



CLOSE UP

AUCKLAND FILM SOCIETY Vol 74 March – November 2019

PREMIER CARD MEMBER BENEFITS

- **FREE** entry to all Auckland Film Society 2019 Season films
- 12-month membership from date of purchase
- **DISCOUNTS** at
French Film Festival 2019
New Zealand International Film Festival 2019 18 July – 4 August 2019
Show Me Shorts Film Festival
Academy Cinemas \$10 all sessions (\$5 on Wednesdays)
Rialto Cinemas, Newmarket \$12 Mon – Fri, except 3D,
 Beyond/Alternative Content, Film Festivals and Special Events
Lido & Capitol Cinemas \$10 Mon – Fri, except Alternative Content
- **FREE Close Up** magazine. Collect your copy at any AFS screening.
- **Car parking**
 The Chancery car park: \$3 flat fee from 5pm – visit
www.heartofthecity.co.nz/article/three-dollar-parking-city-centre
 Greys Ave open-air car park: \$10 flat fee after 6pm
 Victoria St car park: \$2 per hour to a maximum of \$10 after 6pm
 Civic car park: \$12 flat fee after 6pm

2019 SAMPLER CARD MEMBER BENEFITS

- **FREE** entry to ANY THREE films in the AFS 2019 Season
 Cardholder entry only – strictly non-transferable. Please note, no film society, film festival or cinema discounts apply to 2019 Sampler Cards.
- **Special offer! Buy your first 2019 Sampler Card before 15 April for \$25**
 Valid for your first 2019 Sampler Card purchase only. All subsequent 2019 Sampler Cards cost \$35.
- The 2019 Sampler Card lets new members try out the film society and allows you to pay for a Premier Card by instalments. Exchange five 2019 Sampler Cards in your name plus \$5 for a Premier Card and enjoy Premier Card benefits.
- Upgrade to a Premier Card before the end of the 2019 Season and receive 12-month membership from date of purchase of your first 2019 Sampler Card. Cinema discounts apply at upgrade until your Premier Card expires.
- **FREE Close Up** magazine. Collect your copy at any AFS screening.
- **Car parking**
 The Chancery car park: \$3 flat fee from 5pm – visit
www.heartofthecity.co.nz/article/three-dollar-parking-city-centre
 Greys Ave open-air car park: \$10 flat fee after 6pm
 Victoria St car park: \$2 per hour to a maximum of \$10 after 6pm
 Civic car park: \$12 flat fee after 6pm

DATES AND TIMES

Most screenings are at the **Academy Cinemas, 44 Lorne St, Auckland, Mondays at 6:30 pm.**

No screenings on public holidays. We screen on the following Tuesdays.
Tuesday 23 April at 6:30 pm Ariel
Tuesday 4 June at 6:30 pm My Man Godfrey
Tuesday 29 October at 6:30 pm Tanna

Early start – the following screenings start at 6:00pm because of a long running time:
Monday 15 July Brazil
Monday 30 September Ash Is Purest White
Monday 14 October Aquarius
Monday 4 November Mulholland Drive

CONTENTS

PAGE

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|----|
| HIS GIRL FRIDAY | AFS Fundraiser – all tickets \$20 | 4 |
| IN A WORLD ... | Opening Night | |
| SHADOWS IN PARADISE | | 5 |
| WESTERN | | |
| THE MATCH FACTORY GIRL | | 6 |
| ARIEL | | |
| I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO | | 7 |
| DAISIES | | |
| THE FOREST FOR THE TREES | | 8 |
| MY 20TH CENTURY | | |
| IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD | | 9 |
| MY MAN GODFREY | | |
| CAMERAPERSON | | 10 |
| A GERMAN YOUTH | | |
| THE VIRGIN SUICIDES | | 11 |
| THE LEGEND OF RITA | | |
| LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD | | 12 |
| BRAZIL | | |
| WÜLU | | 13 |
| NOCTURAMA | | |
| THE DIVINE ORDER | | 14 |
| MAKALA | | |
| HEART OF A DOG | | 15 |
| FÉLICITÉ | | |
| ZAMA | | 16 |
| ASH IS PUREST WHITE | | |
| NEXT OF KIN | | 17 |
| AQUARIUS | | |
| LADY MACBETH | | 18 |
| TANNA | | |
| MULHOLLAND DRIVE | Closing Night | 19 |
| SUNSET BOULEVARD | AFS Fundraiser – all tickets \$20 | |

WELCOME TO AUCKLAND FILM SOCIETY

Our 2019 season is a richly eclectic programme of special screenings, classic features, documentaries and contemporary cinema from around the world.

Auckland Film Society is a non-profit incorporated society and a registered charitable organisation. AFS is run by volunteers elected at our AGM (next AGM is 29 April 2019). Visit us at aucklandfilmsociety.org.nz.

Contact Auckland Film Society

Tel 527 6076 (answerphone)
 Email info@aucklandfilmsociety.org.nz
 Post PO Box 5618, Wellesley St, Auckland 1141

Like us on Facebook /aklfilmsoc Follow us on Twitter @aklfilmsoc

AFS Committee members are Alison Ashton, Simon Erceg, Andrew Lockett, Gorjan Markovski, Jane McKenzie, Craig Ranapia, Carmel Riordan, Marjorie Sprecher and Dave Watson. Special thanks to Michael McDonnell at the New Zealand Federation of Film Societies, nzfilmsociety.org.nz

This issue of *Close Up* was edited by Alison Ashton, Robyn Harper, Andrew Lockett, Jane McKenzie and Craig Ranapia. Picture research by Michael McDonnell, NZ Federation of Film Societies

Auckland Film Society thanks Foundation North and Waitemata Local Board, the Goethe-Institut, Institut Français and the Embassy of France, the Confucius Institute Victoria University of Wellington and local supporters, Time Out Bookstore, The Surrey Hotel, Metropolitan Rentals, French Film Festival 2019, New Zealand International Film Festival 2019, Show Me Shorts Film Festival, Flicks.co.nz and the Academy Cinemas

QUIET PLEASE!

Please be considerate of others in the audience during film screenings.



Monday 04 March at 6:30 pm

AFS Fundraiser

Special extra screening open to the public – all tickets \$20

His Girl Friday

USA 1940

Director: Howard Hawks
 Producer: Jed Harris
 Production co: Columbia Pictures
 Screenplay: Charles Lederer, based on the play *The Front Page* by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur
 Photography: Joseph Walker
 Editor: Gene Havlick
 Music: MW Stoloff

With: Cary Grant (Walter Burns), Rosalind Russell (Hildy Johnson), Ralph Bellamy (Bruce Baldwin), Gene Lockhart (Sheriff Hartwell), Porter Hall (Murphy), Ernest Truex (Bensinger)

92 mins, Blu-ray. PG

Howard Hawks was attracted to the purity of succinctness. The filmmaker had no patience for handwringing, self-pity, artless exposition, or for any formal element that could be interpreted as self-consciousness... The saps in Hawks's world... believe in proffering clichéd, obligatory romantic sentiment, failing to understand that the camaraderie found working alongside your fellow human is deeper: more inherent, truthful, and matter-of-fact...

The editing in Hawks's films is quietly brilliant, working in tandem with the more overtly amazing in-camera editing of his framing. Characters move in a manner so as to seemingly naturally form the through lines of the images, physically complementing the verbal action of the stylized dialogue. Hawks's films carry you through their plots on a river of carefully subsumed craftsmanship.

His Girl Friday is one of Hawks's most perfect realizations of this aesthetic. The protagonists are reporters for a Chicago newspaper, intelligent, über-competent professionals who know how to wage social warfare while appearing to shoot the breeze. At the beginning of the film, Hildy (Rosalind Russell) is about to leave her editor, Walter (Cary Grant), who's also her ex-husband, because she wants to live as an actual "human being." ... Hildy is falling prey to sentimentality, and Walter must remind her of her destiny, calling on their intricate, instinctual private language as a couple forever in simpatico.

So the film is driven by Walter asserting to Hildy that she stay with the paper as well as him by extension, though Hawks has pointedly little interest in their romance as a separate endeavor from their writing. In this film's world, only a schmuck would require the sort of pitifully unoriginal affirmation that Hildy's new suitor, Bruce (Ralph Bellamy), is all too willing to provide... As these characters make their respective cases, volleying legendary dialogue back and forth at a bewildering clip, Hawks arranges them in tableaux of subtly shifting geometry that indicates power, or illusions thereof...

Hawks has refreshingly little patience for preaching, and he doesn't express an opinion on the legitimacy of the news story that occupies Hildy and Walter, which involves their efforts to opportunistically free a white man who lost his job and killed a black cop... The contrast of two men's deaths – and a woman's suicide attempt – with a comedy of remarriage is gleefully, debauchedly callous: Hawks's blitheness, about a black victim as nothing more than an inciting incident for a white press to manipulate political protocol, has a tart edge, particularly when seen through the prism of our bleak contemporary political spectrum. *His Girl Friday* isn't a dusty old classic; it's alive and electric, ready to bite... Chuck Bowen, *Slant Magazine*



Monday 11 March at 6:30 pm

AFS thanks Time Out Bookstore

In a World...

USA 2013

Director/Screenplay: Lake Bell
 Producers: Lake Bell, Mark Roberts, Jett Steiger, Eddie Vaisman
 Production co: 3311 Productions, In A World, Team G
 Photography: Seamus Tierney
 Editor: Tom McArdle
 Music: Ryan Miller

With: Lake Bell (Carol), Fred Melamed (Sam), Rob Corddry (Moe), Alexandra Holden (Jamie), Demetri Martin (Louis), Eva Longoria (as herself), Ken Marino (Gustav), Tig Notaro (Cher), Nick Offerman (Heners), Michaela Watkins (Dani), Geena Davis (as herself)

93 mins, Blu-ray. R16 sexual references & offensive language

What's in a voice? Power, for one thing. The power to tell people things – anything from an update on a global crisis to the general gist of a young adult movie franchise. This idea is at the center of Lake Bell's hilarious, sincere and boldly feminist comedy *In A World...*, which she wrote, directed and stars in.

Carol (Bell) is a vocal coach eking out a living in Los Angeles. She's in the shadow of her father, Sam Soto (Fred Melamed), one of the bigwigs in the field of movie-trailer voiceovers, a profession Carol would love to break into if it weren't so male-dominated and if Dad weren't so offhandedly unsupportive of her ambitions. But when she wins a gig voicing the preview for a "children's romantic comedy" (ha!), and then another and another, Carol starts to think she might have some traction in a world where those very words – "In a World" – are always intoned by men.

Bell is a warm and winning presence in the film, and supported by a well-cast array of funny actors and professional comedians alike. *In a World...* sticks to the beats of many romantic comedies, but it importantly places the feminist drive for self-fulfillment above any of the film's romantic scenarios. It also tackles feminism from a unique angle, the significance of voice – a facet of self-presentation – for women. There's a reason that the movie-trailer voiceover is a male domain, and it's not just limited to trailers, nor as Sam densely states is it about people not yearning for "a female sound." It has to do with authority. Beth Hanna, *IndieWire*

Bell has made a lively, modern screwball comedy with a terrible title; the dialogue moves fast and sometimes takes nutty, unexpected loops, like puppies scrambling over one another in a basket. The title, mentioned perhaps too many times in the course of the movie, refers to the opening words of 1,001 cheesy trailers, a phrase that became a trademark of sorts for real-life voiceover king Don LaFontaine, who recorded uncountable trailers, commercials, and promos in a career that spanned more than 40 years. (He died in 2008.) In Hollywood, being dead doesn't stop anyone from competing with you.

Bell captures the insularity of certain professional pockets of Hollywood, with all their petty rivalries and backstabbing. But she's sharpest in her exploration of what makes women desire success, and what prevents them from getting it. Carol, for all her awkwardness, is extremely competitive – there's no stopping her once she gets a shot at a prestigious gig. But her success also makes her instantly unattractive to a certain kind of man.

In a World... is a movie about ambition that is itself quietly ambitious. In a world where remarkably few women either get or create the opportunity to make movies, Bell has already figured one thing out: You don't have to shout to be heard. – Stephanie Zacharek, *Village Voice*



Monday 01 April at 6:30 pm

Shadows in Paradise Varjoja paratiisissa Finland 1986

Director/Screenplay: Aki Kaurismäki
Producer: Mika Kaurismäki
Production co: Villealfa Filmproductions
Photography: Timo Salminen
Editor: Raija Talvio

With: Matti Pellonpää (Nikander), Kati Outinen (Ilona), Sakari Kusomanen (Melartin), Esko Nikkari (co-worker), Kylli Köngäs (Ilona's girlfriend), Pekka Laiho (shop steward)

76 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc
In Finnish with English subtitles

The first part of the so-called "proletariat trilogy" and the film that set the blueprint for the Kaurismäki mode, *Shadows in Paradise* may run a mere 76 minutes, but one couldn't mistake brevity for slightness, despite its wisp of a narrative. A garbage collector and supermarket cashier... are brought together through circumstance and misfortune, their relationship tentatively blossoming in the face of dashed dreams and collective disappointments. Kaurismäki punctures the gloom of his muted palette with the occasional splash of primary colour, at once prefiguring the rigorous mise-en-scène that would become his stock in trade and the delicately negotiated possibility of a brighter future with which this beautiful miniature ends. – Matthew Thrift, *Sight and Sound*

Kaurismäki made two films – a cold-hearted Helsinki version of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1983) and the outrageously absurdist *Calamari Union* (1985) – before establishing his distinctive laugh-or-cry balance and semi-Socialist footing with *Shadows in Paradise*. A relatively soft-edged tragic-romance, *Shadows* unites Kaurismäki axiom Matti Pellonpää, as an implacable garbage-man, and *Match Factory's* Kati Outinen as a kohl-eyed store clerk, two inexpressive Every schmucks from modern Europe's dingiest backwater, happening onto each other and launching tentatively, inexpressively, into an affair, trying to make a life together.

