

Printed from the Pittsburgh City Paper website: <http://www.pittsburghcitypaper.ws>

POSTED ON JANUARY 27, 2011:

Zenith

As usual, the future is all messed up.

By Al Hoff



Who? What? Where?

Viewers juggle two narratives in writer-director Vladan Nikolic's moody sci-fi thriller, *Zenith*. In the present day, we follow a former priest named Ed as he tries to uncover a conspiracy known as "Zenith." The other plotline unspools in 2044: Ed's son, Jack, a drug-dealer in a messed-up world, finds his father's videotapes. Further complicating Jack's already confused existence are a beautiful prostitute with a powerful daddy; a conspiracy buff; and some people trying to kill him.

Nikolic's low-budget indie is well produced, with clever location shooting that uses our busted-up present as a grimmer future. (One colorful thing grim futures always have: strip clubs that blast techno music.) The film has antecedents in assorted time-, space- and mindbenders such as *La Jetée*/ *12 Monkeys* and *Primer*, as well as dozens of paranoid dystopic works.

What's real? Is there a conspiracy? Whom to trust? Answers are fluid, but here's a clue: Twice Ed recounts the infamous Milgram experiment of the 1960s, in which subjects were instructed to administer crippling, even lethal shocks to strangers. Thus, one can be powerless even when he believes he's in control. An authority may simply be manipulating one toward a larger, secretive goal. And then, there's that meta-narrative about what you, the viewer, are getting suckered into believing ... 10 p.m. Fri., Jan. 28, and 10 p.m. Sat., Jan. 29. Oaks (Al Hoff)

URL for this story: <http://www.pittsburghcitypaper.wshttp://www.pittsburghcitypaper.ws/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A90431>