



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 Adebanojo, 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 mummies 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

Sedmikrásky
 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 Sust, 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, goes 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*