"Trying" may be too strong a word – in Kaurismäki's films, part of the sad, cosmic comedy derives from the sense that the characters' options are already spent, their life energy is all but used up, and that they go through the motions of life out of habit and a residue of preposterous hope. From the word go, the film's protagonists are battling their low economic stations as desperately as any noir hero – but instead of fuming and sweating they stare, bottled up and lost in dead-end thought. In fact, Kaurismäki is as ardent a student of pulp film and nostalgic American culture as Quentin Tarantino, and his characters follow a classic film noir track. (Vestiges of America are everywhere: music, blue jeans, habitually smoked Marlboros.) It's part of Kaurismäki's brilliance that he is both devilishly ironic and stealthily earnest and poignant – every aspect of *Shadows* can be read as... a balancing act in which every scene is a mystery, a test of the perhaps negligible distance between empathy and heartlessness, between joy and misery. Here is the frontier crossing station between Robert Bresson's unemotive tribulations and Buster Keaton's stonefaced schtick.

For a noir romance, *Shadows* is neither very noirish nor terribly romantic, but a conscientiously flatfooted investigation into what those genre impulses mean to us. Deceptively simple, *Shadows* is a minor-key masterpiece, but every Kaurismäki film feels like a blessing, as he balances a rueful gallows humor with genuine sympathy for his near-catatonic people, and creates a visual sensibility so rigorous and unpatronizing that it musters metaphoric notions about the meaning of human life and about socioeconomic injustice without lifting a finger. – Michael Atkinson, *TCM.com*



Monday 08 April at 6:30 pm

Western Germany/Bulgaria 2017

Director/Screenplay: Valeska Grisebach
Producers: Maren Ade, Jonas Dornbach, Valeska Grisebach, Janine Jackowski, Michel Merkt
Production co: Komplizen Film, Chouchkov Brothers, Coop99, KNM, ZDF-Das Kleiner Fernsehspiel
Photography: Bernhard Keller
Editor: Bettina Böhler

With: Meinhard Neumann (Meinhard), Syuleyman Alilov Letifov (Adrian), Vyara Borisova (Vyara), Reinhardt Wetrek (Vincent), Veneta Frangova (Veneta), Kevin Bashev (Wanko)

121 mins, Blu-ray. M violence, sexual references & offensive language
In German, Bulgarian and English with English subtitles

One of the films of the year has arrived – maybe the best of the year – a work of unmatched subtlety, complexity and artistry. It is about tension and transgression, and yet also succeeds in evoking a pure and miraculous calm. Peter Bradshaw, *Guardian*

Like its title, *Western* is both startlingly direct and full of resonance and ambiguity. Written and directed by the gifted Valeska Grisebach, the movie follows a group of German construction workers into a remote stretch of Bulgarian countryside, near the Greek border, where they have come to build a hydroelectric power plant. The story is a faultlessly observed, broodingly intelligent piece of realism, a dispatch from a sun-baked frontier that could hardly feel more mundane or specific, but which Grisebach somehow suffuses with the beauty and power of myth.

We are a long way from Monument Valley, but the images in *Western*, shot by the cinematographer Bernhard Keller, have a rough-hewn majesty that cuts across genre and geography. You can sense Grisebach's stealth homage to the work of Hollywood masters like John Ford and Anthony Mann in her feel for magnificent, rugged landscapes, which also includes the craggily handsome face of her leading man, Meinhard Neumann.... In temperament and life experience, he stands apart from his fellow laborers, most of whom are younger and more unruly. The group's arrogant boss, Vincent (Reinhardt Wetrek), gets off on the wrong foot with the locals when he harasses a young Bulgarian woman (Vyara Borisova) swimming in a river near their camp. In another scene, he marks the construction site with a German flag, which is promptly stolen. His justification for his men's presence on foreign soil – "We're bringing infrastructure" – is more of an excuse for his own boorishness.

Meinhard, by contrast, has a gift for defusing ugly situations, which suggests he's seen his fair share of them... He begins hanging out with the villagers. He forges an especially close bond with a landowner... and even borrows [his] beautiful white horse, adding another layer of western imagery even as it pushes the story in a harrowing, unsettling direction. ...

The animus between locals and outsiders occasionally surfaces in dialogue, and more than one character alludes, with bitter irony, to the German occupation of Bulgaria during World War II. But for the most part the menace simmers just beneath the surface, and Grisebach shows a remarkable talent for drawing out and modulating tension within a scene. She is clearly fascinated by the interplay of hostilities here, by the ways in which individual resentments can intersect with a broader, cultural and historical sense of indignation... Rather than surveying her nonprofessional actors with a detached, analytical eye, Grisebach shoots them in a style both observant and intimate.

Justin Chang, *Los Angeles Times*



Monday 15 April at 6:30 pm

The Match Factory Girl Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö Finland 1990

Director/Screenplay/Editor: Aki Kaurismäki
Producers: Aki Kaurismäki, Katinka Faragó, Klas Olofsson
Production co: Villealfa Filmproductions, Swedish Film Institute
Photography: Timo Salminen

With: Kati Outinen (Iris), Elina Salo (mother), Esko Nikkari (stepfather), Vesa Vierikko (Aarne), Reijo Taipale (singer), Silu Seppälä (brother)

69 mins, Blu-ray. PG
In Finnish with English subtitles

The final part of the proletariat trilogy, *The Match Factory Girl* is Kaurismäki's shortest film and one of his very best. It also finds the director at his most stripped back. An extended opening montage of factory machinery in action plays like something from a Frederick Wiseman doc, before we're introduced to Kati Outinen's titular shrinking violet, Iris. She's stuck at home with her dismissive parents, ignored at the local dancehall and discarded by the cruel suitor who knocks her up. When she buys some rat poison, the compound grimness shows little sign of letting up. But Kaurismäki has something else up his sleeve for a last-minute bait and switch. Bleak social realism takes a turn into pitch black comedy, as Iris decides she's had enough, finally showing her stripes as Finland's answer to Lady Snowblood. – Matthew Thrift, *Sight and Sound*

The terseness or absence of dialogue, the gruff brutality of the parents, the heartlessness of the man, and the emotional nonexpressiveness of all four characters evoke the world of Bresson, especially his consecutive harsh rural fables of the 60s, *Au hasard Balthazar* and *Mouchette*. Though Kaurismäki's style is usually less radical than Bresson's (he doesn't focus on the characters' feet, for instance), his content... seems directly inspired by Bresson's, though Kaurismäki doesn't make any allowances for behavioral differences between impoverished French farmers and a well-to-do Helsinki hotshot, for instance. After Iris has suffered further callousness from her lover, finds herself pregnant, and winds up being treated even more miserably by him, her apparently deliberate miscarriage is depicted in an elliptical manner – she walks out of frame and a car screeches to a halt offscreen – that's straight out of Bresson.

For all his powers of abstraction, Bresson is obviously interested in saying something about mankind in general and rural French society in particular. By contrast, even though Kaurismäki has identified *The Match Factory Girl* as the final part of a trilogy "dedicated to the memory of Finnish reality" – a look at that country's working class, which he seems to regard as "what's left of Finnish culture".

This brings us to the literary quotation that opens *The Match Factory Girl*: "They most likely died of cold and hunger far away there in the middle of the forest," attributed to a character in Ivan Turgenev. Kaurismäki's gloss on the quotation, expressed during an interview, was "I feel that Turgenev's description applies very well to the Finnish people, who seem meant not to be noticed."

Clearly determined to be noticed, but knowing full well that Bresson's uncompromising directness would land him in trouble, Kaurismäki adopts the postmodernist irony of Fassbinder and some of the hip irony of his pal Jim Jarmusch to ease the pain. He piles more and more misery onto Iris to make the movie comic, turning it into "playful" camp melodrama, cutesy S&M. And by God it works. – Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Chicago Reader*



Tuesday 23 April at 6:30 pm

Ariel Finland 1988

Director/Producer/Screenplay: Aki Kaurismäki
Production co: Villealfa Filmproductions, Finnish Film Foundation
Photography: Timo Salminen
Editor: Raija Talvio
Music: Olavi Virta, Rauli Somerjoki, Melrose, Bill Casey, Esko Rahkonen, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Taisto Tammi, Dmitri Shostakovich

With: Turo Pajala (Taisto Kasurinen), Susanna Haavisto (Irmeli), Matti Pellonpää (Mikkonen), Eetu Hilkamo (Riku)

72 mins, Blu-ray. PG
In Finnish with English subtitles

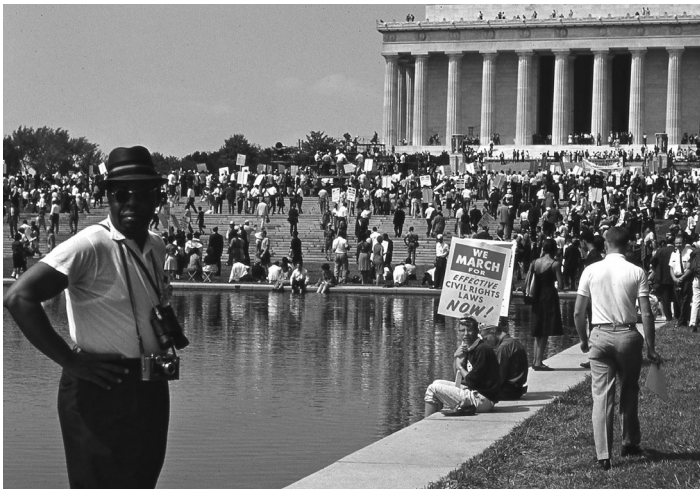
Kaurismäki has little interest in notions of love and happiness in romantic terms. More often than not, shacking up proves at best a question of convenience or survival. And so it is in *Ariel*, the second part of the proletariat trilogy, as Taisto (Turo Pajala) takes to the road in the broken-topped Cadillac gifted by his father moments before he blew his brains out. He meets traffic warden Irmeli (Susanna Haavisto), but not before being robbed of his inheritance at a roadside burger bar. Catching up with one of his muggers, he's arrested and imprisoned, hatching a plan with cellmate Matti Pellonpää to escape overseas with Irmeli and her young son. Kaurismäki takes his first turn into genre territory for *Ariel*'s last act, while retaining the pervasive existential yearning exemplified by a closing rendition of "Somewhere over the Rainbow" – sung in Finnish, natch. Matthew Thrift, *Sight and Sound*

Ingmar Bergman made a film at the dawn of his career named *It Rains on My Future*, and I thought of that title while I was watching *Ariel*. This is the new film by Aki Kaurismäki, the director from Finland whose work has been inspiring articles in film magazines calling him the best young director from Europe. I went expecting to see the new Fassbinder or Herzog or Almodovar, and what surprised me was how traditional the film is; it's a despairing film noir with a "happy" ending that taunts us with its irony.

One of the special qualities of the movie is the physical clumsiness of most of the characters. They move like real people, not like the smoothly choreographed athletes we see on TV and in American movies. When the hero runs, he looks like he's not accustomed to running. When cops race up to nab somebody, they run flat-footed, and grab him in an awkward and uncoordinated tussle.

A similar clumsiness adds conviction to the action. Events occur in a stark and naive way. A bank robbery ends with money being dropped all over the sidewalk. Conversations are blunt. Motives are simple. The movie's lack of physical and social finesse is a positive quality; it makes the characters seem touchingly real. Watching their clumsiness, I became aware of how actions sometimes don't seem spontaneous in Hollywood films. Nobody ever seems to be performing an action for the first time, and the moves all seem practiced and familiar.

Ariel is the first film of Kaurismäki's I've seen, and on the basis of it I want to see more. He has a particular vision. It isn't the vision of a flashy stylist with fashionable new attitudes, but the vision of a man who has found a filmmaking rhythm that suits his own bruised sensibility. *Ariel* speaks for the dispossessed with a special conviction because it isn't even angry. It's too tired to be angry. It's resigned. The more you think about it, the last scene, the "happy" ending, may be the only really angry scene in the movie. – Roger Ebert, *RogerEbert.com*



Monday 29 April at 6:30 pm

I Am Not Your Negro

France/USA 2016

Director: Raoul Peck
Producers: Rémi Grellety, Raoul Peck, Hébert Peck
Production co: Velvet Film
Writer: Raoul Peck, James Baldwin
Photography: Henry Adebounjo, Bill Ross, Turner Ross
Editor: Alexandra Strauss
Music: Alexei Aigui
Narrator: Samuel L Jackson

93 mins, Blu-ray. M violence & offensive language

Perhaps the most dramatic exhumation of the festival comes in Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro*, an essay film built around the unfinished thirty pages of James Baldwin's final work, in which the writer recalled the lives of his assassinated friends Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. Through archival footage and whispered narration by Samuel L Jackson, Peck reimagines Baldwin's incomplete text, which itself conjures these three men and uses those reminiscences to delve into the history (and future) of race in America. The director doesn't limit his visuals to the period Baldwin is discussing; he includes contemporary footage of Black Lives Matter protests, of Barack Obama's election, and of ordinary modern people, defiant and alive. The film eventually becomes an act of provocation, and of prophecy.

Bilge Ebiri, *The Village Voice*

Because Peck only gives us fragments of these arguments, boiling them down to somewhat decontextualized insights, the viewer is left to piece them together to create an overall intellectual and philosophical outlook. And because they are not compartmentalized into thematic sections, his critiques are allowed to form a surprising dialogue – to “bang against and reveal each other”. For example, the first section of the film, titled Paying My Dues, collapses past and present as it zig-zags from color footage of outraged whites protesting de-segregation to a montage of racist advertising illustrations and photos featuring grinning butlers and mammies to contemporary shots of Times Square accompanied by Baldwin's reminiscence about his ambivalent return from Paris and right on to his childhood memories of imbibing the monstrous beauty of Joan Crawford in *Dance, Fools, Dance*. All of the film's sections function this way, as though coursing through Baldwin's head; the result is an unorthodox psychological portrait, a way of getting to know someone without having to account for an entire life, and a utilization of cinematic devices to broaden what might have been a purely text-driven experience.

Michael Koresky, *Reverse Shot*

I Am Not Your Negro is not a typical documentary, and it's often uncomfortable to watch. What makes it so compelling is that Peck is able to get at the core of what James Baldwin's life's work was. By removing the talking heads and the conventional linear narrative that we see so often in non-fiction work, Peck forces the audience to feel or at least acknowledge what we've always felt. In my adult life, I have often felt isolated. My first few years in New York City, I felt invisible as though I was always screaming at the top of my lungs while strangers stared at me; their faces fixed apathetically on my wounded one. It's comforting somehow to know that James Baldwin may have felt the same way. After all, as I'm learning, and what Baldwin so eloquently states, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” It also leaves viewers with a very clear message; that today is yesterday.

