

THE SECOND BEST THING YOU CAN DO IN THE DARK...

JUDE

BY DAVID LEES

Jude is one of the few films at the Atlantic Film Festival that will gain a wide release and be shown in a theatre near you. Fresh from a win at the Edinburgh Film Festival and a recent Academy Award Nomination for its star Kate Winslet, this is a movie that could sport a very tempting poster.

Jude (played by Christopher Eccleston of *Shallow Grave*) is a farmer at the turn of the century, dreaming of an education in Christchurch. Thinking he is to be a father, Jude marries Arabella and all hope for an education is lost until Arabella leaves him.

In Christchurch, Jude meets his cousin Sue (Kate Winslet). Almost instantly, they fall in love but warnings by Jude's great grandmother, and his marital status, keep the two apart long enough for Sue to look elsewhere. The very man who had inspired Jude to get an education marries Sue.

For the rest of the film Jude is bounced between his great-grand-

mother — Arabella — and Sue, the love of his life.

Jude is based upon one of the darkest of Thomas Hardy's novels, *Jude the Obscure*, and 'the obscure' is exactly what the film needs.

Director Michael Winterbottom crudely attempts to take the Merchant-Ivory (*A Room With a*

View, *Sense and Sensibility*) approach to this film when he should be making a film in the spirit of *Vincent Price*, *Natural Born Killers*, and *Seven*.

The result is that the film's atmosphere rarely reflects the mood of its characters. Our point of view is often with Jude at times when we should be looking down on him. Scenery and costumes are authentic, but are by no means lush. Worse, we see all of the characters' physical attributes well; but

the lighting just does not reflect their emotions. Suffering the same fate, by lacking emotional gusto, is the score. This forces the audience to rely on the events in the movie for all of their emotional stimulation.

Even the acting couldn't break through and create intense emotions with the audience. The actors did what they could, but we weren't left alone enough to form an intense emotional bond. Witty comments did bring some laughter, but many a greater roar has been made by an audience. If Jude was portrayed as even more of a loser the audience would have laughed more, just to escape the misery.

The audience had to rely heavily on the visual shock of one scene for their emotion, but it is not enough to visually shock us in this age of sexual freedom and ultraviolence. Even a part of the shocking scene is omitted from the movie along with many other events and themes which could have intensified Jude's despair.

I could have felt creepy, depressed and pissed-off coming out of this movie. Instead, I was just annoyed.



and he goes back to him. Meanwhile, Jean Bilodeau has prepared a hideout for them since Simon's arsonist behaviour has been discovered. Simon does not accept his offer and is quite hostile towards him. Jean becomes very angry, and

This movie is about struggles. It is about Simon's struggle with his own sexuality, and also about Jean Bilodeau's struggle with his guilt, which he ultimately cannot come to terms with. It is also about Vallier's struggle with his love for Simon (his first love), and he is admirable in the way he quietly accepts Simon's rejection. The struggles are eventually resolved: Vallier is killed, and Bilodeau apparently kills himself. Simon is finally set at peace in the end when he finally uncovers the truth of what really happened to Vallier.

in a fit of rage, knocks over a lamp and sets fire to the attic. He then locks the door, runs away, and blames the fire on Simon, which is why Simon is in jail. Jean does come back to save Simon, but leaves Vallier to burn to death. Simon didn't know this as he had passed out in the fire. When the Bishop finally reveals the truth, Simon has a chance to kill him, but leaves the Bishop to commit suicide — which is the last image we are left with.

I personally did not enjoy the movie. I found the story dragged out and the constant flashbacks confusing. However, the acting was extremely natural and convincing, and the characters well developed. The audience reaction was favourable judging by the amount of applause and the comments I heard afterwards. It is a difficult movie to follow, and I would not recommend it to the passive movie watcher.

NIGHTLIFE

BY GREG MCFARLANE

Nightlife, a film set in a Scottish city park, describes the many activities which take place in this area at night. The main plot involves Bobby (Katrin Cartlidge),

a reclusive woman living in an apartment across the street from the park. From her apartment window, Bobby watches the park and takes blurry photographs of the people using it. She especially enjoys taking photos of a man she calls "Rod". The viewer has a sense that she is secretly infatuated with the wealthy dark-haired man.

When Bobby observes the kid-

napping of Rod, she calls the police to report the crime. Panic stricken, she fails to convey the details of the crime to the police and is forced out of her personal shell and her apartment to save the man from his kidnappers.

Nightlife contains many subplots. Issues such as alcohol, drugs, studying, sex and one-night stands are all tackled in a thought-

ful and at times humorous manner. In contrast to the frantic and sometimes disturbing main plot, the sub-plots are for the most part lighthearted glimpses at odd situations which probably happen every day.

Nightlife was an excellent film packed with forty minutes of premier dialogue. Intelligent and clever, this drama describes Bob-

by's fear and panic as she is thrust into a foreign situation, and contrasts her plight with just the right amount of humour so our concern for her is not lost.

