



Ree / Buzz

Circulation
150

Monthly Publication of the Adelaide University Film Society

Vol. 6 Ed. 2

March 2002

PALACE NOVA

WALLIS

President's Report

Since this may very well be my last broadcast as Grand High Auspicious Prez of the Film Society, the first thing I would like to do is take the opportunity to thank and congratulate all the wonderful people who worked so tirelessly over the last twelve months to keep the Film Society trundling along. I don't want to start naming the guilty, since I'll certainly leave some people out, but everyone deserves a hearty handshake and a pat on the back. Our labour has successfully (to some extent) satisfied the cravings of the salivating, palpitating membership to watch films. Yeah baby!

Now, that said, I wish all the candidates for position of El Presidente this year all the best. I have enjoyed being Da Prez, though I can't for the life of me work out why. And I can't work out why everyone put up with me for a whole year, given the remarkable degree of incompetence and negligence I have displayed in office. I do hope no-one minded too much. Thanks for putting up with me.

I think that's just about enough administrivia from me; I know I'm mean't to review the year that's been and all that, but now I want to talk about film. Well, one film in particular, which has crossed my mind recently so I thought I'd mention it. I talk of *Olivier, Olivier*. It's a French film released in 1992, and in my opinion a truly excellent film (one of my all-time favourites). Written and directed by Agnieszka Holland, who has a motley crew of films to her credit. These include *To Kill A Priest* (1988), a true story from her native Poland of a priest murdered by the Communists for inciting his flock to resistance, starring Christopher Lambert, Ed Harris, and Tim Roth amongst others. Also *Hitlerjunge Saloman* (1993) released under the English title *Europa Europa*, and according to one IMDb user a movie that says everything that *Saving Private Ryan* says, but much better.

Anyway, I would argue the virtue of *Olivier, Olivier* on three levels. Firstly, it's brilliantly produced. Top marks for cinematography, lighting, make-up, cos-

tumes, continuity, and all that stuff. Not the shiny, plastic, space-age polymer no sharp edges or you may cut yourself style that Hollywood aspires to, but just plain excellent story telling in the movie medium. Visually, it manages to be restrained and respectful, yet rich and deep none-the-less. The lighting, in both the indoor and outdoor scenes, is superb. This is something I consider very important, and something Hollywood films more often than not let me down on. Secondly, the narrative is an excellent and gripping drama. We are given intense, close and personal access to the difficult lives, the pain and the joy, of a troubled family as the relationships between its members evolve over the years. So skillfully are the characters brought to life, and their personas displayed before us so honestly and nakedly, that you can't help but sympathise with all four of them. I think it is this mutual sympathy that makes the film so powerful in this regard; the tension and antagonism between them is induced within the audience. Also the narrative spans many years, and the story moves at just the right pace; lingering on some moments and skipping past others, yet always following a scenic and interesting path. This further serves to draw the audience in to the drama which, being a family drama, is inevitably one that spans many years. Finally, the plot of the movie contains a quite bizarre, intriguing, and confusing mystery. There is a spiritual aspect to it that continually baffles me and leaves me pondering stuff every time I see this movie. By the end of the movie, one finds the seemingly rational and logical plot that has come forth thrown into sharp doubt and inconsistency, and yet one's intuition is still that the story has a rational explanation. This is something I love in movies; when there are so many layers that every time you see the movie you notice more detail, and more pieces of the puzzle reveal themselves, and yet the puzzle is just as baffling.

Well, I must say I enjoyed that. So in case I don't get to waffle in another President's Report, I'll end by bidding you all happy trails. May your herd be large and fruitful!

Matt Lowry

Da Prez.

<http://www.smug.adelaide.edu.au/aufs>

Film Reviews

No Man's Land

Screening at the Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas from 25th April.

Written and Directed by Branko Djuric.