Aramide A Tinubu, *Shadow and Act*



Monday 06 May at 6:30 pm

Daisies

Czechoslovakia 1966

Director: Věra Chytilová
Production co: Filmové studio Barrandov
Screenplay: Věra Chytilová, Ester Krumbachová, Pavel Juráček
Photography: Jaroslav Kucera
Editor: Miroslav Hájek
Music: Jiří Šust, Jiří Slitr

With: Jitka Cerhová (Marie I), Ivana Karbanová (Marie II), Julius Albert (elderly gentleman), Jan Klusák (young gentleman), Marie Češková, Jiřina Myšková (women in toilet)

74 mins, DCP. M
In Czech with English subtitles

There's something about banned movies that makes you want to run out and see for yourself what the fuss has been about. In the case of *Daisies*, modern audiences who come to see this late-'60s gem will be rewarded with a wicked sex farce and daring surrealist cinematography. – Ela Bittencourt, *Slant*

Marie I and Marie II, the unholy-fool heroines of Věra Chytilová's anarchic Czech New Wave 1966 classic, *Daisies*, have insatiable appetites: not just for pickles, sausages, bananas, and other suggestively shaped food, but for mayhem in general. Similarly, *Daisies*, a dada, gaga series of high jinks, oral fixations, and aggressive regression, devours the borders between sense and nonsense. Matching the lunacy of her characters, the formal elements of Chytilová's movie also suggest liberating disorder. A riot of technical tricks, *Daisies* shifts between color, black-and-white, and tinted images and includes a scene in which the two Maries, wielding scissors, essentially turn themselves into paper dolls.

Chytilová's second feature, *Daisies* was originally planned as a send-up of bourgeois decadence; the director herself referred to it as “a necrologue about a negative way of life”. Yet, too freewheeling and unclassifiable, the film, which Chytilová co-wrote with Ester Krumbachová, goesos anyone hung up on rules: *Daisies* is dedicated “to those who get upset only over a stomped-upon bed of lettuce”.

Born in 1929 and the only female enrolled at the prestigious Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in 1957, Chytilová devilishly flouts one of cinema's most sacrosanct tenets: creating sympathetic characters. “We're supposed to be spoiled, aren't we?” Marie I (Jitka Cerhová), distinguished by her ponytails and Bardot-ish moue, says to Marie II (Ivana Karbanová), who often wears a crown of the titular flowers atop her strawberry blond bowl cut. The two actresses, both nonprofessionals – Cerhová was a student and Karbanová a salesclerk at the time; both would appear in a handful of films afterward – erupt in Woody Woodpecker-like laughs, their maniacal giggles belying the stealth radicals they're portraying...

Czech censors weren't amused and banned *Daisies* for “food wastage.” After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Chytilová, who unlike compatriot Milos Forman, refused to relocate to the West, was prohibited from making films until the mid '70s... *Daisies* has been praised as a feminist triumph – a claim that the director has been loath to embrace. In a tetchy interview with *The Guardian* in 2000, Chytilová stressed that she preferred “individualism” to “feminism”. “If there's something you don't like, don't keep to the rules – break them. I'm an enemy of stupidity and simplemindedness in both men and women, and I have rid my living space of these traits.” The pretty nitwits at the center of her most famous film bear out her philosophy.

Melissa Anderson, *Village Voice*



Monday 13 May at 6:30pm

The Forest for the Trees Der Wald vor lauter Bäumen Germany 2003

Director/Screenplay: Maren Ade
Producer: Janine Jackowski
Production co: Komplizen Film, KaufmanWöbke
Photography: Nikolai von Graevenitz
Editor: Heike Parplies
Music: Ina Siefert, Nellis Du Biel

With: Eva Löbau (Melanie Pröschle), Daniela Holtz (Tina Schaffner), Jan Neumann (Thorsten Rehm), Ilona Christina Schulz (Frau Sussmann), Robert Schupp (Toby)

81 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc
In German with English subtitles

Maren Ade's fantastic debut feature, winner of a Special Jury Prize at Sundance, is a compactly-crafted, disarmingly-honest account of an idealistic young teacher drifting comically out of her professional and personal depths. That it was Ade's thesis project as a student at the Munich Academy for Film and Television – completed when she was just 26 – makes its maturity and directorial aplomb all the more impressive. Melanie (played with cringe-worthy perfection by Eva Löbau) is a mousey twentysomething hoping for a fresh start in southwest Germany after being offered a teaching post mid-year. She begins to unravel when her progressive but undisciplined teaching style fails, her colleagues ostracize her, and her disastrous misreadings of a trendy neighbour's social cues jeopardize a desperately sought-after female friendship. Shot on digital video in Ade's hometown of Karlsruhe (where both her parents work as teachers), the film has a lo-fi, home-movie quality that adds to its intimacy, unease, and unexpectedly sublime denouement. – *The Cinematheque*

An outstanding Löbau plays Melanie as a social incompetent, her sterile modern apartment symbolic of her vacuous existence. She begins living life vicariously through new best friend Tina (Daniela Holtz) but with one accidental encounter too many, Melanie strays into borderline stalker territory. At the same time, she ignores advances from fellow teacher Thorsten (Jan Neumann), the one person who actually wants to stop her dissolving into a neurotic mess.

Ade's own script is sharp enough to ensure that nothing is wasted, oozing with that sick pit-of-the-stomach feeling that comes with being truly out of your depth and builds towards an enigmatic conclusion rich in pathos. For a first film, it's accomplished; for a college project, it's astonishing. – Jamie Woolley, *BBC*

Tapping in to primal fears of professional ineptitude and social rejection with an almost sadistic meticulousness, *The Forest for the Trees* is a precisely modulated first film... equally adept at sidestepping genre expectations and creating an atmosphere of oddly bracing bleakness. – Eddie Cockrell, *Variety*

Watching her misread the world, lose control of her life and descend into total demoralisation is a painful business. But her ordeal is observed with honest compassion and a total lack of sentimentality, and the director and her star make you care for Melanie the way Flaubert makes us care for Emma Bovary. Philip French, *Guardian*

Disturbingly frank, compassionate... *Forest* is an affecting, very intelligent work, done with an eye for realism and a heart for the lonely, insulted and injured. Michael Wilmington, *Chicago Tribune*



Monday 20 May at 6:30pm

My 20th Century Az én XX századom Hungary/West Germany 1989

Director/Screenplay: Ildikó Enyedi
Producer: Gábor Hanák
Production co: Budapest Stúdió Vállalat, Freihandler Filmproduktion GmbH
Photography: Tibor Máthé
Editor: Mária Rigó
Music: László Vidovszky

With: Dorothea Segda (Dóra/Lili), Oleg Jankovsky (Z), Paulus Manker (Ottó Weininger), Péter Andorai (Thomas Edison), Gábor Máté (K)

104 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc
In Hungarian with English subtitles

Hungarian film-maker Ildikó Enyedi won the Golden Bear at Berlin in 2017 with *On Body and Soul*, and now audiences get to see her debut feature, which was an award-winner at Cannes 30 years ago. *My 20th Century* is a jeu d'esprit, a whimsical erotic fantasia of central Europe, a millennial meditation on modernity, all in black-and-white and infused with the spirit of early cinema, with distinct touches of Buster Keaton and a playful attitude to sex, comparable to Milan Kundera.

Polish actor Dorota Segda plays two twins, Dora and Lili, reunited by fate in the year 1900. Dora is now what is quaintly called an adventuress, scamming besotted rich men out of their money. Lili is a passionate idealist, feminist and anarchist who is preparing to assassinate a politician in Budapest. It is a weird, surreal farce and a parable for... what? Are Dora and Lili emblems of capitalism and communism, the two great intertwined creeds of the 20th century? Perhaps. – Peter Bradshaw, *Guardian*

Enyedi was born in 1955 and has forged a thoroughly independent career. She studied philosophy at university, but quit because she considered the course to be badly taught. Then she went to the Budapest Film Academy and managed to complete the course, despite considering leaving because she felt that "some of those in power were lazy thinkers". She became a visual artist and joined the Bela Belazs studio in Budapest 1979 – this is the place that produced works by such Hungarian notables as Béla Tarr.

My 20th Century's a true beauty too, masterfully edited by Mária Rigó and unforgettably photographed by Tibor Máthé. The opening scenes almost invite us to gaze in awe at the quality of crisp white light and velvet darkness in the film – there's no reason that you should stop gazing as it continues.

It is a cinephile film that plunders the silent era for tropes and imagery, entwining history with the history of cinema itself. Silent cinema buffs will enjoy that Enyedi's film incorporates many aspects of early film style, from its square aspect ratio and high-contrast black-and-white cinematography, to props such as black spherical bombs with a fizzing wick. Elsewhere, the medium of film itself is rendered surreal as films are rear-projected into frames on a gallery wall, or a laboratory dog takes part in an experiment that recalls *A Clockwork Orange*.

The cinema is just one of the 20th-century ideas that illuminate this film – from politics through to science, technology and transport. Enyedi's film has the capacity to make ideas and inventions that are now familiar seem new again, to imbue them with the sense of wonder and magic that they once held. This fascinating film is a fiction, a kind of fairytale filled with coincidences, chance encounters, biblical references and many, many animals, but at the same time it is also a magic-realist, feminist history of a century of change, innovation and also terrible atrocities. – Pamela Hutchinson, *Silent London*



Monday 27 May at 6:30 pm

In this Corner of the World Kono sekai no katasumi ni Japan 2016

Director: Sunao Katabuchi
Producers: Masao Maruyama
Production co: Genco, Mappa
Screenplay: Sunao Katabuchi, based on the manga by Fumiyo Kono
Photography: Yuya Kawazawa
Editor: Kashiko Kimura
Music: Kotringo

Voices: Non, Yoshimasa Hosoya, Minori Omi, Natsuki Inaba, Mayumi Shintani, Shigeru Ushiyama, Daisuke Ono, Megumi Han

129 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes
In Japanese with English subtitles

It's with a leisurely air that *In This Corner of the World* unravels its coming-of-age tale, yet the relaxed pace, sweet sentiments and gorgeous visuals expected of Japanese animated fare prove somewhat deceptive. It is exactly what a tender yet tragic Second World War-set effort should be, especially one that sweepingly traces a young woman's determined journey to adulthood as uncertainty and worse looms over Japan. As Katabuchi lovingly helms the second screen adaptation of Fumiyo Kono's manga, his Studio Ghibli pedigree – as an assistant director on *Kiki's Delivery Service* – is evident.

With protagonist Suzu Urano first spied as a child, filling in for her ill older brother on the family's seaweed delivery route, the film's hardy, can-do attitude is evident from the outset. Time passes, and soon 1933 becomes 1943, with text on screen marking the changing months and years. Now 19 years old, aspiring artist Suzu harbours a secret crush on seemingly disinterested neighbourhood bully Tetsu; and yet, when a marriage proposal comes her way, it's actually from a stranger. Agreeing to wed naval clerk Shūsaku Hōjō means relocating to Kure on the other side of Hiroshima, living with his family, and starting life anew. Her days are filled with intensive housework, stolen moments as a bond slowly forms with her kindly husband, curt words from his sister, and the many changes the war brings – and then the bombings start. – S Ward, *Screen Daily*

Slyly and artfully, Katabuchi packs his narrative with incident and revelation. Epiphanies keep popping out from this director's meticulous portraiture, his acute observations of habits and gestures. This generous *mélange* of domestic drama and Bildungsroman never devolves into a sob story, and Suzu never registers as a soap-opera heroine, bearing up nobly under multiple calamities, which include a devastating physical injury.

Katabuchi prizes suppleness, responsiveness, and flexibility, in his characters, his drawings, and his storytelling. He establishes a psychological intimacy with Suzu so instinctive that we can read her signals in an instant. Visually, the movie goes beyond prewar nostalgia. With a lived-in realism, it takes a vital, tactile, observant view of the past. As a child, Suzu wades through the mud of the seabed at spring tide; as a young wife, she wanders lost through the courtesan district of Kure. Katabuchi intersperses this naturalistic tapestry with splashes of volatile lyricism. In the eyes of Suzu the artist, anti-aircraft blasts become Van Gogh-like starbursts. In the psyche of Suzu the bomb victim, the world goes black, and people register as chalky stick figures.

Katabuchi withholds any scenes of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, until the end. Then he delivers an intense vignette of a little girl clinging to her dead mother until she's driven away by flies. That child enters into Suzu and Shusaku's life as they determine to rebuild it. – Michael Sagrow, *Film Comment*



Tuesday 04 June at 6:30 pm

My Man Godfrey USA 1936

Director: Gregory La Cava
Production co: Universal Pictures
Screenplay: Morrie Ryskind, Eric Hatch, based on the novel by Hatch
Photography: Ted Tetzlaff
Editors: Ted Kent, Russell J Schoengarth
Music: Charles Previn

With: William Powell (Godfrey), Carole Lombard (Irene Bullock), Alice Brady (Angelica Bullock), Gail Patrick (Cornelia Bullock), Jean Dixon (Molly), Eugene Pallette (Alexander Bullock)

94 mins, Blu-ray. PG

So long as we live in a world of vulgar inequalities, *My Man Godfrey* will have relevance. The story of a mysterious butler who carbonates a household of madcap swells is ageless, and we marvel that such a piquant piece of film can be over 80 years old. *Godfrey* is foremost a screwball comedy, albeit one with considerable tang. As a Depression-era product, it has plenty to say about responsibility in hard times, but it maintains a light touch throughout. Director Gregory La Cava achieves this through repeated crossings of class lines. Rich and dizzy Irene Bullock (Carole Lombard) dares to cross the divide by her active adoration of “forgotten man” Godfrey (William Powell). Irene and maid Molly (played by brittle wisecracker Jean Dixon) commiserate over Godfrey and further break down barriers of the working and idling classes. Repeatedly, La Cava and company serve up the rich as silly, frivolous, childlike, and trivial, while the poor are strong, dignified, generous, and compassionate. Miraculously, he gives us these elemental distinctions without the torpor of penny-ante philosophizing or the goo of Capraesque speechifying. – Matthew Kennedy, *Bright Lights Film Journal*

Godfrey doesn't merely use Lombard and Powell, it loves them. She plays Irene, a petulant kid who wants what she wants when she wants it. His Godfrey employs an attentive posture and a deep, precise voice that bespeaks an exact measurement of the situation he finds himself in. These two actors embody personal style in a way that is (to use a cliché that I mean sincerely) effortlessly magical. How can such reserve suggest such depths of feeling? And Lombard has a dreamy, ditty breathlessness that shows her sweetly yearning after this man who fascinated her even when she thought he really was a bum.

