

One man's meaningless assessment of a celluloid celebration

By Azed Majeed

The 1991 Festival of Festivals is over for another year. And this is my cheap, meaningless assessment of this great local celebration of celluloid.

Before I begin, however, let me make this important point: all frequent festival-goers will have their own opinions about the best and worst films, and the festival in general. I am but one voice among many. Only through love and tolerance of other voices, regardless of race, creed or colour, can we, as a community, come to a harmonious interpretation.

Yet, I feel the need to say that, out of all opinions, mine is the most important...WHO GOT THE PRESS PASS? HUH?...WHO?...WHILE YOU WERE STANDING IN LINE FOR HOURS WAITING TO SEE SOME FILM THAT WILL BE RELEASED NEXT WEEK, I BREEZED RIGHT INTO THE PRESS SCREENINGS TWO MINUTES BEFORE THE FILM STARTED...AND I WAS ALLOWED TO BRING GUESTS...SO, DON'T BOTHER ME WITH YOUR PETTY AND WORTHLESS OPINIONS, JUST PAY ATTENTION!!! MAYBE YOU'LL LEARN SOMETHING, FORCHRISSAKES!!!!

So, here is my cheap, meaningless assessment of the Festival.

Thursday, Sept. 5

Opening night. The Festival got under way in the usual exciting, exhilarating fashion with Bruce Beresford's *Black Robe*. *Black Robe*, huh?...hmmmm...I think that's what I was wearing AT HOME while watching *The Simpsons*. Those opening night gala's are full of Industry Scum anyway...
Next!

Friday, Sept. 6

Oh, screw this diary format...who's got time? Here is my list of the of the best and worst films at this year's Festival. I will be using a totally arbitrary and utterly meaningless, *Now Magazine* rip-off rating system:

Excellent (EEEE)
Pretty Good (EEE)
Fair (EE)
Piece of shit (E)

Barton Fink (EEEEEEEEEE)

The latest from the Coen brothers is simply the best film of the year. Beware of idiot critics who will try to avoid conformity by giving it a negative review...DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT!!

Nouvelle Vague (EEEE)

Hey, it's Godard.

He No Juguchi (EEEEEEEEEEEE)

Although not as technically sophisticated as *Barton Fink* or *Europa*, first time feature film director, Takanori Yoshio's *He No Juguchi* was my personal favourite. A thoroughly engrossing film about the despair of youth in Japan; this film moves easily between scenes that charm beautifully to scenes that stun with earnest seriousness. If this film ever gets released, don't miss it!

Prospero's Books (EEEE)

Another lesson on ways to watch film, director Peter Greenaway's latest offering is a take on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Greenaway's films are never easy to watch, yet they always reward the patient viewer. Using a mixture of film and High Definition Television technology, Greenaway has produced the most visually elaborate and utterly artistic film ever made.

The Leader, His Driver, and the Driver's Wife (EEEE)

A fascinating documentary concerning director Nick Broomfield's attempt to interview Eugene TerreBlanche, the leader of the neofascist Afrikaner resistance movement. A film as much about the



Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix share a serious moment in Gus van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho*. It is a strange film, but it is a strange review in an even stranger world...

filmmaking process as it is about the megalomaniacal leader. A must see.

Love in the Time of Hysteria (EEEE)

First time feature film director Alfonso Cuaron has crafted a very funny and lightning-paced film about a sexually hyperactive man who is given his come-uppance by the women he has wronged. An entertaining and stylishly crafted film from Mexico.

Days of Being Wild (EEEE)

This film from Hong Kong, directed by Wong Kar-wai, offers one of the most original narrative techniques ever utilized in films. Shifting narrative perspectives with each new character, the film deals with individuals who have lost their sense of history and tradition who, having constantly searching for something to give their lives meaning. Beautifully shot and edited, this film should not be missed.

Mediterraneo (EEEE)

From Italy comes this extremely charming and poignant comedy. Directed by Gabriele Salvatores, it centres around eight Italian soldiers who are sent to garrison an isolated and strategically unimportant Greek island during WWI. With the loss of their radio they are cut off from the war. Each man's personality slowly changes as they become enamoured of the paradise they have chanced upon.

