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Friday, November 30, 2007

INDIE FEATURE AND SHORT FILMS MAKE A MARK reviews by Gerald Wright

MOOD: A-OK

"BADLAND"

Directed & Written by: Francesco Lucente

Running time: 2 hours 20 minutes

Release date: November 30, 2007

Distributor: Copex

MPAA Rating: R

This is a shocking look at the aftermath of war on one returning war veteran and his family. Jerry (Jamie Draven) is a Marine reservist who was a young idealistic patriot who served his country in the first Gulf War, redeployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. As the time passes Jerry becomes a father of two sons and a younger daughter. But life is besieged by hard times and unfulfilled desires. He returns to society from the military a changed man from horrors committed that go beyond comprehension and sanity. He now lives a life of poverty, his kids afraid of his unexplained outburst of anger, his wife Nora (Vinessa Shaw) unsympathetic to nosebleeds and nightmares he suffers. Nora hides money from Jerry and refuses to pay bills, in case they need to leave. He's made a scapegoat for gas and money embezzling at his gas station position by his friend Louie (Tom Carey). His failure as a man, his actions as a soldier is the punishment that the entire family shares. With respect and dignity eluding him and the betrayal of Nora, his anger and despair drive him to commit an act so monstrous and irreversible that nothing he has experienced in combat could have prepared him for. The heinous act witnessed by his young 11 year old daughter Celina (Grace Fulton) is the basis for this narrative.

Stories of isolated incidences concerning returning vets and domestic violence have become a major problem, such as the Fort Bragg suicides. PTSD is a problem that must be addressed. Psychological and health problems must be a priority.

James Draven portrays his lead character with an astonishing and haunting intensity. His performance is matched by that of 11 year old Grace Fulton as Celina his daughter. Totally natural, she sees no evil, experiencing only love and faith. Veteran actor Joe Morton portrays Max another broken and older reservist and returning sheriff trying to recapture his life gives an exceptional performance and adds a soundtrack song. And Chandra West is a sympathetic restaurant owner who falls for Jerry. The unseen characters in this film is the featured songs by Bruce Springsteen, Ray Lamontagne and Joe Morton.

"jeffrey" (Short film)

Directed & Written by: Russell Costanzo

Running time: 14 minutes and 30 seconds

Genre: Dramedy

Produced by: Palmy Inn Productions in association with Shoebox Pictures

In this quirky film the audience is taken on a bizarre routine adventure of a man who suffers from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Jeffrey (Michael Neithardt) is a man set on his own peculiar and calculated procedure. Every morning he awakens and follows an exact order of things to do. But what would happen if things don't go as planned? Does Jeffrey begin again with his order of strange habits?

The reactions to those questions make this an amusing film. It is fascinating to take a poignant topic as OCD and find humor. This is a dark comedy that doesn't laugh at the illness, but finds humor in the situations Neithardt's *jeffrey* portrays on screen. Clever and witty. This is an excellent film short.

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1. [No Country for Old Men \(2007\)](#)
2. [There Will Be Blood \(2007\)](#)
3. [The Darjeeling Limited \(2007\)](#)
4. [Ratatouille \(2007\)](#)
5. [I'm Not There \(2007\)](#)
6. [Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street \(2007\)](#)
7. [Juno \(2007\)](#)

8. [Lust, Caution \(2007\)](#)
9. [Before the Devil Knows You're Dead \(2007\)](#)
10. [Black Book \(2007\)](#)

Friday, November 23, 2007

"EVERYTHING'S COOL" review by Gerald Wright

Directed by: Danieal B. Gold & Judith Helfand
Running time: 89 minutes
Release date: November 23, 2007 (NYC & LA)
Genre: Documentary
Distributor: City Lights Pictures
MPAA Rating: Not Rated

This film is categorized as a "toxic comedy" that follows a group of activists as they try to raise awareness and reduce the conflict between the understanding scientists and closed minded politicians regarding Global Warming. The main issues are refraining from using fossil fuel.

The documentary focuses on "global warming messengers" from 2003 to 2007. Their mission is to find the right image, the powerful dialogue or the political hot button that will move reluctant citizens and elected officials to take meaningful action on climate change. This is through the efforts of Bill McKibben, the "The Poet Laureate" of global warming who published *The End of Nature* in 1987. Ross Gelbspan, "The Columbo of Climate Change", who recently came to terms that his decade of writings, interviews, public readings and policy discussions have come to nothing and is ready to toss in the towel. But every time he gets a second thought on the issues, he is back in the fight. Dr. Heidi Cullen, a Weather Channel climatologist who is exclusively dedicated to covering the global warming beat on cable television. She turn her academic persona into a marketable t.v. personality to get the word out. Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, took the message to a higher level. These two eco-messiahs are known as the "Bad Boys of Environmentalism" because of their radically explosive means they critique the movement. Rick Piltz, the whistle blower, whose job was to prepare scientific reports to congress on the latest research on climate change. Repressed and depressed by political censorship blew the lid off the White House's scandalous manipulation of global warming science. And last on the list of messengers is Bish Neuhouser, an everyday guy in Park City who finds himself frustrated by the chaos. He decides to convert his 1970's car from fossil fuel petro to home made bio-diesel (vegetable oil).