The cinematography by Ted Tetzlaff is a shimmering argument for everything I've ever tried to say in praise of black and white. Everything that can shine, glimmers: the marble floors, the silver, the mirrors, the crystal, the satin sheen of the gowns. There is a tactile feel to the furs and feathers of the women's costumes, and the fabric patterns by designer Louise Brymer use bold splashes and zigs and zags of blacks and whites to arrest our attention. These tones and textures are set off with one of those 1930s apartments intended to look like a movie set, all poised for entrances and exits.

A couple of reviewers on the Web complain that the plot is implausible. What are we going to do with these people? OK, it's all implausible. That's what I'm here for. By pretending the implausible is possible, screwball comedy acts like a tonic. Nothing is impossible if you cut through the difficulties with an instrument like Powell's knife-edged delivery. The movie also benefits from the range of sharply defined characters, and the actors to play them. Even the biggest stars in those days were surrounded by other actors in substantial roles that provided them with counterpoint, with context, with emotional tennis partners. – Roger Ebert, *RogerEbert.com*



Monday 10 June at 6:30 pm

Cameraperson

USA 2016

Director/Photography: Kirsten Johnson
Producers: Kirsten Johnson, Marilyn Ness
Production co: Big Mouth Productions, Fork Films
Editor: Nels Bangerter
Music: Wellington Bowler, Carla Kihlstedt, Dino Rešidbegović

102 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language

To be a documentary cameraperson often demands an occupational commitment to mute invisibility. In the face of documentary film's illusory immediacy, we would do well to remember the camerapeople who work to bring images back to us. A cameraperson is placed at the nexus of intimate, precarious, and often dangerous relationships between places and bodies. Far from invisible, she must be almost freakishly hyperpresent – both vulnerable to the moment and able to manipulate it as it unfolds, amenable to the strangest and most unpleasant of circumstances, all while framing images that have the potential to delight and instruct. She must be self-aware and able to transcend the confines of self-consciousness at the same time.

Johnson has built a career extracting footage from the thorniest of material. Her credits include two of the most successful and controversial documentaries of the past few decades: the highest-grossing documentary of all time, Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and Laura Poitras's *Citizenfour*. Despite these successes, Johnson's efforts had received little mention, her presence deliberately effaced within her body of work. In *Cameraperson*, Johnson is intensely present, as she is the chief object of inquiry. Her second feature-length solo directorial effort, the film delves into 25 years of past footage, shot mostly as a cinematographer for other directors, to stitch together a cinematic self-portrait. Johnson's extraordinary and poetic film accomplishes for documentary cinematography what Christian Frei's *War Photographer* did for photojournalism, illuminating the complex ethical, philosophical, and political stakes behind a craft that remains mostly concealed from the lay consumer of images.

Lauren Du Graf, *Los Angeles Review of Books*

The film has no narrative, no thesis to prove, and no obvious throughline, simply minutes of footage that change in location, subject, visual composition and tone, over and over again. There are lawyers, midwives, grandmothers, children, boxers, and animals. There are locations like New York, Foča, Bosnia, Sana'a, Yemen, Pennsylvania, Zalenge, Darfur, and Kabul, Afghanistan. There are conversations about rape, abortion, PTSD, and watermelons. The combination of repetition and juxtaposition slowly begins to create a series of thematic connections: life, death, the struggles of women, the anger of men. These are palpable, resonating feelings that, despite the geographical and cultural differences between subjects, all feel interconnected.

Tina Hassannia, *RogerEbert.com*

Johnson's footage is rarely beautiful; this is no sizzle reel of magic-hour lens flare or startling symmetries. Rather, Johnson has opted for moments in which her camera jiggles, fails and bumps into things. Behind it, we hear her sneeze, gasp, curse and cry – and frequently just not know what to do next. To behave, in other words, not as an impartial, impassive human camera, nor as an artist constantly fired by divine inspiration, but as a working person and emotional being. *Cameraperson* reminds us that the fluidity and cohesion of a film is as illusory in documentary as in fiction filmmaking – not the reproduction of a complete, naturally occurring and "true" narrative, but the product of a long chain of choices, biases, compromises and chance occurrences.

Hannah McGill, *Sight and Sound*



Monday 17 June at 6:30 pm

A German Youth

Une jeunesse allemande – Eine deutsche Jugend
France/Switzerland/Germany 2015

Director/Writer/Editor: Jean-Gabriel Périot
Producer: Nicolas Brevière
Production co: Local Films, Alina Film, Blinker Filmproduktion, RBB
Music: Alan Mumenthaler

93 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc
In German, French and English with English subtitles

Exploring the rise and fall of the Baader-Meinhof Group (aka the Red Army Faction) through student movies, protest films, news broadcasts and other audio-visual records of the epoch, this densely layered documentary reveals how members of a disillusioned post-war generation... transformed into left-wing militants whose actions would have deadly consequences for all involved.

Covering the decade stretching from 1965 to 1975 – a period that saw leftist movements sprout up in the US (the Vietnam War protests), France (May '68), Italy (The Red Brigades) and elsewhere – Périot begins by providing context for what would happen in Germany, where children born before or during WWII were raised by authority figures they could no longer trust. "Parents have lost their credibility due to their identification with Nazism," claims the highly articulate Ulrike Marie Meinhof, who worked as a journalist for a left-wing magazine, and also directed a few short films, before co-founding the RAF along with artists-turned-radicals Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, and the lawyer Horst Mahler.

At the same time that West Germans took to the streets, the Berlin-based DFFB film school was founded, and some of its pupils quickly joined the fight. Among them were Holger Meins, whose various short movies – artful pieces of left-wing agitprop – are intercut with coverage of events that gave rise to the student-led revolution, including the killing of Benno Ohnesorg by riot police and the shooting of Marxist agitator Rudi Dutschke by the anti-communist Josef Bachmann. These two incidents, along with growing protests against news magnate Axel Springer (a sort of German Rupert Murdoch of the time) would inspire the Baader-Meinhof Gang to take action in 1970.

With no commentary beyond audio clips and visuals composed almost entirely of historical footage, Périot uses the radicals' own images and words to show how their discourse evolved over 10 years from progressive to militant, with the RAF carrying out several bombings in the early 70s before they were hunted down and then arrested or killed. (Ulrike Meinhof committed suicide in jail under mysterious circumstances.) Périot also reveals how certain filmmakers of the era – including Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni and RW Fassbinder – found themselves mixed up in the movement... Essential for anyone interested in cinema and politics – Jordan Mintzer, *Hollywood Reporter*

Périot has always probed society's wounds, questioning events – Hiroshima, the G8 summits, even coming out – by forcing viewers to confront common perceptions, sources of information, and the ways official reports are designed to prop up the powers that be. In *A German Youth*, he refuses to romanticize the actions of the Red Army Faction (RAF) yet similarly offers no condemnation, demanding that [we] consider the political and social atmosphere of the period. Utilizing news footage, TV programs, crude activist films and the like, Périot (always his own editor) builds his arguments almost invisibly, guiding the viewer while trusting his audience to use their heads. How refreshing to have a director refuse black-and-white conclusions, knowing that formulating questions is the best way to probe the past and its ramifications.

Jay Weissberg, *Variety*



Monday 24 June at 6:30 pm

The Virgin Suicides

USA 1999

Director: Sofia Coppola
Producers: Francis Ford Coppola, Julie Costanzo, Dan Halstad, Chris Hanley
Production co: American Zoetrope, Muse Productions, Eternity Pictures
Screenplay: Sofia Coppola. Based on the novel by Jeffrey Eugenides
Photography: Ed Lachman
Editor: Melissa Kent, James Lyons
Music: Air

With: James Woods (Mr Lisbon), Kathleen Turner (Mrs Lisbon), Kirsten Dunst (Lux Lisbon), Josh Hartnett (Trip Fontaine), Michael Paré (adult Trip Fontaine), Danny DeVito (Dr Horniker), Giovanni Ribisi (narrator), AJ Cook (Mary Lisbon), Hanna Hall (Cecilia Lisbon), Leslie Hayman (Therese Lisbon), Chelse Swain (Bonnie Lisbon)

97 mins, Blu-ray. R16 sexual themes & content that may disturb

Some films succeed by creating exciting, exotic worlds that filmgoers could never visit. Others introduce audiences to characters they will never forget. Then there are those rare movies that entrance us by the emotional tone they capture and sustain. This is the rarefied air in which *The Virgin Suicides* makes its considerable impact. This dreamy tone-poem to the longing and frustration of adolescence doesn't unfold as much as materialize, and it hovers in the imagination long after the lights have gone up. From the outset, it's clear that all may not be right with the Lisbon sisters. When a psychiatrist tells Cecilia that she's too young to know how bad life can be, she levels him with an even gaze. "Obviously, doctor, you've never been a 13-year-old girl."

Anne Hornaday, *Baltimore Sun*

Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *The Virgin Suicides*, set in 1970s suburbia, is a creamy, moonbeam-laden love letter to the girls of the day, in their French-cut T-shirts, bell-bottoms and Love's Baby Soft. It's a tender and beautifully written book, one that makes the case once and for all that boys can be a sentimental and perceptive lot, but there's one big problem with it: It's so obsessively detailed that by the end it's almost unreadable. The book's narrators are a group of boys who've grown into men, but who can't leave their memories of five neighborhood girls, the Lisbon sisters, behind them. If all boys had as many exposed nerve endings as they seem to, we'd live in a world with no skyscrapers and no bridges.

Leave it to a woman to boil all the excess, leaden moisture out of Eugenides' book and leave just the bare-bones poetry. Sofia Coppola's adaptation of *The Virgin Suicides* – it's her directorial debut, and she also adapted the screenplay – captures the loveliest visuals and bits of language from Eugenides' book and faithfully, but not slavishly, transfers them to the screen. There's no irony in Coppola's treatment. She connects with the essential purity of Eugenides' story, stripping it down to its bare essentials and cutting straight to everything that's wonderful about it. It's a movie adaptation that's filled with love. The picture has a feminine sensibility in terms of its dreamy languor, the pearlescent glow that hovers around it like a nimbus. (It's beautifully shot by Edward Lachman and features a willowy score by Air.) But there's also a clear-eyed precision at work here, almost as if Coppola subconsciously wanted to make sure she captured Eugenides' vision, while also giving a sense of the Lisbon sisters as real live girls.

The real charm of *The Virgin Suicides* lies in the details, in the way it evokes both the era and the peculiar romantic fixations of awkward teenage boys. Coppola's suburbia is partly a half-remembered dream state and partly an optimistic interior decorator's sketch, a conglomeration of how people lived and how they desperately wanted to live. Coppola's just as good, though, at showing what happens when that idealized world goes off-kilter. – Stephanie Zacharek, *Salon*



Monday 01 July at 6:30 pm

The Legend of Rita

Die Stille nach dem Schuß

Germany 2000

Director: Volker Schlöndorff
Producers: Friedrich-Carl Wachs, Arthur Hofer, Emmo Lempert
Production co: Babelsberg Film, MDF, MDR
Screenplay: Wolfgang Kohlhaase, Volker Schlöndorff
Photography: Andreas Höfer
Editor: Peter Przygodda

With: Bibiana Beglau (Rita Vogt), Martin Wuttke (Erwin Hull), Nadja Uhl (Tatjana), Harald Schrott (Andi), Alexander Beyer (Jochen), Jenny Schily (Friederike), Mario Irrek (Klatte)

103 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc
In German, French and English with English subtitles

The Legend of Rita, directed by the gifted German Volker Schlöndorff (*The Tin Drum*) stars Bibiana Beglau as Rita, a West German who belongs to a left-wing terrorist group in the 1970s. The group robs banks, kills people and inspires a dragnet after a jailbreak. The movie doesn't make it easy for us: Rita is not an innocent bystander and kills a policeman herself. But this isn't a simplistic parable about her guilt or motivation; it's about the collapse of belief during the last decade of the Cold War. Schlöndorff believes his audience may be grown up enough to accept a story about a woman who is not a heroine. Imagine that. Roger Ebert, *RogerEbert.com*

First seen robbing a bank in West Germany, Rita's later hauled in for questioning when traveling through East Berlin from Beirut. The Stasi officer, Erwin (Martin Wuttke), lets her go after making it clear he's there to help if she ever needs him. Following the bungled attempted breakout from a West Berlin jail by Andi (Harald Schrott), Rita's [boy friend], and the group's leader, Rita calls on Erwin to make good on his offer, and the fractious gang is spirited away first to Beirut ("where we witnessed a just cause turn into a murderous war") and sometime later to Paris. Tensions within the group – especially Andi's affair with another woman (Franca Kastein) – start to test their solidarity, and Rita narrowly escapes arrest after shooting a French cop who's chased her for a traffic violation.

Erwin comes to their aid again, but this time with a different offer: They are to stay in East Germany and live a normal, "proletarian" life under assumed identities ("legends" in Stasi-speak), completely apart from one another. Some refuse and take their chances back in the West; Rita accepts.

The main dish of the story... pulls the curtains back on a world little explored by Western cinema – everyday life in East Germany, portrayed sans bias and the customary clichés. Adopting the persona Susanne Schmidt but still fired by her political ideals, Rita discovers a world far from her imaginings, one of ordinary Germans who've adapted to the regime under which they live, in some ways respect its peace and order and (when Rita's cover is blown) certainly don't want a West German terrorist in their neighborhood.

