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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES & VIDEO DIARIES

A very natural impulse among film directors is to draw upon their own early lives for their debut features, and in some cases - Truffaut with "**LES 400 COUPS**", Maurice Pialat with "**L'ENFANCE NUE**" - the integrity and power this invests in the project make the resulting film among the strongest of their careers. Other directors, Louis Malle for example with "**AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS**", or John Boorman with "**HOPE AND GLORY**", have shied away from doing so until they have mastered the medium itself and (in Malle's case) placed some emotional distance between themselves and the scorching memories concerned. But not all autobiographical input implies deep trauma - "**The Simpsons**" cartoon family is thinly based on creator Matt Groening's own, as was "**The Addams Family**".

The majority of the titles below, however, are simply based upon autobiographical, or quasi-autobiographical source material, and here the authorial voice becomes filtered through the directorial one, inevitably diminishing authenticity. Writer J.G. Ballard was given a small cameo appearance in Spielberg's "**EMPIRE OF THE SUN**", which recounted his boyhood in Japanese internment camps, but his presence on set did nothing to guarantee the film's *verité*. It is of course a common boast of American TV movies, in particular, that they are "based on" true events or characters, a claim which is intended to add gravitas to the confected drama, but such spurious claims, indeed the whole deplorable genre of "docu-dramas", which make even more insistent declarations of veracity, serve only to obscure the authorial voice, and smudge the boundaries between naked invention and reportage.

The purest form of autobiographical film-making is the current trend on television for "video diaries", in which ordinary people record their views and preoccupations direct to camera, eliminating director and film crew from the loop entirely, so that only at the editing table can their voice be "moulded" and "shaped". An earlier form of this, made feasible by the explosion of cable channels in the US, was "public access television". One of the most exhilarating and unmodulated pieces of children's television ever made, for example, was Holland's "**Achterwerk in de Kast**", from the VPRO network. It consisted of a small booth like a puppet theatre which the child would enter and speak direct to camera for a minute or so on whatever subject he or she pleased. Some entrants would simply show off a pet, or a musical instrument they could play, while others sat down to "*J'Accuse*" their families, their schools, or state a view on some question of current affairs. One young boy used this slot to "come out" as a transvestite, one young girl delivered a small lecture on the use of tampons, others discussed equally intimate matters in their lives, and some had nothing to say at all, simply staring back at the camera. The show was a genuine triumph of empowerment for the true voice of children, and although it has had its imitators - on German and British television, for example - none have had the courage of the VPRO to let children talk about whatever they please, however they please. Once you have seen it, nothing else comes close.