This film doesn't really seem to be about anything, and it is definitely not a musical. The description of this movie includes the following: "Funny, compelling, and surprisingly blunt"; more like lame, boring and surprisingly stupid. The film supposedly "confronts conventions about style, content and film methodology." However, this seems to be an excuse for a totally disorganized movie. The first few minutes were funny, but the movie quickly goes downhill after that.

FRANK AT FIVE

Liferaft Earth and About Me: A Musical

BY ELAINE BELTAOS

Liferaft Earth (27 minutes)

A group decides to fast for one week in recognition of people around the world who are hungry. This film takes place in the 1960's, and the setting is in both a shopping centre parking lot and a chalet in the San Francisco mountains. There is no plot; this is a documentary consisting of short interviews with the fasters and clips of their week together. The participants call their fast the Liferaft, a "war against death."

Although the film does have its elements of humour (like when Frank leaves the Liferaft to go dine at a Chinese restaurant), it also leaves us with a feeling of unease: the Liferafters can look forward to the end of the week, but the people they represent cannot. A good look at the reasons behind why people protest and at the 1960's in general.

About Me: A Musical (35 minutes)

This film is supposed to be about Robert Frank's life, with Lynn Reyner playing Robert Frank. It includes shots of people sitting around, interviews with Reyner — who is supposed to be Frank — and a little bit of singing. Most of the singing is quite good, but there is hardly any of it.

LOVE ME TENDER

BY GREG MCFARLANE

Directed by Patrick Harkins, *Love Me Tender* is a touching film set in 1960 about an energetic wife and mother who is obsessed with Elvis Presley. Rose (Julie Graham) works four jobs to save money so she can one day visit Graceland.

Unfortunately, with Rose gone for most of the day, the household is not the "normal" environment that husband Bill (Stuart McQuarrie) wants. The funniest moments in the film come while watching Bill and Rose's two young sons cheerfully doing many chores that the traditional sixties housewife would do. Bill becomes annoyed that his sons are doing



"female" domestic chores and complains to his buddies at work about his erratic household.

Next, in the bonehead move of the century, Bill buys his first television with Rose's "Elvis money". Devastated, she loses all of the

spirit which had made her such an engaging person and becomes the "normal" housewife that Bill wanted. For a time, Bill enjoys having his laundry done and having the "mother of all sandwiches" in his lunchbox. He later realizes

that by spending Rose's money, he has also taken all of her spirit. In a heartwarming ending, Bill reconciles for his mistake in a way that Rose would never forget.

Love Me Tender is an enjoyable love story and timepiece. Complete with tacky furniture, clothing, hairstyles and the music of Elvis, it captures the atmosphere of 1960 perfectly. Although it follows the classic format of a love story — man and woman in love/man screws up/man atones for actions/happily ever after — it does so in a way that is funny and original. As well, we are never quite sure if Bill can make up for his actions until he finally does. I recommend this short film to anybody, even if you are not a fan of love stories. I'm not and I loved *Love Me Tender*

Looking ahead...

This is the last weekend to catch some flicks and seminars at the Atlantic Film Festival, but be warned, these films may make you think. Here are a few dangerous selections:

Thursday September 26

Tears of Stone, 7:00 p.m., Wormwoods.

Mute, 11:30 p.m., Wormwoods.

Friday September 27

The Road Taken, 7:00 p.m., Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Packing Heat, 9:15 p.m., Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Joe's Wedding, 11:30 p.m., Wormwoods.

Saturday September 27

How to Score in Atlantic Canada (Seminar), 10:00 a.m., Westin Nova Scotian.

The Usual Children, 1:00 p.m., Oxford.

The Special Effects Revolution (Seminar), 2:00 p.m., Westin Nova Scotian.

Lexx: The Dark Zone Stories, Saturday is sold out.

An extra showing has been added for Sunday September 29,

1:00 p.m. at Wormwoods.



LILIES

BY ELAINE BELTAOS

Lilies takes place in 1952, but repeatedly flashes back to 1912 in

the form of a play. The movie is about Bishop Bilodeau who is listening to a prisoner's confession. The prisoner is Simon (pronounced Simone) Doucet. The story is about Simon, his lover Vallier de Tilley and the Bishop himself, Jean Bilodeau. Simon locks the door to the confessional and the other prisoners proceed to perform a play describing the story, which the Bishop is forced to watch.

In the play, Simon and Vallier are lovers, much to the objection of Jean, until Simon decides that it is time he started "thinking about girls." He becomes engaged to a beautiful Parisienne lady. However, Vallier is still greatly in love with Simon. It doesn't take too long for Simon to realize that he doesn't feel the same love for his fiancée that he feels for Vallier,



COLD FEVER

The best Icelandic/Japanese road movie you'll see all year!

It's playing tonight at 9:30 pm. at Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Cinema. Won Best Film, Edinburgh Film Festival, 1995

A Japanese businessman travels across Iceland in order to put the spirits of his deceased parents to rest.