Pic's even-handedness – neither anti-East nor pro-West – is its most striking element. Co-scripter Wolfgang Kohlhaase, a veteran screenwriter at East Berlin's DEFA Studio (where his output included the fine 1980 contempo drama *Solo Sunny*), has come up with a convincing portrait of everyday life behind the Iron Curtain, of people with their own lives and goals rather than the usual Western portrait of poverty-stricken, oppressed folks with only escape on their minds. Derek Elley, *Variety*

... a powerful document, an attempt to reckon with a recent history too easily airbrushed by triumphalism and complacency. – AO Scott, *New York Times*



Monday 08 July at 6:30 pm

Last Year at Marienbad L'année dernière à Marienbad France/Italy 1961

Director: Alain Resnais
Producers: Pierre Courau, Raymond Froment
Production co: Terra Film, Société Nouvelle des Films Cormoran, Precitel, Como-Film, Argos-Films, Les Films Tamara, Cinétel, Silver Films, Cineriz
Screenplay: Alain Robbe-Grillet
Photography: Sacha Vierny
Editors: Jasmine Chasney, Henri Colpi
Music: Francis Seyrig

With: Delphine Seyrig (A), Giorgio Albertazzi (X), Sacha Pitoëff (M)

94 mins, DCP. PG

Back in the day, literal-minded audiences had great fun pretending to be baffled by this artist of European art films. Basically, *Last Year at Marienbad* – which Alain Resnais directed from an original screenplay by “new novelist” Alain Robbe-Grillet – is a situation. The politely avid X (Giorgio Albertazzi) pursues the mysteriously diffident A (Delphine Seyrig) through a huge, mirror-encrusted château, complete with formal garden – “a universe,” as Robbe-Grillet described it, “of marble and stucco, columns, moldings, gilded ceilings, statues, motionless servants”. Gloomy organ music underscores the proceedings as X insists against A’s protestations that a year ago she’d promised to leave her husband M (the cadaverous Sacha Pitoëff) and go off with him. The tension is never resolved: Is X casting a spell or breaking one? One thing is certain: Breathtaking in her slouch, the irresistible Seyrig – whose only previous film appearance had been as the put-upon beatnik wife in the entirely different art-house hit *Pull My Daisy* – transforms the noun “arabesque” into a verb. ... This languid, elaborately coiffed and bejeweled creature – her beyond-Dietrich outfits designed by an uncredited Coco Chanel – embodies obsession. Is she married to Death, who never loses the version of pickup sticks that would thereafter be known as the “Marienbad game”? Or is it Death who woos her? In either case, the spectator is similarly obliged to surrender to the movie’s incantatory rhythms and sublimely maddening mannerisms.

Hopelessly retro, eternally avant-garde, and one of the most influential movies ever made (as well as one of the most reviled), *Marienbad* is both utterly lucid and provocatively opaque – an elaborate joke on the world’s corniest pickup line and a drama of erotic fixation that takes *Vertigo* to the next level of abstraction. It’s a movie of alarming stasis – elegant zombies positioned like chess pieces in a hyper-civilized haunted house – and unsurpassed fluidity. The hypnotic dollies elaborate on those of Resnais’s earlier *Hiroshima Mon Amour*; the montage effortlessly synthesizes past and present, flashback and flash-forward, svelte shock cuts and shock match cuts. *Marienbad* eludes tense. The movie is what it is – a sustained mood, an empty allegory, a choreographed moment outside of time, a shocking intimation of perfection.

J Hoberman, *Village Voice*

About 11 minutes into the film, Alfred Hitchcock (or an elaborate full-sized cutout) makes one of his trademark cameo appearances, perhaps the only one not in his own film. It’s easy to miss in the midst of all those mannequin-like patrons. Whatever else it may or may not be, *Last Year at Marienbad* is a mystery thriller, bearing more than a few trappings of the horror genre. No coincidence, then, that one of the films most indebted to *Last Year at Marienbad*, Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*, borrows liberally at stylistic and thematic levels, engaging in similar-seeming Steadicam shots tracking ceaselessly along the Overlook’s pattern-carpeted hallways, and putting forward the uncanny suggestion that its terrible events have all happened before and likely will happen again, forever and ever and ever. – Budd Wilkins, *Slant Magazine*



Monday 15 July at 6:00 pm

Early start: long run time

Brazil UK/USA 1985

Director: Terry Gilliam
Producer: Arnon Milchan
Production co: Embassy International
Screenplay: Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, Charles McKeown
Photography: Roger Pratt
Editor: Julian Doyle
Music: Michael Kamen

With: Jonathan Pryce (Sam Lowry), Robert De Niro (Harry Tuttle), Katherine Helmond (Mrs Ida Lowry), Ian Holm (Mr Kurtzmann), Bob Hoskins (Spoor), Michael Palin (Jack Lint), Ian Richardson (Mr Warren), Peter Vaughan (Mr Helpmann), Kim Griest (Jill Layton), Jim Broadbent (Dr Jaffe), Barbara Hicks (Mrs Terrain)

142 mins, Blu-ray. M violence

Former Python Terry Gilliam is nothing if not a grim fantasist – a wild-eyed dreamer who deeply distrusts systems and offers underdog protagonists a way to navigate them, even when escape seems impossible. This is most apparent in his 1985 dystopian classic *Brazil*, certainly one of the most fascinating and compelling depictions of Orwellian-esque sci-fascism ever put to screen. Three decades after its release, *Brazil* is perhaps his most masterful example of this thesis and a film that deserves to be remembered for decades to come. The cold, bureaucratic nightmare of *Brazil*’s unnamed dystopian metropolis would have made Kafka proud. The world shows all the hallmarks of your classic dystopia: an endless sea of gray skyscrapers overseen by autocratic government agencies with scary names like Information Retrieval and the Department of Records; beaten-down office drones dealing with cumbersome technology somewhere between a typewriter and a Commodore 64; and tiny bullet-shaped cars that confine as much as transport. Gilliam’s stifling Expressionism hammers home a world overly obsessed with the convenience of technology to the point where agency is handed over to it.

Pushing back against this foggy wasteland of forms and figures is *Brazil*’s compellingly hapless protagonist: the bookish Sam Lowry, played with impeccable versatility and comic wit by Jonathan Pryce. In a world that keeps its head down and obediently does its work, Sam is a dreamer – when we first see him, he imagines himself a glorious, angelic knight, soaring above clouds that pollution will no longer let him see in the real world. Gilliam’s bold colors and breathtaking models work within these recurring dreams, reminding Sam, like the audience, that there’s more to the world outside the claustrophobic din of his broken-down apartment. The complicated story of *Brazil*’s release is almost an exercise in the same kind of bureaucratic, dehumanizing control under which its characters must live. When Gilliam tried to release it in the States, Universal (who handled the distribution) thought it tested so poorly that they forced Gilliam to release a shorter version to give it a happier ending. Gilliam, ever the dreamer, refused to accept this: he snuck film students and critics into secret screenings of his intended version of *Brazil*.

Only when it won Best Picture at the LA Film Critics Association awards did Universal agree to release the original version. Thirty years later, it’s tough to say just how germane *Brazil*’s criticism of governmental bureaucracy fits in. Some might say it perfectly encapsulates the endless grinding of individuality under the heel of an ineffectual, yet overly interventionist government; others might say Gilliam’s depiction of bureaucracy applies more to the severity of the Thatcher era than to modern-day, deregulated America. However you feel, *Brazil* makes everyone hope for a world in which people are free to live, dream, and dissent. – Clint Worthington, *Consequence of Sound*



Monday 12 August at 6:30 pm

Wùlu

France/Senegal 2016

Director/Screenplay: Daouda Coulibaly
Producers: Eric Névé, Oumar Sy
Production co: La Chauve Souris, Astou Films, Orange Studio, Appaloosa Films
Photography: Pierre Milon
Editor: Julien Leloup
Music: Eric Neveux

With: Ibrahim Koma (Ladji), Inna Modja (Aminata), Ismaël N'Diaye (Zol), Jean-Marie Traoré (Houphouët), Habib Dembélé (Issiaka), Mariame N'Diaye (Assitan), Quim Gutiérrez (the Colombian), Olivier Rabourdin (Jean-François)

95 mins, Blu-ray. R16 violence, drug use, sexual material & content that may disturb
In French and Bambara with English subtitles

Sometimes the political is gussied up in a genre, as in *Wùlu* a gangster picture that swirls in the circumstances of Mali's civil war, speculating on the country before soldiers overtook the government in 2012. When would-be van driver Ladji (Ibrahim Koma) is spurned for a promotion he says nothing, but his eyes scream frustration. He's soon at the gated house of a drug lord, swapping Bambara for French to call in an old favor. Easy as pie, the path to crime. Ladji begins trafficking cocaine across the country just like that, and spills the beans to his sister just as blatantly. Fewer debuts have been as complete or compelling as Franco-Malian director Daouda Coulibaly's. It's a testament to his writing and directing that the stakes and betrayals register and resonate in an economical 95 minutes. Like all of his cinematic predecessors, Ladji works for a better life for himself and his sister – their relationship itself a rewriting of the one in *Scarface*. While his sister's avarice groans for more things, bigger houses, he exhibits no compulsions, material, pharmaceutical, or otherwise. There is a girl, a posh American-educated daughter of a general, but Ladji exercises restraint and carries something like wisdom, setting him apart from most gangsters. – Elissa Suh, *MUBI Notebook*

Scarface is the genre gift that keeps on giving, even when set in Mali. And while much remains the same, here acts of individual wrongdoing tend to pale next to the wrongs of postcolonialism and organized terror. – Manohla Dargis, *NY Times*

It is also a hybrid cultural product. On the one hand the African touch is present in its title (*Wùlu*, "the dog" in Bambara, is the fifth stage of a rite of passage allowing to find one's own place in the world) and clearly recognisable through its renderings of the landscapes and the social contradictions (opposition between the bush and the city) of a country experiencing the growing pains of the second or third stage of post-colonial mutations (Tuareg rebellion, incursion of Islam fundamentalism, then 2012 military coup in Mali).

Yet the film's hybridity is immediately palpable through the dialogue's mixture of Bambara and French – which reflects the reality of daily life in Bamako. Shot mostly in Senegal (like Abderrahmane Sissako for *Timbuktu*, Coulibaly found post-coup Mali to be too dangerous a place to shoot) the film is a French-Senegalese production, benefiting from a combination of talents from both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. The DP (Pierre Milon), the editor (Julien Leloup) and the composer (Eric Neveux) are respected professionals with impressive filmographies in French cinema and television; the art director (Papa Mahamoudou Kouyaté), costume designer (Mariam Coulibaly) and co-producer (actor Oumar Sy) have African names. Daouda Coulibaly himself was born in Marseille to Guinean and Malian parents. Born and raised in Paris, actor Koma has a solid career in the French film and television industry. Bamako-born singer Inna Modja spends her time between Mali and France. Bérénice Reynaud, *Senses of Cinema*



Monday 19 August at 6:30 pm

Nocturama

France/Germany/Belgium 2016

Director/Screenplay/Music: Bertrand Bonello
Producers: Edouard Weil, Alice Girard
Production co: Rectangle Productions, Wild Bunch, Pandora Filmproduktion, Arte France Cinéma, WDR/Arte, Scope Pictures, My New Picture
Photography: Léo Hinstin
Editor: Fabrice Rouaud

With: Finnegan Oldfield (David), Vincent Rottiers (Greg), Hamza Meziani (Yacine), Manal Issa (Sabrina), Martin Guyot (André), Jamil McCraven (Mika), Rabah Nait Oufella (Omar), Laure Valentinelli (Sarah), Ilias Le Doré (Samir), Robin Goldbronn (Fred)

130 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc
In French with English subtitles

Nocturama, Bertrand Bonello's hypnotically unsettling new movie, has the artful, suggestive symmetry of a Rorschach blot. In the first half, several young Parisians coordinate and execute a series of terrorist attacks over one afternoon. In the second, they hide out for the night in a locked-down shopping mall, where their killer instincts give way to a sudden appetite for luxury brands. At once an oblique thriller and a cool, mesmerizing provocation, the film dispenses with backstory, motivation and the other dramatic conventions that movies typically use to make meaning, especially on a subject as troubling in its real-world implications as it is here.

Despite the movie's attention-grabbing log line and its emergence at a state of heightened anxiety across Europe, I'd submit that it isn't really about terrorism at all. You could say that its chief concern is with its characters' moral vacuity, the banality of their particular evil. But Bonello's approach, always seeking to evoke rather than explain, doesn't allow us either the clarity of analysis or the comforts of condemnation. That uncertainty may explain the film's polarizing effect on audiences since it opened in French theaters and began playing at film festivals. Some of this, of course, is due to unfortunate timing: Bonello wrote the script in 2011, long before Al Qaeda gunmen attacked Charlie Hebdo's headquarters in January 2015, and filmed it in Paris mere months before the Islamic State-backed killings that rocked the city that November.

