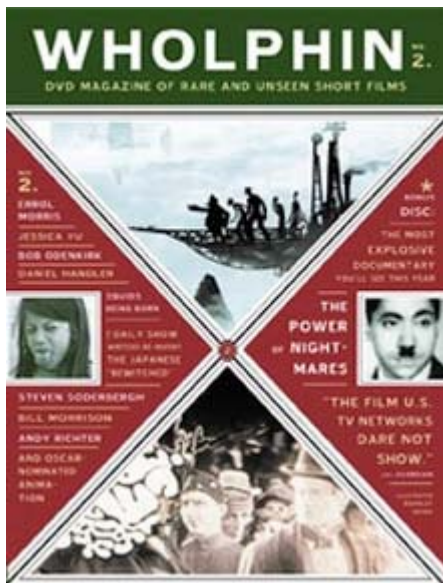




## ▶▶ Book Reviews

### "Wholphin Issue 2: DVD Magazine of Rare and Unseen Short Films"

by Robert Stephens  
EDGE Entertainment Contributor  
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The cover to the current issue of Wholphin.

McSweeney's, the literary world curated by David Eggers, has been building steam in both its print and Internet operations over the past few years. It involves its readership with impending writing of the day, simultaneously proving the continuous talents of the knowns alongside that of burgeoning newbies.

In a new format, McSweeney's is attempting to radicalize how the art-world gets exposure; a DVD magazine. The experiment, deemed **Wholphin** (after a rare dolphin/whale hybrid) decides rather than telling an audience about some cool things, why not show it to them as well?

The Wholphin team collects "rare and unseen short films" and brings them to the masses, a great avenue for entrepreneurial filmmakers to tread, and perhaps avoid their work being lost among isolated audiences of the film-festival aristocracy. And all of this can be experienced while you sit on your couch in crisp air conditioning, praying for some summer rain to fall. Not too shabby.

On the literary side, the DVD magazine looks like a little hardcover book. Inside are the DVD and about 20 pages detailing its contents, from summaries and interviews to factoids and even cooking recipes. The problem is...this doesn't feel like a magazine as much as it does liner notes.

In its second, and current, volume (released in quarterly publication) Bob Odenkirk (of Mr. Show fame) and Steven Soderbergh salute their shorts alongside relative nobodies. Let me tell you, some of the nobodies run away with the gold. Brad Seibel and his marine biologist colleagues captured some mesmerizing footage of a squid clasping a gigantic egg sack. The find meant a lot to the scientific world, but the elegance and otherworldliness of the scene should deservedly be praised in the art world as well. If anything on this DVD represents the duality that Wholphin intends to portray, this meeting of science and high art is it - These scientists aren't just their job, a concept many "filmmakers" should apply to themselves.

While the DVD has many highlights, and a few pitfalls (read Soderbergh's Building No. 7) an inclusion that must be mentioned is the hour-long-segment from BBC documentary series The Power of Nightmares. As Brent Hoff, Executive producer of Wholphin, remarks in the magazine's introduction, the inclusion of this documentary is to get some good information out to a bunch of people who've been denied it. Never in America, aside from a few festival

showings, has the documentary been viewable. Thanks to Wholphin, part of it now is.

By the end of the doc, I wanted to see the rest of it. It was driving me crazy. I began to hate Wholphin for just giving me this tease and not the whole package. So I went to YouTube.com and typed in the title. I got a few clips from the other installations, but not enough. Then I entered "neoconservatives" in my search. All 3 parts of the documentary were available in 6 half hour streaming videos. Amazing. I watched them all, thanks to the tip-off by Wholphin.

But then I finally figured it out. Wholphin isn't really that original after all. It's just what everything on the Internet already is, with a budget and neat packaging so that someone can walk around with an item that describes their hobby and not just be seen as an agoraphobic who surfs the web all day. Seriously, the content is great, but the idea is not novel. It's just tangible. Let's be thankful for the assemblage, but seriously, nerds who want to find an array of weird footage have been doing it on the Internet for a decade.

My advice to Wholphin is to expand on the literary portion of their enterprise. Give me articles and information that I'll want to read anywhere, not just after viewing a short film. Create a theme for the DVD and then compile stories, articles, and nonsense that will make me think about the idea beyond the DVD content. Give me a reason to bring Wholphin along with me on the bus, or to the doctor's office. Make it feel like an interactive magazine, like the Internet is in my pocket and you've done the Google search for me already - because right now, it just feels like a collection of short films. A lot more can be done with the format, but I think they've hit on a neat idea.

All that said, I'm still going to subscribe.

\$15.95 if bought on its own  
\$40 for 1-year subscription (4 issues)  
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See current submissions for issue No. 3 and other multimedia at  
[www.wholphindvd.com](http://www.wholphindvd.com)

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