L'Adolescente	:
Åke och hans Varld	Sweden 1984: "Åke and his World" – from Bertil Malmberg's 1924 semi-autobiographical novel of childhood in a small Swedish village. With Martin Lindström
All the Way Home	:
Almost Famous	UK 2001: Fictionalised account of director Cameron Crowe's adolescent experiences as a 70s journalist for <i>Rolling Stone</i> magazine, as he follows the tour of a (fictional) rising rock group. With Patrick Fugit , 15.
...And the Earth did not Swallow him	US 1994 : From Tomas Rivera's portrait of chicano family life in the 1950s "...Y no se lo Trago la Tierra".
Art for Teachers of Children	US 1995 : Independent feature about a boarding school girl (14) who embarks on a sexual relationship with her "dormitory counsellor", a relationship that endured for several years. The film is written, shot, directed, edited and narrated by the girl herself, Jennifer Montgomery. Potentially at least then, a rare first-hand testimony to such an affair.
Au Revoir Les Enfants	France 19 : [Goodbye Children] – of director Louis Malle
Avalon	US 1990 : Third instalment of director Barry Levinson's "Baltimore trilogy" (following "DINER" and "TIN MEN") recounting the lives of his grandfather and father as European immigrants, and the decline of their close-knit family as they absorb themselves into American culture. Levinson himself is played by Elijah Wood , 9.
Bal Na Vodi	:
Blut und Ehre – Jugend unter Hitler	: [Hey Babu Riba] W German TV serial 1982: "Blood and Honour – Youth Under Hitler". A boy joins the Hitlerjugend and finds relations with friends and family soured. With Jeffrey Frank
The Boy from Mercury	UK / Eire / France 1996 : Debut writer/director Martin Duffy's semi-autobiographical account of a young fatherless boy of the late 50s / early 60s whose idol is Flash Gordon and who claims extraterrestrial parentage. With James Hickey and Sean O'Flanagan .
The Boys of Paul Street	UK / Hungary 1969 : aka "A Pal Utcai Fiuk" Third film version of Ferenc Molnar's autobiographical story of two rival boys' gangs warring over a vacant lot in post-war Budapest. With Anthony Kemp ; John Moulder Brown ; Martin Beaumont ; Earl Younger , etc
Brother to the Ox	:
Brusten Himmel	Sweden 1982 : [Broken Sky] – of director Ingrid Thulin
C'est la Vie	France 90 : "That's Life" – Third instalment of director Diane Kurys trilogy in which alter ego Frédérique, now 13, enjoys a long seaside holiday in the 50s and watches her parents' marriage founder. See also "DIABOLO MENTHE" and "ENTRE NOUS".
Cheaper By The Dozen	:
A Child's Christmas in Wales	: Of poet Dylan Thomas
A Circle of Children	US TV 77: From Mary MacCracken's novel about an impoverished private school for autistic children. With Patrick (12) and Matthew (10) Laborteaux
The Citadel	:
The Dark at the Top of the Stairs	US 1960 : From a Pulitzer Prize-winning play based on William Inge's memoirs of a boyhood in 1920s Oklahoma. One of the plot strands concerns his (Robert Eyer) awakening sexuality. Another concerns a boy (Lee Kinsolving) driven to suicide by anti-semitism.
Dawandeh	Iran 1984 : "The Runner". Street boy (Majid Nirumand +/-13) lives in a derelict hulk on the beach and ekes out a subsistence as a shoeshine or selling ice water. Based on director Amir Naderi's own boyhood, reportedly.
Den'en ni Shishu	:
Detstvo Gorkovo	USSR 1938 : "The Childhood of Maxim Gorki", set in late 19 th century.
The Devil's Playground	Australia 1976 : of director Fred Schepisi's boyhood at a repressive 1950s Catholic Seminary.
Diabolo Menthe	France 19 : [Peppermint Soda/Peppermint Frappé]
Distant Voices, Still Lives	
Doodzonde	Netherlands 1978 : of director René van Nie's sternly catholic boyhood during a 1940s miners' strike.
Dolina Issy	:
Emma's War	:
Empire of the Sun	:

L'Enfance Nue	France 1967 : [Naked Childhood] – of director Maurice Pialat
Entre Nous	France 19 :
The Evacuees	: of playwright
Four Friends	:
Fuzi Qing	Hong Kong 1981: “Father and Son” – Allen Fong’s debut feature recounts his shanty childhood and adolescence, and the conflict with his father over his ambition to be a film-maker.
Hideous Kinky	: Of author Esther Freud
Hope and Glory	UK 19 : of director John Boorman
How Green Was My Valley	US 1941 : Based on John Llewellyn’s bestselling account of his boyhood in a turn-of-the-century Rhonda Valley mining village. <i>Roddy McDowall</i> plays the author as a boy.
The Hummingbird Tree	:
I Remember Mama	US 1948 : Sentimental reminiscence of growing up in a Norwegian immigrant family in 1910 San Francisco, adapted from Kathryn Forbes’ memoirs “ <i>Mama’s Bank Account</i> ”. The long-running TV soap “ Mama ” was a spinoff from this.
Islands in the Stream	:
Der Junge Torless	:
Kadisbellan	:
Lachenite Obouvki na Neznainiya Voin	Bulgaria 1979 : “The Patent Leather Shoes of the Unknown Soldier” – supposedly quasi-autobiographical account of director Rangel Vulchanov’s childhood in the thirties.
Der Laden	W German TV serial 1988 : 3-part adaptation of East German author Erwin Strittmatter’s childhood, youth and early manhood on the German/Polish border, from 1919 to post-war Soviet occupation. With <i>Ole Brandmeyer</i> .
The Last Winter	:
Lajanje na Zvedze	Serbia & Montenegro 1999 : [Barking at the Moon] – of writer Milovan Vitezovic’s post-WW2 schooldays.
Little House on the Prairie	: [US TV soap]
The Long Day Closes	:
Mame	:
Man, Woman and Sin	:
Min Fynske Barndom	Denmark c1995 : [My Childhood] – of composer Carl Nielsen
Montreal Main	Canada 1974 : of producer/director/writer Frank Vitali’s tentative love affair with a 12-year old boy within alternative Montreal gay culture.
Morphine and Dolly Mixtures	:
My Dog Skip	:
Nel Nome del Padre	:
Padre Padrone	Italy TV 1977: [Father Master] – of writer Gavino Ledda’s boyhood and youth as an illiterate Sardinian shepherd boy post-WW2.
Places in the Heart	:
Playhouse 90 – "Child of Our Time"	: [US live TV play]
Podranki	USSR 1976: [Orphans] – of a Soviet writer orphaned in WW2.
La Promesse de L’Aube	:
Puika	USSR 1977 : [The Boy] – of a Latvian writer
Les Quatres Cents Coups	: [The 400 Blows]
Richard Burton's A Christmas Story	: Of actor Richard Burton
Room For One More	:
Les Roseaux Sauvages	France 1994 : “Wild Reeds” – André Téchiné’s autobiographical portrait of adolescence in an early 60s French boarding school, with the attendant ambiguities of sexuality.
Roughly Speaking	:
Sonndags Barn	: Of Swedish director/author Ingmar Bergman
Spendljk na Motyla	: Of Czech director Hannah Kodicekov
Swimming	:
A Time to Live	US TV 1986 : Muscular dystrophy story from Mary-Lou Weisman’s book “Intensive Care”.
Lisa	Minnelli plays her, and <i>Corey Haim</i> the stricken son.
Tongdang Wansui	: [“Long Live the Childhood Gang”] Of Taiwanese director Yu Weiyen