But in addressing *Nocturama*, we should be particularly careful about confusing it with recent history, whether that means praising it for its uncanny prescience or damning it for deviating from events that Bonello never claimed as inspiration. In less assured or idiosyncratic hands, the notion of these killers suddenly transfigured – zombified, even – by Chanel, Fendi and Sonia Rykiel might have played as a cheap satirical dig, a facile reminder of the hypocrisy behind their anti-establishment rage. Stalking his characters with sinuous camera movements and split-screen surveillance footage, Bonello turns it into the stuff of a waking nightmare, complete with the occasional dreamlike apparition drifting into view. Are they specters of the already dead, or omens of the deaths still to come? – Justin Chang, *Los Angeles Times*

What's principally stimulating in Bonello is his basic lack of self-censoring mechanisms, and his fearless leaps from one movie to the next. This cool drink of cyanide comes after the fashion-drunk heights and depths of *Saint Laurent*; before that came a period prostitution piece (*House of Tolerance*, 2011) and the Rivette-ing descent into the idea of pleasure-as-battlefield in *On War* (2008). Not a lot of working directors have found as many ways to break the cycle of comfortable self-congratulation and cultivated, custom-fitted seriousness... Howard Hampton, *Film Comment*



Monday 26 August at 6:30 pm

The Divine Order Die göttliche Ordnung Switzerland 2017

Director/Screenplay: Petra Volpe
Producers: Reto Schaerli, Lukas Hobi
Production co: Zodiac Pictures
Photography: Judith Kaufmann
Editors: Hansjörg Weissbrich
Music: Annette Focks

With: Marie Leuenberger (Nora), Max Simonischek (Hans), Rachel Braunschweig (Theresa), Sibylle Brunner (Vroni), Marta Zoffoli (Graziella), Bettina Stucky (Magda), Therese Affolter (Dr Charlotte Wipf), Ella Rumpf (Hanna)

96 mins, Blu-ray. M sex scenes & sexual references
In German, English and Italian with English subtitles

In the opening scenes of her stirring comic drama *The Divine Order*, writer-director Petra Volpe collages together images from the US sexual revolution and civil rights movements – turbulent, raucous demonstrations – before plopping us down in 1971 Schweiz, a quiet, rural canton of Switzerland, where time seems to have stood still since the 1940s. We meet Nora (Marie Leuenberger), a wife and mother of two young boys who looks like she'd be right at home in Maria von Trapp's old Austrian convent. Nora bids her little family farewell and then coasts on her Schwinn up and down the twisty tree-lined roads to her sister-in-law's farmhouse to help out with housework. On her bicycle, Nora is exuberant and breathless, a wink tip-off to where this story is heading: These two-wheeled freedom machines were, in real life, instrumental to the suffrage movement around the world.

At home, Nora is happily on call 24-7 for her men, both big and small. Yes, her husband, Hans (Maximilian Simonischek), expects her to do the washing and cooking, calls her from the living room to bring him some tea, and gently forbids her from working outside the house as a travel agent, but he also seems genuinely concerned for her happiness – even if he can't fathom it means she wants equal rights. Hans is a good man, just not one who can immediately envision her as more than she is, which is why it's so difficult for Nora to jump into the fray of the canton's burgeoning women's rights movement, because she sees it at first as a rejection of men.

But the second Nora opens the free pamphlets and books from the local feminists, she's rapt, so much so that her confused sons must interrupt her from her reading to remind her to make their food. When she asks them to clear their own dishes, their response is both truthful and tragic: "But ... we're boys." She seems to realize she's fighting this fight for them as much as for herself...

Volpe depicts Nora's awakening as an avalanche down the Alps, one that can't be stopped. The biggest snowball comes from a sex workshop, where she has her own *Fried Green Tomatoes* Towanda moment and for the first time sees her vagina. "My vagina is a lion," she says, before Volpe transports us to a nearly surreal dance floor, where Nora sways and thrashes her hair back and forth, while the shards of light reflecting off a disco ball seem almost to emanate from within her body. Though the scene is fantastical bordering on whimsical, Volpe never drops the seriousness of the story.

Judith Kaufmann's cinematographic style favors shadows that frame the faces of these women, and at times her camera pushes in for quick zooms like we're in a tense Martin Scorsese picture. Only instead of gangsters, we're watching suffragettes in an impossibly tiny town toil and scheme their way to the right to vote. – April Wolfe, *Village Voice*



Monday 02 September at 6:30 pm

Makala France 2017

Director/Photography: Emmanuel Gras
Producer: Nicolas Anthome
Production co: Bathysphere Productions
Editor: Karen Benainous
Music: Gaspar Claus

With: Kabwita Kasongo, Lydie Kasongo

96 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc
In Swahili and French with English subtitles

A documentary with the elemental simplicity of a neorealist parable, *Makala* shadows Kabwita, a young man in the Congo, through the processes of making, transporting, and selling charcoal. Every part of this chain of production, which he carries out by himself, is arduous: from felling a tree and building a forge to haggling in the markets of the nearest town, several days away on foot. In its middle third, the film turns into the most single-minded of road movies: Kabwita sets forth from his remote village to sell his wares, pushing a teetering bicycle weighed down with bulging sacks along treacherous dirt roads, contending with speeding trucks and extortionists. A film of considerable beauty, *Makala* locates an epic dimension in the humblest of existences. But Gras is not seeking to ennoble poverty: he recognizes that for Kabwita, and for many others like him, basic survival requires truly monumental efforts, and it is only right to film them as such. – Dennis Lim, *Film Comment*

The title of the documentary filmmaker's third feature means "charcoal" in Swahili, one of four major local languages in Democratic Republic of the Congo. Over the course of the film, one will get to see where that charcoal comes from, how it's made and eventually sold. But the process is not presented in an informative manner as a National Geographic program would. Instead, it's evoked as a Herculean struggle, as in the stark cinematic opening when Kabwita Kasongo is seen felling a colossal tree. Gras observes with hallowed silence, devoid of any superfluous effects or exposition. By the time Kasongo stuffs the charcoal into giant sacks and loads them onto his bicycle to take to town, Gras' cinematography enters the realm of the symbolic. Through a gray and ochre cloud of dust and smog, Kasongo pushes the bicycle uphill, a veritable embodiment of Sisyphus. The vehicle, keeling over under the weight, looks like the titular beast of burden in *The Turin Horse*.

On this almost wordless 30-mile walk, the camera gets so close it magnifies the pearls of sweat that glisten and dangle from the handsome man's eyelashes. Only once do we get a wider perspective, when the lens is pulled back to reveal he is not alone but among a line of others pushing their charcoal-stacked bicycles.

Makala consciously eschews hard facts or figures and avoids making any social commentary. Yet, even as Kasongo is confronted by hard-nosed people throughout the film, and his determination seems to waver toward the end of his trip, audiences will come away believing that he and his lot are not bereft of hope. Ultimately, the film proves its worth by betraying a minimum of condescension or intrusiveness.

In spite of a lean budget, craft contributions boast a distinct style that benefits from well-planned shoots and clean, chronological editing by Karen Benainous. Of particular note are night scenes lit with a soft flicker that transports the viewer to an evocative pre-electric milieu. – Maggie Lee, *Variety*



Monday 09 September at 6:30 pm

Heart of a Dog

USA/France 2015

Director/Writer/Music: Laurie Anderson
Producers: Laurie Anderson, Dan Janvey
Production co: Canal Street Communications
Photography: Laurie Anderson, Toshiaki Ozawa, Joshua Zucker-Pluda
Editors: Melody London, Katherine Nolfi

75 mins, Blu-ray. PG

Laurie Anderson's *Heart of a Dog* begins with an animated segment in which we hear Anderson tell of a recurring dream she's had: that she's giving birth to her rat terrier, Lolabelle, but it's no kind of immaculate conception – she has actually had the dog, fully grown, sewn into her stomach, so that she can then give birth to her. Those of us who love our pets as family members know what this is all about, and the fact that Anderson goes to such extremes – even in her dreams – is good for a laugh.

But *Heart of a Dog* – which features much footage of the fetching and insouciant Lolabelle, including some clips of her playing the piano, a skill she discovered late in life – is about much more than obsessive pet love. It's mostly about death, though it's among the most cheerful and inquisitive movies about death I've ever seen. Anderson has lots of reasons to be thinking about this subject: Her beloved Lolabelle no longer walks this Earth, and the film is dedicated to her late husband, Lou Reed, who died in 2013. And if her observations lean a bit too heavily on Buddhist philosophy, there's still something comforting about the way she ultimately connects the idea of loss with the nature of enduring love. Living through pain is the only way to live, period – there's no other way to move forward. Bring it on, and make it big. – Stephanie Zacharek, *Village Voice*

Giving voice is a specialty of Anderson's, and *Heart of a Dog* abounds with her talent for voluble free association. Anderson's narration is read over disparate imagery consisting primarily of her own animation and drawings, footage (sometimes distressed) shot with small digital cameras, and 8-mm home movies that were sourced from the filmmaker's siblings. I must confess that at the outset, I found the trademark voice Anderson uses to deliver her text – a lilting deadpan made aggravatingly overblown by her pronounced pauses between words ("And we would never... be... going... back") – close to intolerable; for as much sympathy as I, a superfan of the four-footed, had for her project, I struggled in the first fifteen minutes to enter it. But so absorbing, and apposite, are Anderson's digressions in this wide-ranging documentary that I eventually accustomed myself to these vocal tics. – Melissa Anderson, *Artforum*

It's a risky film because such personal expression, particularly those accompanied by animation and free-flowing thought, can be prone to solipsism. But here, Anderson is anything but. Other reviewers have pointed out that Lolabelle could be a metonym of sorts for other losses Anderson has faced, including those of her husband Lou Reed and her mother. It doesn't really matter if that's true, because her tribute to Lolabelle has a sublime, simultaneous effect of being both so specific about her pet and also being universal enough to apply to any kind of loss. You'll probably love this film, whether or not you're a dog person. – Tina Hassannia, *RogerEbert.com*



Monday 16 September at 6:30 pm

Félicité

France/Belgium/Senegal/Germany/Lebanon 2017

Director: Alain Gomis
Producers: Arnaud Dommerc, Oumar Sall, Alain Gomis
Production co: Andolfi, Granit Films, Cinekap, Need Productions, Fixer Congo, Katuh Studio
Screenplay: Alain Gomis, Delphine Zingg, Olivier Loustau
Photography: Céline Bozon
Editor: Fabrice Rouaud
Music: Kasai Allstars, Arvo Pärt

With: Véro Tshanda Beya (Félicité), Papi Mpaka (Tabu), Gaetan Claudia (Samo), Kasai Allstars

129 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes
In Lingala and French with English subtitles

Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans, goes the old saying – though for the variously stymied characters of *Félicité*, life hits them when they have no plan at all. It's a film in which a hard-earned smile, the contact between one person's skin and another's, or a serene strain of music amid the everyday noise can qualify as a dramatic event. Far from the miserabilist issue drama that synopsis portends, instead weaving a sensual, sometimes hopeful, sometimes disturbing urban tapestry with threads of image, sound, poetry, and song. – Guy Lodge, *Variety*

Senegalese-French director Alain Gomis' *Félicité* is a great patchwork of elements that are full of contradictions and contrasts. And it's beautiful, energetic and refreshing. It's about a singer in an outdoor bar, also a single mom, played by enigmatic Véro Tshanda Beya Mputu, trying to survive day-to-day life in Kinsasha, Democratic Republic of Congo. Strong willed and free spirited, she is a modern woman who doesn't need a man by her side. But life throws curve balls at her when least expected and keeps her on her toes. As with his previous films that took place in Dakar, Senegal, the sight and sound of bustling streets of Kinsasha becomes as much a character in the film as any individual.

Félicité is a melding of many conflicting elements. There is documentary-like naturalism (thanks to the handheld cinematography of veteran DP Celine Bozon, sister of director Serge Bozon) mixed in with a recurring, beautiful dream sequence in the woods in near darkness. There is local music (featuring the Kasai Allstars) rubbing shoulders with the Kinshasa Symphonic Orchestra playing classical pieces by Arvo Pärt. It's the music that is at the heart of the film. Sung by earthy, smoky-voiced Muambuyi, the lead singer of the Kasai Allstars, Mputu's Félicité comes to life whenever she's on stage. The "Congotronics" is an infectious, eclectic music that represents many different ethnic groups. Arvo Pärt's somber music fills in for somber moments but it fits surprisingly well in the film. The running joke that takes up much of the screen time is Tabu's epic struggle with Félicité's dying fridge. It's an impetus for their budding romance and also provides glimpse of the earthly concerns of Kinsasha's everyday life, as Tabu scans the bustling outdoor market for spare parts: the dirt road, panhandlers, dancing traffic signal cop, pickpockets, and so forth. It's a dizzying display of what it's like living in such a place and also a testament to human resilience. Dustin Chang, *Screen Anarchy*

Though the second half turns somewhat diffuse, Gomis' tough and vibrant understanding of romance and struggle scarcely falters. Neither does his sense of wonder toward his indomitable leading lady: Riding in the back of a motorcycle, Beya might be Gong Li in Zhang Yimou's *The Story of Qiu Ju* or one of Satyajit Ray's proud women, all too aware of the peril and autonomy of living day to day and song to song. – Fernando F Croce, *MUBI Notebook*



Monday 23 September at 6:30 pm

AFS thanks The Surrey Hotel

Zama

Argentina/Brazil/Spain 2017

Director: Lucrecia Martel

Producers: Benjamín Domenech, Santiago Gallelli, Matías Roveda, Vânia Catani

Production co: Rei Cine, Bananiera Filmes, El Deseo, Patagonik, MPM Film, Canana, Lemming Film, KNM, O Som e a Fúria, Louverture Films, Telecine, Perdomo Pictures, Picnic Producciones

Screenplay: Lucrecia Martel. Based on the novel by Antonio Di Benedetto

Photography: Rui Poças

Editor: Miguel Schverdfinger, Karen Harley

With: Daniel Giménez Cacho (Zama), Lola Dueñas (Luciana Piñares De Luenga), Matheus Nachtergaele (Vicuña Porto), Juan Minujín (Ventura Prieto), Rafael Spregelburd (Capitán Parrilla), Nahuel Cano (Fernández), Mariana Nunes (Malemba), Daniel Veronese (Gobernador Il)

115 mins, DCP. M violence & nudity
In Spanish with English subtitles

At first blush, *Zama* is close kin to *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, the towering 1972 Werner Herzog classic about a Spanish conquistador losing his way and his mind in 16th-century South America. There's a deluded European colonizer at the new movie's center, too – Don Diego de Zama (Daniel Giménez Cacho), an administrative functionary serving the royal court of Spain in the wilds of Paraguay at the tail end of the 18th century. As in *Aguirre*, the tone is detached, the plot minimal, the action cruel, the visuals serene and increasingly phantasmagoric. The jungle seems ready to reclaim the characters at any moment. If Herzog is a mystic and a shaman, though, Argentina's Lucrecia Martel is a more hardheaded sort of cinematic poet. Based on her countryman Antonio di Benedetto's existential 1958 novel of the same name, *Zama* is a political treatise under cover of a dark Kafkaesque comedy. The message is that a colonizer destroys everything he touches but nothing so much as the colonizer himself. Some movies unfold as dreams; *Zama* dances us toward the edge of nightmare and then asks us to open our eyes. – Ty Burr, *Boston Globe*

Unlike ostensibly similar slow-cinema films, Martel's leisurely pacing does not connote a paucity of action or intrigue. If anything, *Zama*'s sluggish rhythms belie a surfeit of incident: Every scene is steamy with background activity, the air thick with hidden motivations and unspoken crosscurrents. It is heady and tactile, with *Tabu* DP Rui Poças creating exquisitely precise frames, and sound designer Guido Berenblum then coloring in a whole universe of chirruping crickets and stagnant waters outside them. Every close up is a portrait and every wide a tableau: at one point Zama is taken to task by a sour-tempered superior and we can actually hear the old man blink. The formal control is remarkable, but sometimes almost stultifying, as though Martel had spent every moment of this intervening decade plotting how to pack each scene more densely, to the point it feels like Zama could maybe stop a bullet.