No Man's Land is one of those great films that you leave feeling that you've heard a story that had to be told. A film that you could really analyse to death (one of my great loves) or just walk away from, hav-

ing spent a really interesting 90 minutes.

Set during the Bosnian-Serbian conflict of the early 90s, it charts a day in the life of two soldiers: one Bosnian, one Serb. The soldiers find themselves together stranded in a trench smack bang in the middle of no-man's-land, within firing range of both sides. They fight, they joke, they discover how similar they are. They both "know" the same girl in a local town, they both smoke the same cigarettes, and they both hate each other with a passion. The United Nations Peace Keeping Force - the real bad guys in this tale - are called in to help the two men.



Constrained by UN bureaucracy, the UN soldiers on the ground turn the whole situation into a farce. Reporters move in and a media circus ensues.

The ReelBuzz: Part black comedy, part social commentary, *No Man's Land* is a good watch with a kick ass ending.

ESther

Monster's Ball

Directed by Marc Forster.

Starring Billy Bob Thornton & Halle Berry.

In the Deep South men are men, women are whores or housewives, and blacks are on Death Row. Hank Grotowski (Thornton) is the senior guard on the Row. He is accustomed to accepting the accepted: as a guard he values ritual; his racism is habitual deference to his being-a-man-is-doing-as-a-man father (Peter Boyle). His son, Sonny, is the newest guard on the Row. Sonny is played by Heath Ledger but don't go just to wave the flag because he's not around for long: he chokes with nausea on his first prisoner-escort and commits suicide when Hank tells him he's a wuss.

Leticia (Berry) is the wife of the executee, ground down by debt and the thankless years of waiting for her husband to die. When her teenage son is hit by a car, Hank, ignorant of her identity, helps her to the hospital. Their separate losses make them mutually sympathetic and they form a relationship.

Essentially, it's a story of humanity played for romantic poignancy before a background of social and human tragedy. The interest lies in seeing how Hank and Leticia deal with their own and each other's pasts. Billy Bob Thornton is, of course, good value as the laconic, stone-faced man, emerging from the shadow of his upbringing. Berry is far too glamorous (perfect skin and hair, broomstick-with-breasts figure) to be convincing for her harried and hopeless role. The characters are unfortu-

nately let down by a lack of context, especially the town's apparent obliviousness or indifference to their relation-



ship. There are a number of implausibilities, particularly how their relationship could last any time at all. Crises do, in fact, develop constantly but are resolved without a murmur. *Monster's Ball* is watchable but not much more. Amor vincit omnia.

Guy

Mulholland Dr

Screening at the Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas from 28th March.

Written and Directed by David Lynch.

Starring: Justin Theroux, Naomi Watts, Laura Harring. If you ever wondered why people call David Lynch a God, *Mulholland Drive* is here and ye shall wonder no longer.

Lo though I shudder at the confusing two-part nature of your film, and your strange symbolism, I shall fear no boredom, for your amazing mixture of black comedy and in-

sane and compelling storyline comfort me. Our story begins on the dark and deserted Mulholland Drive. A



gorgeous woman is sitting in the back of a stretch limousine. It stops. A man gets out of the front with a gun and is about to shoot her when fate steps in and she escapes. She stumbles into an apartment and hides there, only to be discovered, bleeding and unable to remember her name, by a Doris Day-like would-be actress who has just moved to LA from the Canadian sticks. Together they slowly uncover her identity.

Meanwhile, a Hollywood director finds that his movie is being taken over by a bunch of sinister mafia men who are demanding he place the actress of their choice in the lead role. It seems unrelated to our main story, but is it? Is anything or anyone what they seem in this film?

Part mystery, with hilarious moments, including what I'm going to refer to as a homage to Quentin Tarantino. Part horror with, dare I say it, a homage to Stephen King. Part linear narrative (but only part). Also worth mentioning that Marcus Graham and Melissa George have roles in this film, so if you count Naomi Watts as an Australian (she did hard time in soapie television out here) there are three Aussies in this film.