This is an excellent anti-war film, a genre we definitely have not outgrown.

My Own Private Idaho (EEEE)

A very strange film...yeah, strange...directed by Gus Van Sant (*Drugstore Cowboy*). About two young male prostitutes, played by River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves, this film is actually an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part One* and *Henry IV Part Two*. Did I mention strange?...you gotta see it, man.

As for bad films, a few of the worst were: *New Shoes*, a pretentious, self-

arts

indulgent piece of left-wing crap; *The Rapture*, a really, really moronic take on religion, starring Mimi Rogers — STARRING MIMI ROGERS? Figure it out —; *The General's Son*, from Hong Kong, deals with...ZZZZZZZ; and, Sean Penn's *The Indian Runner*, a slow-moving bag of cliches with way too much acoustic slide guitar on the soundtrack.

This year's Festival was mired with mishaps. The TTC strike did not, diminish attendance; however, the additional traffic and extra carbon dioxide made things hard for people waiting in line for long periods of time.

Even more difficult to stomach during those long lineups were people who felt it necessary to broadcast their really moronic opinions about films they had seen. Let's make a new rule for next year's Festival, shall we? NO LOUD, OBNOXIOUS, DILETTANTISH PONTIFICATING IN LINE!...except, by me...after all I have a press pass.

This rule should also extend to people who pass an immediate judgement on a film at 100db's one second after the film ends. Comments concerning films just seen should not be made until you are at least one hundred feet from the cinema.

AND ANOTHER THING: NO NEGATIVE COMMENTS ABOUT *BARTON FINK*!! Like the guy I overheard after the gala screening say to his companion, "Tell me you didn't like that, please." I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I DON'T LIKE, BUDDY!...

Ahem. Anyway, it's time to sign off now...I've got to hurry, the video store is closing soon.

Good intentions, bad film

by Ira Nayman

If good intentions resulted in worthwhile films, I would wholeheartedly recommend *Clearcut*. Unfortunately, they don't; what could have been an excellent exploration of the way White business destroys Native habitats quickly degenerates into a formulaic thriller.

The film starts with white lawyer Peter Maguire (Ron Lea, who looks and acts like a member of the Canadian branch of the Baldwin family) losing an injunction to stop a northern Ontario logging company from clearcutting forest on Native land. (Clearcutting is the logging industry's modern equivalent of napalm, leaving a forest devastated.)

Arthur (Grahame Green), frustrated with the White system, kidnaps Maguire and mill owner Bud Ricketts (Michael Hogan). The balance of the film has the two city men trying to survive in the wild, uncertain of what the Native wants and fearing he might

festival of festivals

Clearcut
directed by Richard Bugajski
starring Ron Lea and Grahame Green
produced by Cinexus

kill them both.

The early scenes of a confrontation on a logging road and Ricketts working the press effectively convey aspects of the Native struggle for the integrity of their land. As directed by Richard Bugajski (whose *Interrogation* was a sensation at last year's Festival of Festivals), these scenes are tense while also conveying fascinating information.

Unfortunately, the set-up goes nowhere after the first reel. Rob Forsyth's script is the main problem; the dialogue is largely unbelievable and the characters are poorly drawn stereotypes (the naive liberal, the smug mill owner, the Native pushed too far). Without some details about Arthur's life in particular, we cannot sympathize with his actions, or even

understand what he hopes to accomplish.

In the end, then, the story is reduced to "average White guys being terrorized by a crazy Native." I suspect this is the opposite of the effect the filmmakers intended (at least, I hope it is).

Early in the film there is a shot of the three men in a canoe dwarfed by the vastness of the lake and the forest on its shores. The scene says more about the relationship between man and nature than all of the speeches in the film put together.

If the producers had trusted Bugajski's direction more, the film would have been a lot better.

Clearcut could have been a cogent articulation of Native Canadian rage (as *Do the Right Thing*, for instance, was a cogent articulation of black American rage). That it opted for a simpler genre approach to the issues it raises is a shame.

Clearcut, which appeared at the Festival of Festivals, opens in Toronto on Friday, September 20.

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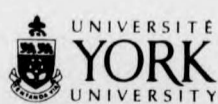
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