There is some Quixote here, not just because of the language and time frame, but also because of the essential futility of so much of Zama's endeavor. But the real literary touchpoints are more modern: Zama waits for deliverance that never comes like a Beckett character and goes insane through upriver isolation like a mid-ranking Colonel Kurtz. And Kafka would get a dry chuckle out of the irony that is going on a manhunt for a man you know is a member of the hunting party, or seeing the reward you hoped to gain meted out to your enemy as a punishment. But then, the challenging, patience-testing, yet undeniably visionary Zama is neither of the past nor of the present, but belongs to some half-lit eternity instead, where people have been consigned to atone for sins they only foggily remember committing, and have nothing to do but wait out the Purgatory of prolonged hope. – Jessica Kiang, *The Playlist*



Monday 30 September at 6:00 pm

Early start: long run time

Ash is Purest White

Jianghu er nv

China 2018

Director/Screenplay: Jia Zhangke

Producers: Shozo Ichiyama, Nathanaël Karmitz

Production co: Shozo Ichiyama, Nathanaël Karmitz Productions, Office Kitano

Photography: Eric Gautier

Editor: Laclau, Lin Xudong

Music: Lim Giong

With: Zhao Tao, Liao Fan, Xu Zheng, Casper Liang, Feng Xiaogang, Diao Yinan

141 mins, DCP. R13 violence
In Mandarin with English subtitles

Jia Zhang-ke's latest is an often glorious drama about how one woman's journey from self-sacrificial moll to avenging criminal echoes her country's embrace of capitalism. – Peter Bradshaw, *Guardian*

A strange and haunting gangster epic that explores the soul of modern China. Nicholas Barber, *BBC*

[This is] a story of thwarted yet oddly resilient love, as well as a beautiful marriage of the political and the personal. That particular synthesis is nothing new for Jia Zhangke, the revered Chinese writer-director whose work brings the chaos of life in his rapidly evolving country into hyper-crisp digital focus. In *Ash Is Purest White*, he subtly distills nearly two decades of gradual social change into the story of a small-town gangster and his moll. The movie opens in 2001, in the northern village of Datong, where Guo Bin (Liao Fan), a member of the jianghu underworld, runs a mahjong parlor and enjoys the sycophantic attention of his comrades and underlings.

But from the start, it's Bin's girlfriend, Qiao (Zhao Tao), who magnetizes the camera's attention, whether she's playfully socking his buddies or hitting the dance floor while "YMCA" blasts in the background. A fiercely devoted partner to Bin, she more than holds her own in this masculine enclave, and her own belief in the brotherly codes of the jianghu, a commitment referenced by the title, runs startlingly deep. When Bin is attacked by local thugs, it is Qiao who fatefully intervenes and pays the steepest price. From there, the film undergoes a series of thrilling narrative reversals but always keeps Qiao at the fore, grounding its portrait of long-term social and technological flux with the kind of gutsy, lovelorn heroine who would be right at home in a 1940s Hollywood melodrama. Qiao and Bin continue to cross paths over the years, at times enjoying the odd moment of tenderness, only to have the past come rushing back with seething, explosive force. But their difficult present and uncertain future weigh on them no less heavily.

Jia likes to hold his characters in a tight visual embrace, then cut away to something – a train navigating the countryside, or the stars shimmering in the night sky – that places their drama into awe-stirring perspective. This is a movie about how time and circumstance conspire to make dazed, restless wanderers of us all. But no familiarity with Jia's earlier work is necessary to appreciate *Ash Is Purest White*, which is fierce, gripping, emotionally generous and surprisingly funny: The movie's most entertaining moments find Qiao using her hard-earned street smarts to pull herself out of short-term hunger and poverty. Meanwhile, even those accustomed to seeing Zhao in Jia's movies (the two are married and collaborate frequently) might be taken aback by the depths of her acting here. *Mountains May Depart* was a breakthrough for her, and she surpasses it here with the richest, most subtly complex performance she's given to date. – Justin Chang, *LA Times*



Monday 07 October at 6:30 pm

Next of Kin

Australia/New Zealand 1982

Director: Tony Williams
 Producer: Robert Le Tet, Timothy White
 Production co: Filmco, Film House, SIS
 Screenplay: Michael Heath, Tony Williams
 Photography: Gary Hansen
 Editor: Max Lemon
 Music: Klaus Schulze

With: Jackie Kerin (Linda), John Jarratt (Barney), Alex Scott (Dr Barton), Gerda Nicolson (Connie), Charles McCallum (Lance), Bernadette Gibson (Rita)

89 mins, Blu-ray. M violence

After shooting two feature films in the 60s, Tony Williams went on to make a huge contribution to the development of the New Zealand film and television industries through the nine ground-breaking indie documentaries he directed for Pacific Films, and his feature-film *Solo*, which was one of the earliest films of the 1970s Kiwi new wave.

In the early 80s Williams shifted his base to Melbourne (and later Sydney), and directed *Next of Kin*, which he co-wrote with Michael Heath. After taking over the retirement home formerly run by her late mother, a young woman (Jackie Kerin) starts to worry that a pattern of unexplained deaths and strange visitations is repeating itself. Tony Williams' cult feature began development as a black comedy about murderous Kiwi caterers, before morphing into this moody gothic mystery – the first horror film directed and written by Kiwis (though it was ultimately shot and set in Australia). Williams has continued to have a lively influence on our culture as the award-winning director of many legendary commercials, including the Toyota "Bugger" campaign and the Crunchie train robbery ad. – *NZ On Screen*

Why does it feel so good, and so rare, to stumble upon a horror movie that doesn't just feel in command of its images, but uniquely risky as well? *Next of Kin* is the best kind of surprise: it combines the campy pleasures of 80's B-horror with the baroque composition and exacting sensibility of *The Shining*, *Suspiria* or *Don't Look Now*. It has deep resonances with these prior films, but stakes a territory that feels confidently original, carving out spaces of surrealist reverie and slow-motion lyricism in moments of ostensible panic. Still, it never feels condescending to its genre – as if horror could only be made artistic by departing from its core conventions. Genuinely obsessed with the gross liquidity of the human body – the wrinkled pallor of drowned skin and the unreal glassiness of eyes – *Next of Kin* finds a delicacy in the grotesque that feels traumatic rather than affected. Full of startling imagery and pulsing with a fantastic score from ex-Tangerine Dream member Klaus Schultze, it's a film of disarming beauty about the visceral fear that adulthood is mad, violent, and wrong.

Next of Kin is so refreshing a film that almost everyone who writes about it ends by musing why Tony Williams hasn't made a feature since. Perhaps renewed interest – *Next of Kin* features briefly in the wonderful recent documentary about Australian cult cinema, *Not Quite Hollywood*, in which Quentin Tarantino (among others) lavishes it with praise – will succeed in drawing Williams back into the driver's seat? Or perhaps – as with *Next of Kin*, which ends with Linda and Nico on the open road, speeding away from cataclysmic destruction – Williams found that, after this, there was nowhere else to go.

Jonathan Foltz, *Not Coming To A Theatre Near You*



Monday 14 October at 6:00 pm

Early start: long run time

Aquarius

Brazil/France 2016

Director/Screenplay: Kleber Mendonça Filho
 Producers: Émilie Lesclaux, Saïd Ben Saïd, Michel Merkt
 Production co: CinemaScópio, SBS Films, Videofilmes, Globo Filmes
 Photography: Pedro Sotero, Fabrício Tadeu
 Editor: Eduardo Serrano

With: Sonia Braga (Clara), Maeve Jinkings (Ana Paula), Irandhir Santos (Roberval), Humberto Carrão (Diego), Zoraide Coletto (Ladjane), Fernando Teixeira (Geraldo), Buda Lira (Antonio), Paula De Renor (Fátima), Bárbara Colen (Clara in 1980), Daniel Porpino (Adalberto & Rodrigo), Pedro Queiroz (Tomás), Carla Ribas (Cleide), Germano Melo (Martin), Julia Bernat (Julia)

146 mins, Blu-ray. R16 nudity, explicit sexual material & offensive language
 In Portuguese with English subtitles

Sonia Braga gives the performance of her long, storied career in *Aquarius*, Brazilian director Kleber Mendonça Filho's follow-up to his much admired *Neighboring Sounds* (2012). Set, like that film, in Recife, the capital city of Pernambuco, *Aquarius* is named for the apartment complex in which Clara (Braga) grew up and where she still lives at age 65, in retirement, even though she's the last tenant remaining in the building. Where *Neighboring Sounds* leaned heavily on formalism, fashioning a kaleidoscopic portrait of an entire block, *Aquarius* is more conventionally structured. Its plot, which sees Clara standing her ground against the rapacious interests of developers who want to tear down the Aquarius and build a condominium, dates back at least to Elia Kazan's *Wild River*.

But Mendonça Filho is as interested in Clara herself as he is her ties to the objects that partly define her life and takes time for numerous digressions ... involving her love life, her family, her relationship with her longtime maid (Zoraide Coletto), and her love of music ranging from samba to Queen. ... The character study doesn't mesh with the social-justice drama as snugly as one might hope, but it's hard to complain that they seem like two separate movies when both movies are so thoroughly enjoyable. And they do share Braga, who makes Clara an indomitable force of nature while also expertly revealing the character's fragility. Plus, she's allowed to be a fully sexual woman at 65. "Dona Clara, forgive me, but are you hitting on me?" asks a hunky young lifeguard at one point, and I could almost hear the audience thinking, "You wish."
 Mike d'Angelo, *AV Club*

Aquarius is a marvelous and surprising act of portraiture, a long, unhurried encounter with a single, complicated person. And that is enough to make it a captivating film, an experience well worth seeking out. But there is also, as I've suggested, more going on than the everyday experiences of a modern matriarch. Clara's particularity is precisely what makes her such a resonant and representative figure, because it's her idiosyncratic spirit that is threatened by the sterility and greed represented by her mercenary antagonists.

This is, in other words, a political film, and it's not surprising that it has been caught up in the drama of recent Brazilian politics.... *Aquarius* has become a rallying point for the embattled Brazilian left, but even viewers with scant knowledge of the situation in that country will be aware of the film's timeliness... Clara represents values that look, in the current climate, decidedly old-fashioned. She is a warrior for aesthetic distinction, for critical thought, for sexual and creative liberty – for things that cannot be bought, sold or indexed. And she is not someone you want to go up against in a fight.

AO Scott, *New York Times*



Monday 21 October at 6:30 pm

Lady Macbeth

UK 2016

Director: William Oldroyd
 Producer: Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly
 Production co: Sixty Six Pictures, iFeatures
 Screenplay: Alice Birch, based on the novella by Nikolai Leskov
 Photography: Ari Wegner
 Editor: Nick Emerson
 Music: Dan Jones

With: Florence Pugh (Katherine), Cosmo Jarvis (Sebastian), Paul Hilton (Alexander), Naomi Ackie (Anna), Christopher Fairbank (Boris)

89 mins, Blu-ray. R16 violence, offensive language & sex scenes

This brilliantly feminist British indie film plunges a cold, sharp knife into the back of bonnet dramas. *Lady Macbeth* is like a Jane Austen story with a dash of sex and murder and a nineteenth-century heroine who might have swallowed the works of Caitlin Moran and Gloria Steinem. – Cath Clarke, *Time Out London*

Few movies this year will be more likely to molest your sleep. – Anthony Lane, *New Yorker*

A “feminist” film need not portray all its female characters in a positive light. Women aren’t a monolith of benevolence. Still, a film with multiple female characters who are equal parts sympathetic and sadistic, who face off against one another in a battle of wits and will, exposing some harsh truths about race, class, and privilege, is something rare – something to be tightly embraced. *Lady Macbeth* – a chilling period piece about a woman who comes into her own savage power, directed by William Oldroyd and penned by playwright Alice Birch – is that film.

Newcomer Florence Pugh smolders as Lady Katherine, a young woman sold into a loveless and dutiful marriage with a much older man, Alexander (Paul Hilton). Our sympathies are squarely with her in the opening scene, as she peers out from a white lace veil, surveying the solemn men in dark suits surrounding her at the ceremony. Her eyes take in the world with curiosity and dread: What will they do to her? Perhaps knowing the answer to that, Lady Katherine surprises us with a question of her own: In what terrible ways will she deal them their fate? ...The moment the house is free of men, Katherine’s corset is loosened (or gone altogether). Later, when decorum demands that her servant Anna (Naomi Ackie) – who is black – must again tie her up tight at the waist, Katherine deals with the pain by slurping red wine. And when Katherine takes a lover – farmhand Sebastian (Cosmo Jarvis) – her demeanour grows hungrier, and Oldroyd finds in her desire deliciously dark humour.

