



Monday 09 March 2019 at 6:30 pm

AFS thanks Time Out Bookstore

Orlando

UK 1992

Director: Sally Potter
Producer: Christopher Sheppard
Screenplay: Sally Potter. Based on the novel by Virginia Woolf
Photography: Aleksei Rodionov
Editor: Hervé Schneid
Production designers: Ben van Os, Jan Roelfs
Costume designers: Sandy Powell, Dien van Straalen
Music: David Motion, Sally Potter

With: Tilda Swinton (Orlando), Billy Zane (Shelmerdine), Lothaire Bluteau (The Khan), John Wood (Archduke Harry), Heathcote Williams (Nick Greene/Publisher), Charlotte Valandrey (Sasha), Quentin Crisp (Queen Elizabeth I), Dudley Sutton (James I), Thom Hoffman (King William of Orange), Jimmy Somerville (Falsetto/Angel), John Bott (Orlando's father), Elaine Banham (Orlando's mother), Jessica Swinton (Orlando's daughter)

94 mins, Blu-ray. PG sexual references

Rarely have source material, director, and leading actress been more in alignment than in *Orlando*, the 1992 adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel, directed by Sally Potter and starring Tilda Swinton... Watching *Orlando* some 17 years after its US theatrical run, however, proves a welcome reminder of just how skilfully they marshalled their respective gifts here, how openly they entered into a dialogue with Woolf's playful, slippery text... Skipping across centuries of English history... Woolf refracts her ageless hero(ine)'s fantastical exploits through the archly poker-faced prism of historical biography... Rather than wrestle a more 'relatable' arc from Orlando's journey, Potter takes the novel's state of sly inquisitiveness as her guiding spirit. Her screenplay glides elegantly from situation to situation... surveying the cultural topography of a given period and zeroing in on how much (or how little) changes as she works her way across the timeline. Appropriately, a given vignette's primary concerns are announced in capitalized intertitles: poetry, sex, love, etc.

In the end, though... they play second fiddle to Potter's and Woolf's dominant double vision of gender as both an ever-malleable construction shaped by the specific historical moment, and an enduring method of social control wielded by those in power (ie men). The film bustles with soprano-voiced male singers, unwieldy wigs, and costumes paraded by both sexes, and a memorably commanding Queen Elizabeth I played by Quentin Crisp. A world of pageantry and primping, its members nevertheless divorce the porous boundaries between male and female social codes from the unequal levels of respect bestowed on each. Well-trodden ground, to be sure, and Potter pushes the satire into occasionally broad places... But if Potter's ideas are familiar, her touch is light...

She also seems very aware of the gift she was given in Swinton's magnificent central performance... Consider the waves of surprise, bemusement, and wonder that wash over Orlando's face when she gazes upon her newly female body. "Same person. No difference at all... Just a different sex," she muses to the camera, a hint of transgressive energy mixing with an almost-spiritual calm. In a film that refuses to mash up Woolf's brainy text into prestige-pic mush, Swinton provides a crucial way into Orlando's inner life... She is joined by an exemplary supporting cast... particularly true of Crisp, who transcends man-in-a-dress smirking to get at something fragile and warm beneath Elizabeth's surface imperiousness. ...And when Potter's camera finally rests on Swinton's face (a tear peacefully making its way down her cheek, a Mona Lisa smile on her lips), the synthesis of written character, actorly presence, and directorial gaze haunts the mind and fills the heart in equal measure. – Matthew Connolly, *Slant*



Monday 21 March 2005 at 6:30 pm

Le cercle rouge

France/Italy 1970

Director/Screenplay: Jean-Pierre Melville
Production Co: Les Films Corona, Euro International Film, Selenia Cinematografica
Producer: Robert Dorfmann
Cinematography: Henri Decae
Editor: Marie-Sophie Dubus
Production Design: Théo Meurisse
Sound: Jean Neny
Music: Eric de Marsan

With: Alain Delon (Corey), André Bourvil (Mattei), Gian-Maria Volonté (Vogel), Yves Montand (Jansen), André Eykan (Rico), François Perier (Santi)

140 mins, HD, PG
In French with English subtitles

This 1970 classic from writer-director Jean-Pierre Melville... [is] the prototype for all subsequent heist films. The cast is extraordinary: taciturn, self-contained ex-con Alain Delon and Yves Montand, elegantly languid as a safe-cracking alcoholic, team up with Gian-Maria Volonté, a fugitive from justice. They rob a chic Place Vendôme jewellery store in a tense, wordless 30-minute sequence owing much to Jules Dassin's 1954 masterpiece *Riffifi*, before they are hunted down by a dogged cop (André Bourvil). Paris has never looked better or (with the help of a great jazz score) sounded finer. It's all unutterably cool and quite unmissable. – David Griffin, *Daily Telegraph*

High priest of tough-guy mysticism, inventor of the attitudinous thriller associated with Godard, Tarantino, and Wong Kar-wai, the late Jean-Pierre Melville returns to us this week with the local premiere of the complete 140-minute version of his 1970 buddy-manhunt-caper cum crypto-western *Le Cercle rouge*, presented – in a restored colour print – by his acolyte John Woo.

Prefaced by one of Melville's patented fake Buddhist quotes, *Le Cercle rouge* is a work of leisurely development and tragic inevitability – so formalised it seems natural for the criminals to wear jacket and tie as they waft through a posh, nocturnal Paris... The heist at the movie's centre is choreographed like a commando raid or a bullfight, with the dapper, self-possessed Delon a grim matador in white gloves and a full face mask. Afterward, Jansen is willing to forgo his share of the loot; to participate in taking the Place Vendôme jewellery store is reward enough.

Jansen is pursued by his demons; Vogel by an Interpol cop; Corey by the mob. The existential doom is so thick you could spread it on a baguette. As deliberate as it is, *Le Cercle rouge* does not lack for suspense. The elegantly functional script pivots on a neat series of reversals and chance intersections. Despite the presence of Euro stars Delon and Montand, the tone is less preening than businesslike – stately rituals performed by a cast of solitary men in trench coats. (Melville's notion of a gallant woman is the nightclub cigarette girl who silently presents Corey with a single rose, as the noose that is *Le Cercle rouge* begins to tighten.)

The Melville world is so specific to the movies that it verges on abstraction, although his streamlined fatalism is enlivened by odd bits of business. The bloodhounds pursuing Vogel through the woods pass a sign reading, "Niepce invented photography in this village, 1822." Jansen suffers excruciatingly literal DTs in a hovel with striped wallpaper too hideous to hallucinate. The underworld dive run by dour, spaniel-eyed Santi features a floor show that might be the prototype for a Robert Palmer video – 12 chorines in matching hooker wigs impassively manoeuvring around a tiny stage... – *Village Voice*