The ReelBuzz: God, (read David Lynch) this is an excellent film.

ESther

The Son's Room

Screening at Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas from 21st March.

Directed by Nanni Moretti.

Starring Nanni Moretti, Laura Morante.

Every now and then I see a film and wonder why the hell they made it. What I sometimes experience as boredom others call depth. What I sometimes interpret as wooden acting others interpret as profound. This is one such film. It won the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival last year - of course, the judges were wrong.

The Son's Room is an Italian film, written, directed and starring Nanni Moretti (*Caro Diario, Aprile*). It explores the grief of a family whose teenage son dies unexpectedly. So, a quick synopsis really would be: meet family, son dies, everyone is sad, film ends. If this sounds like your thing, and it seems to have been at Cannes last year, go see it.

The ReelBuzz: A bit of a yawn actually.

ESther

Film Festival News

I've just heard our equally glorious premier Mike Rann espousing his plans for a week-long film festival in Adelaide, to be held every alternate year (ie when the Festival's not on). This would include a Filmmakers' Week, similar to the Festival's Writers' Week.

Guy

Being a huge fan of totally free Writers' Week, I must say this sounds very promising. We'll have to keep our fingers crossed that they don't suddenly decide to charge exorbitant amounts of money for it too.



Answers to Last Month's Quiz

1. The 74th Academy Awards
2. 1996
3. *The English Patient*
4. *The Usual Suspects*
5. True
6. *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*
7. *Raiders of the Lost Ark*
8. *American Pie*
9. *Independence Day*
10. *Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb*

ESther

Programme

From now on films will be shown in the **Union Cinema**, level 5 of the Union Building.

28th March

The Reckless Moment

1949. Dir: Max Ophüls. Starring James Mason & Joan Bennett.

Film-noir original of last year's *The Deep End*, both based on E.S. Holding's novel *The Blank Wall*. Mason is both sinister and bumbling in his blackmailing of a hapless Bennett.

Plus short: Allegro non Troppo, part 1.

1976. A segment from Bruno Bozzetto's satire of Disney's *Fantasia*.

4th April

Pushpak

1988. Dir: Srinivasa Rao Singeetham.

An unemployed Indian youth gains access to an opulent hotel, gradually destroying it in his revels. An unusual film from India with visual humour reminiscent of Peter Sellers' *The Party* and Jacques Tati.

Plus short: Allegro non Troppo, part 2.

11th April

Black Sunday (*La Maschera del Demonio*)

1960. Dir: Mario Bava. Starring Barbara Steele.

In this stylish Italian horror film a 17th century witch and her lover are executed with a spiked devil's mask (how?) but are revived to destroy her cursed family. 'Rarely has guilty sexuality, transferred into a fascinating fear of women, been represented as explicitly.' Who needs SBS?

Plus short: Allegro non Troppo, part 3.

Editor's Report

We are at the beginning of a new, exciting year for the Film Society. This club depends entirely on YOU, our members. So come along to the screenings on Thursday nights or a committee meeting on Mondays 1-2 pm in the Margaret Murray Room in the Union Building and tell us that you think we are doing a great job. If you don't think so, we also like to know - so you can help us improve. You are all encouraged to come to our next film choosing night (date to be advised on the email list), make suggestions and vote for what you want to see on the big screen next term. So far, we know that we will show three Japanese films in collaboration with the Japan-Australia Friendship Association on 30th April, 1st and 2nd May.

Finally, I just want to plug a couple of films. Firstly, the French feature *Amelie*. A delight for all senses. If you haven't seen it already, go tonight as it probably won't be on for much longer. Secondly, if you are after a heart-warming video experience, seek out the Swedish film *Show Me Love*. It is one of the best films to come out of Sweden since Bergman quit directing. I'm Swedish, so I had to say that...



Editor: Sol
Contributors: Matt Lowry,
Guy and ESther