In one moment, Katherine’s arms are splayed wide across the footboard of her bed while she and Sebastian writhe in ecstasy. The creaking wood of the bed frame beats like a frantic heartbeat against the floor, echoing through the cold, prison-like home. Then Oldroyd brusquely cuts to fresh-faced, prim Katherine in daylight, holding out her cup for some of Anna’s tea, the gentle tinkling of liquid in the china so at odds with the sounds that preceded it. This is a house with no secrets. Rule-abiding Anna hears the ruckus from the lovers, and her tight-lipped, prudish response (she is unable to question her mistress’s exploits) at first contributes to the comedy – at least until Katherine slowly devolves from lovable cad to vindictive murderess. ...Pugh’s and Ackie’s performances here are electric and expressive, the former portraying ultimate power, the latter ultimate fear. By the end of this twisty, enigmatic story, my chest was as tight as one of Katherine’s corsets. – April Wolfe, *Village Voice*



Tuesday 29 October at 6:30 pm

Tanna

Australia/Vanuatu 2015

Director: Bentley Dean, Martin Butler
 Cultural director: Jimmy Joseph Nako
 Producers: Martin Butler, Bentley Dean, Carolyn Johnson
 Production co: Contact Films
 Screenplay: Bentley Dean, Martin Butler, John Collee in collaboration with the people of Yakel
 Photography: Bentley Dean
 Editor: Tania Michel Nehme
 Music: Antony Partos

With: Mungau Dain (Dain), Marie Wawa (Wawa), Marceline Rofit (Selin), Chief Charlie Kahla (Chief Charlie), Albi Nangia (grandfather/shaman), Lingai Kowia (father), Dadwa Mungau (grandmother), Linette Yowayin (mother), Kapan Cook (Kapan Cook), Chief Mungau Yokay (peacemaking chief), Chief Mikum Tainakou (Imedin chief)

104 mins, Blu-ray. M violence & offensive language
 In Nauvhal with English subtitles

The eternal story of young lovers breaking all the rules and risking everything to be together is beautifully told in *Tanna*, the first-ever feature shot entirely in the South Pacific nation of Vanuatu. Based on dramatic events that took place on the volcanic island of Tanna in 1987, the pic weaves fascinating details of tribal life into a universally accessible and emotionally affecting romantic drama. Very well performed by non-professionals drawn from communities whose history is represented on screen, *Tanna* marks a notable narrative debut for the experienced Aussie documaking duo of Bentley Dean and Martin Butler. Part of the film’s success can be attributed to events that took place long before cameras rolled. Dean and Butler spent seven months living with the Yakel, a tribe whose customs and lifestyle have changed little for centuries. During this time the filmmakers were told of a great love story from the recent past. The result was a screenplay written in close collaboration with the Yakel and performed predominantly by its members...

On one expedition Selin catches sight of her big sister, Wawa (Marie Wawa), being courted by Dain (Mungau Dain), the handsome son of village chief Charlie (Chief Charlie Kahla). A bright-eyed, high-spirited teenage beauty, Wawa is deeply in love with Dain and swears Selin to secrecy. Soon after the sisters’ pact is sealed Wawa is initiated into womanhood via rituals that are fascinating on an anthropological level while also serving as marvellously entertaining proof that raucous “hen’s parties” take place all over the world. With arranged marriages firmly entrenched in tribal law Wawa’s prospects of marrying Dain are slim at best. All hope is lost in the aftermath of a brutal attack on the Yakel shaman (Albi Nangia) by Imedin men. At a meeting brokered by local Peacekeeping Chief (Chief Mungau Yokay), it’s agreed by Chief Charlie and the fearsome-looking Imedin leader Chief Mikum (Chief Mikum Tainakou) that hostilities will cease on the proviso Wawa marries an Imedin man...

Wawa and Dain’s love only intensifies as their flight from both Yakel and Imedin snowballs into a matter of life and death and brings them into contact with the world beyond tribal land. In one telling encounter they decide to take their own chances rather than seek safe haven among a community of people who’ve traded traditional ways for Western clothes, housing and religious beliefs. The film’s most visually striking sequence finds Wawa and Dain standing at the mouth of an active volcano. According to beliefs on Tanna the volcano is home to Yahul, a Spirit Mother whose aura teaches wisdom, respect and knowledge. At one magical moment of synchronicity – as if ordained by Yahul herself – the couple embrace while lava shoots up in perfect formation behind them.

Richard Kuipers, *Variety*



Monday 04 November at 6:00 pm

Early start: long run time
AFS thanks Metropolitan Rentals

Mulholland Drive

France/USA 2001

Director/Screenplay: David Lynch
Producers: Mary Sweeney, Alain Sarde, Neal Edelstein, Michael Polaire, Tony Krantz
Production co: Les Films Alain Sarde, Asymmetrical Productions
Photography: Peter Deming
Editor: Mary Sweeney
Music: Angelo Badalamenti

With: Justin Theroux (Adam), Naomi Watts (Betty), Laura Elena Harring (Rita), Ann Miller (Coco), Dan Hedaya (Vincenzo Castiglione), Mark Pellegrino (Joe), Brent Brisco (Detective Domgaard), Robert Forster (Detective McKnight), Katharine Towne (Cynthia)

147 mins, DCP. R16 violence & sex scenes

Blonde Betty Elms (Naomi Watts) has only just arrived in Hollywood to become a movie star when she meets an enigmatic brunette with amnesia (Laura Harring). Meanwhile, as the two set off to solve the second woman's identity, filmmaker Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux) runs into ominous trouble while casting his latest project. David Lynch's seductive and scary vision of Los Angeles's dream factory is one of the true masterpieces of the new millennium, a tale of love, jealousy, and revenge like no other. – *Criterion Collection*

Mulholland Drive originated as a pilot for a television series. Rejected by the network as too dark, slow, and confusing, it was acquired by producers Alain Sarde and Pierre Edelman and the French company Studio Canal Plus, which more than doubled the original budget so that Lynch could shoot a new ending. The result is a bifurcated, through-the-looking-glass narrative in which the second half turns the meaning of the first upside down while putting up its own impediments to our search for the truth. It creates an extreme sense of unease, of dread even, which provokes, in turn, an investigative impulse – as if by using one's analytic skills to piece together its puzzling narrative, one could exert control over the anxiety the film generates. – Amy Taubin, *Film Comment*

Though inherently a wounded duck, full of characters and subplots that drop in and out of the narrative and pacing that dissolves from leisurely television to the tautness of film, *Mulholland Drive* gives way to an internal dream logic that can only be described as Lynchian. Just past the halfway point, it splinters off into the sort of free-floating psychotic excess that marred the latter halves of *Lost Highway* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. While it's tempting to think that Lynch has simply lost control of his vision yet again, the film is so densely layered and seductive that it's hard to pull away completely, even when it stops making rational sense. Recognizing the futility of bringing material for an untold number of television episodes to a neat and satisfying conclusion, Lynch has done the next best thing, pushing the audience deeper and deeper into his subconscious tangles. – Scott Tobias, *AV Club*

Hollywood herself, next to Betty and Rita, is the third star of *Mulholland Drive*, and she's not exactly a benevolent presence. Lynch doesn't mince metaphors in proving Hollywood as a place that has not only the means but the voracious desire to corrode hearts and souls. But for all its malevolence, could Lynch's Hollywood be any more seductive? Or any lovelier, with its deco-era stucco mansionettes, its eerily muted sunshine (daylight as viewed through a champagne hangover, perhaps?), its faded-brocade starlets? (Cinematographer Peter Deming, who also shot *Lost Highway*, outdoes himself here.) Lynch's Hollywood is a grand old girl, but she's one with some very treacherous curves. To trace the contours of her sensuality, you need a camera as sensitive as a set of fingertips. Lynch's is. Stephanie Zacharek, *Salon*



Monday 11 November at 6:30 pm

Special extra screening open to the public – all tickets \$20

AFS Fundraiser

Sunset Boulevard

USA 1950

Director: Billy Wilder
Producers: Charles Brackett
Production co: Paramount Pictures
Screenplay: Charles Brackett, Bill Wilder, DM Marshman Jr
Photography: John F Seitz
Editor: Arthur Schmidt
Music: Franz Waxman

With: William Holden (Joe Gillis), Gloria Swanson (Norma Desmond), Erich von Stroheim (Max von Mayerling), Nancy Olson (Betty Schaefer), Fred Clark (Sheldrake), Lloyd Gough (Morino), Jack Webb (Artie Green), Franklyn Farnum (undertaker), Larry Blake, Charles Dayton (finance men), Cecil B DeMille, Hedda Hopper, Buster Keaton, Anna Q Nilsson, HB Warner, Ray Evans, Jay Livingston (themselves)

110 mins, Blu-ray. PG

"Without me there wouldn't be any Paramount Studios," declares Gloria Swanson as Norma Desmond in Billy Wilder's black comedy *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Former silent film star Desmond may be mad, but there is a grain of truth in what she says: Swanson was one of Paramount's biggest stars even back when it was called Famous Players-Lasky, just as we are told Desmond was too. While *Sunset Boulevard* appears to attack the pretensions and excesses of the silent era, in fact its argument about the bad old days of Hollywood is more complicated than that. The horror at the heart of the film is that, as the studio system was starting to crumble, the beginnings of the industry were coming back to haunt it. Desmond's pride mocks the fall of Hollywood just as it was teetering, rocked by the antitrust laws, the coming of TV and the communist witch-hunts.

Desmond lives in dusty seclusion on the aptly named Sunset Boulevard, with her butler Max (Erich von Stroheim), until a young screenwriter, Joe Gillis (William Holden) stumbles across her house one day. She ensnares him to become her script editor as well as her lover, until, as we already know thanks to a flash-forward at the film's opening, he will meet a violent end...

Crucially, however, the film industry in *Sunset Boulevard* is shown to be on its last legs... Meanwhile, at 10086 Sunset Boulevard, in Desmond's mad mansion, there is always champagne and caviar to hand, and enough money to cater to her every whim and to turn Gillis into a kept man. Paramount and DeMille may not wish to make her extravagant Salomé film, but it is feasible that Desmond, with her funds, could produce it herself. After all she has hired a writer, she already employs a director (Max) and in the film's final seconds, her palatial home becomes – at least in her mind – a movie set. Even if all Paramount can supply that day are the compact cameras used for shooting TV newsreels...

The point is that the crumbling Hollywood of *Sunset Boulevard* is built on the silent era: the houses and studios that "crazy movie people built in the crazy 20s"... Gillis dismisses Desmond's fame but he can name all her co-stars and friends from Mabel Normand to Valentino and Rod La Roque; even Desmond's "waxwork" bridge companions each earn themselves a close-up (and Buster Keaton's is, of course, especially memorable). *Sunset Boulevard* is twice as chilling a film when you realise that Desmond made Paramount Studios a success, rather than the other way around. The faltering movie business was built not on fragile foundations of an art form doomed to obsolescence, but on stronger, more ambitious grounds than it occupied in 1950. Norma Desmond still causes a ripple of excitement when she enters the soundstage. After all, she is big – it's the pictures that got small. – Pamela Hutchinson, *Guardian*

AUCKLAND FILM SOCIETY 2019 SEASON

Academy Cinemas, 44 Lorne St, Auckland Mondays at 6:30 pm (except as noted below)

The 2019 Season is presented with financial assistance from Foundation North and Waitemata Local Board.

Most screenings are members only. Please arrive early – no guaranteed seating.

Programme may change if a film does not arrive. Late changes and full details on our website

aucklandfilmsociety.org.nz

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| 04 March 6:30pm | AFS Fundraiser – all tickets \$20 HIS GIRL FRIDAY 92 mins, Blu-ray. PG | 08 July 6:30 pm | LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD 94 mins, DCP. PG |
| 11 March 6:30 pm | IN A WORLD... 93 mins, Blu-ray. R16 sexual references & offensive language | 15 July 6:00 pm | Early start: long run time BRAZIL 142 mins, Blu-ray. M violence |
| 18, 25 March | No AFS screenings – French Film Festival 2019 | 18 July–04 August | NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL Discounts for AFS Premier Card Members |
| 01 April 6:30 pm | SHADOWS IN PARADISE 76 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc | 12 August 6:30 pm | WŪLU 95 mins, Blu-ray. R16 violence, drug use, sexual material & content that may disturb |
| 08 April 6:30 pm | WESTERN 121 mins, Blu-ray. M violence, sexual references & offensive language | 19 August 6:30 pm | NOCTURAMA 130 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc |
| 15 April 6:30 pm | THE MATCH FACTORY GIRL 69 mins, Blu-ray. PG | 26 August 6:30 pm | THE DIVINE ORDER 96 mins, Blu-ray. M sex scenes & sexual references |
| 23 April 6:30 pm | Tuesday ARIEL 72 mins, Blu-ray. PG | 02 September 6:30 pm | MAKALA 96 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc |
| 29 April 6:30 pm | I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO 93 mins, Blu-ray. M violence & offensive language Auckland Film Society AGM follows | 09 September 6:30 pm | HEART OF A DOG 75 mins, Blu-ray. PG |
| 06 May 6:30 pm | DAISIES 74 mins, DCP. M | 16 September 6:30 pm | FÉLICITÉ 129 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes |
| 13 May 6:30 pm | THE FOREST FOR THE TREES 81 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc | 23 September 6:30 pm | ZAMA 115 mins, DCP. M violence & nudity |
| 20 May 6:30 pm | MY 20TH CENTURY 104 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc | 30 September | Early start: long run time ASH IS PUREST WHITE 141 mins, DCP. R13 violence |
| 27 May 6:30 pm | IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD 129 mins, Blu-ray. M adult themes | 07 October 6:30 pm | NEXT OF KIN 89 mins, Blu-ray. M violence |
| 04 June 6:30 pm | Tuesday MY MAN GODFREY 94 mins, Blu-ray. PG | 14 October 6:00 pm | Early start: long run time AQUARIUS 146 mins, Blu-ray. R16 nudity, explicit sexual material & offensive language |
| 10 June 6:30 pm | CAMERAPERSON 102 mins, Blu-ray. M offensive language | 21 October 6:30 pm | LADY MACBETH 89 mins, Blu-ray. R16 violence, offensive language & sex scenes |
| 17 June 6:30 pm | A GERMAN YOUTH 93 mins, DCP. Censor's rating tbc | 29 October 6:30 pm | Tuesday TANNA 104 mins, Blu-ray. M violence & offensive language |
| 24 June 6:30 pm | THE VIRGIN SUICIDES 97 mins, Blu-ray. R16 sexual themes & content that may disturb | 04 November 6:00 pm | Early start: long run time MULHOLLAND DRIVE 147 mins, DCP. R16 violence & sex scenes |
| 01 July 6:30 pm | THE LEGEND OF RITA 103 mins, Blu-ray. Censor's rating tbc | 11 November 6:30 pm | AFS Fundraiser – all tickets \$20 SUNSET BOULEVARD 110 mins, Blu-ray. PG |