The Torkelsons	: [US TV sitcom]
Transit	Israel 1979 : - of director Daniel Wachsmann
Uz Zase Sk cu Pres Kaluze	Czechoslovakia 1970: ["I'm Jumping Over Puddles Again"] Karel Kachyna film based on Australian Alan Marshall's autobiographical children's book set pre-World War I. A young boy - <i>Vladimir Dlouhy</i> - with a passion to ride horses is struck down by polio.
Village of Dreams	:
Les Violons du Bal	:
V Lyudyakkh	USSR 1938 : "My Apprenticeship" aka "Out in the World" - second part of Mark Donskoi's Maxim Gorki trilogy
Voices From the Doll's House	:
Die Welt in Jenem Sommer	W Germ TV: "The World That Summer" - Robert Muller's portrait of joining the Hitlerjugend as a boy, concealing the knowledge that his grandmother is Jewish. With <i>Jan Schwarzbauer, Jörg Doleh</i>
De Witte	:
De Witte van Zichem	:
Wszystkoi Conajwazniejsze	:
Zamri - Oumi - Voskresni!	:
Zéro de Conduite	France 19 : [Zero for Conduct] - of director Jean Vigo

Non Fiction:

Achterwerk in de Kast	:
Age 7 in America	:
Age 7 in the U.S.S.R	:
Anna ot Shesti do Vosemnadtsati	Russian Federation 1994 : "Anna from 6 to 18". Feature documentary by Nikita Mikhailkov showing his daughter's developing awareness as their society is undergoing a traumatic change of its own. Each year the director poses the same five questions to his daughter, and the change in her responses reflects her priorities and sensitivities as she grows. Unseen, but nevertheless, as a telling psychological experiment, <i>Recommended</i> .
As Seen On TV	UK TV series 1996-97 : BBC children's Vox Populi camcorder series, in which kids make short 10-minute films on their own hobbies, concerns and preoccupations.
Citizen 2000	:
14 Up	:
My Family and Autism	UK TV documentary 2003 : 14-yr old boy with Asperger's Syndrome reports in video diary style on his single-parent family of 3 girls and 4 boys. All four brothers are autistic. A candid and informative programme on living with autism, both from the subjective and objective viewpoint. Luke himself published a book on the subject at 13. <i>Recommended</i> .
7 Up	:
Vorzicht - Kinder in de Kiste	:
Witness: "The Face of Evil"	UK TV 1999 : Recollections of a former Hitler Youth (5 min only)

~ 97 titles ~