This fascinating film is by no means a comedy, but it does take a satirical look at the way the world is today. All the while, the planet is melting and in the Artic the native people are experiencing dramatic and calamitous warming in their communities.

Wednesday, November 21, 2007

"HITMAN" review by Gerald Wright

Directed by: Xavier Gens
Running time: 1 hour 40 minutes
Release date: November 21, 2007
Genre: Action Thriller and Adaptation
Distributor: 20th Century Fox
MPAA Rating: R

In June 2007, Eidos Interactive released the boxset *Hitman Trilogy* video game. This adaptation for the silver screen is perhaps not as exciting but entertaining. Using Europe as the backdrop, Agent 47 (Timothy Olyphant of *Deadwood* and *Live Free or Die Hard*) is the good bad-guy lead character. He is a mysterious and complex man with contradictions. He was tutored in a religious order by the world's deadliest criminals in the art of killing as a child. Their mission is to snuff out evil doers lurking in the world of politics. He is part of a unique team of assassins with no names and known by the last two digits barcoded on the back of their bald heads.

Olyphant portrays a brilliant and charismatic professional assassin genetically engineered to rid the world of bad guys. But in this plot he is set up to be the target by his own people. He happens to get involved in a double cross and soon finds himself as being the hunted rather than the hunter. He learns compassion with the help of a Russian prostitute named Nika (Olga Kurylenko) who is a piece of the espionage puzzle. With Interpol agent Yuri Marklov (Robert Knepper) one step behind him, the elusive Agent 47 is on the move throughout this flick.

This film isn't a "007" movie, but if you are looking for some good ol' razzle dazzle shoot outs, car chases and cool martial arts fight scenes this movie will do the job. Video gamers and young audiences will find this to be a good action flick. I'm neither of the two and I was entertained.

This Week

Opening Movies

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- [The Killing of John Lennon](#)
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New Video Games

- [NBA Live 08](#)
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New Videos/DVDs

- [Shoot 'Em Up](#)
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Sunday, November 18, 2007

"THE MIST" review by Gerald Wright

Directed by: Frank Darabont
Running time: 127 minutes
Release date: November 21, 2007
Genre: Horror and Adaptation
Distributor: MGM/Dimension Films (The Weinstein Company)
MPAA Rating: R

This film adaptation of Stephen King's 1980 novella by the same title follows a violent thunderstorm in a small Maine town outside of a military installation. Artist David Drayton (Thomas Jane), his young son Billy (Nathan Gamble) and their neighbor Brent Norton (Andre Braugher) drive to the local supermarket to get supplies. Once they arrived they find a small band of the town citizens holed up in the store with fear of a strange mist lurking in the air. Refusing to concede to the fear factor, Norton a hot shot attorney refuses to allow himself to accept the fact that deadly horrifying creatures are outside in the mist. Among the citizens is a religious fanatic named Mrs. Carmody (Marcia Gay Harden) who spear heads a mob to sacrifice souls to satisfy the demons. As the deadly creatures begin attacking the town's people, everyone must fight for survival. Meanwhile questions are asked about a top secret experiment the military is conducting called "The Arrowhead Project". The story is not about the monsters lurking outside of the supermarket, but the demons within the people who are turning on one another. The tension in this tale was like watching a pressure cooker of fear. The versatile Marcia Gay Harden gave an excellent performance which generated a major part of the suspense in this terrorizing movie. I'm not a spoiler, but be sure to catch the conclusion of this film. It is a masterpiece of a finale. Only an ending that Stephen King could imagine and Frank Darabont could direct.

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Friday, November 16, 2007

"BEOWULF" review by Gerald Wright

Directed by: Robert Zemeckis
Running time: 1 hour 45 minutes
Release date: November 16, 2007
Genre: 3D-Imax Digital Animation/Action/Adventure/SciFi/Fantasy
Distributor: Paramount Pictures (US), Warner Bros. (Int'l)
MPAA Rating: PG-13

Academy Award winning director Robert Zemeckis, screenplay writers Roger Avary and Neil Gaiman tell the story of the oldest epic tale in the English language with modern technology through digital enhanced live-action. In the age of heroes comes the mightiest warrior of them all, Beowulf (Ray Winstone). After destroying overpowering the demon Grendel (Crispin Glover), he is hailed a the new king of this mythical Scandonavian country. But when he inherits the throne from King Hrothgar (Anthony Hopkins), he incurs the undying wrath of the demon beast's ruthlessly seductive mother (Angelina Jolie), who will use any means to get revenge.

The actual Old English poem of Beowulf was written somewhere between the 7th century and the 12th century. But the story had been told for centuries before that. The only people in the 7th century who knew how to write were monks. So, it could be assume they did a lot of editing. Many of the themes were lifted from the Bible on a herioc man's life fighting his feelings of good and evil and the price of glory. Thus giving life to this great action-adventure-mythological-epic world of monsters, seductresses and strange creatures.

Beowulf is a cinematic marvel that captures your soul with amazing 3D Digital action. It is a fascinating narrative created from medieval poems and legends so exciting that it will have you gripping your seat. The supporting cast cast of Robin Wright-Penn, John Malkovich, Brendan Gleeson and Alison Lohman gave great performances in this epic flick.

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