

ARTS



Rosie meets Guildy: Corpses Rise

by Ira Nayman

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead
directed by Tom Stoppard
produced by Nova Entertainment

Specifically, the problem is specificity. How do you translate the unspecific nature of a fantasy for the stage (which engages the viewer's imagination) to the ultra-specific medium of film (mired,

as it is, in concrete images)?

To take a specific example, consider *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, written and directed by Tom Stoppard from his play. *Rosencrantz and Guil-*

denstern were minor characters in *Hamlet*; Stoppard elevated them to major characters to determine what they were doing between appearances in Shakespeare's play. It turned out not to be much, but they did it brilliantly.

Going in, I wondered how the simple twilight world of the play could effectively be transferred to film. I shouldn't have worried. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is wonderful, hilarious in some places, thought-provoking in others and, ultimately, touching. Although somewhat different from the original, it captures the spirit of the play perfectly.

Stoppard, a literate, intelligent writer, has pointed out that, while the play has the events swirling around the title characters, for the film they are the ones constantly in motion. Not only does this avoid the stage-bound look of most filmed plays, but it actually accentuates the feeling that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* are on the periphery of something important, if only they could figure out what it was.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are one note characters, barely better drawn here than in *Hamlet*; nonetheless, Gary Oldman and Tim Roth portray them masterfully, catching the comedy, confusion and tragedy. We know from the start that they are doomed to die (if you're not familiar with *Hamlet*, you only have to look at Stoppard's title), and the actors manage to invest their performances with a real sense of futility and despair.



Richard Dreyfuss seems too light weight as The Player, the leader of the group of actors who play a key role in *Hamlet*. The character has a majesty that Dreyfuss, entertaining as his performance is, just doesn't seem able to carry off. Now, if Sean Connery had stayed with the part

Wow.

Stoppard's direction is assured and effective — you wouldn't even notice the bits that he chopped out because he grew to dislike them over the years. And, a new recurring sight gag in which *Rosencrantz* almost discovers important scientific principles is hilarious. Furthermore, the film's design is lush, a wonderful swirl of colour and texture. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is, like its older cousin *Waiting For Godot* (to which it bears a striking resemblance), a slapstick comedy of despair. Both explore the themes of fate versus free will and Art versus reality.

To be sure, this is a minority taste in a culture dominated by escapist entertainment. Nonetheless, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is an excellent, worthwhile film.

Not for the faint at heart



Fine, I'll use my shoe-phone then . . .

by Jim Russell

Interrogation
directed by Richard Bugajski
produced by Zespol X

Interrogation is not a movie for the faint of heart.

Seething with brutality and sadism, it is a damning indictment of the Polish government and a black eye on the face of Communism. Completed three months after martial law was declared in Poland, *Interrogation* was labelled "inflammatory" and banned in 1982 by the Ministry of Arts and Culture. It would have

remained suppressed forever if director/writer and new Canadian, Richard Bugajski had not smuggled an illegal video copy of the film into this country in 1985.

The story centers around Tonia (Krystyna Janda) a vivacious, effervescent cabaret singer, who because of a one night stand with a man is now suspected by the state of treason, is spirited away from her husband, her career and her friends by the state security police.

Five years later, after enduring harrowing mental and physical torture, starvation and a gut

wrenching episode of self destruction Tonia, is freed, her humanity, honour and dignity intact. *Interrogation* is a great movie not because of its portrayal of the dark side of mankind, but because Tonia's story represents a ringing confirmation of the human spirit.

I give it a 10 out of 10.

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