

Spring 2020

FILM TRaC*

*teen reviewers
and critics



REVIEWS

Requiem For a Dream

(2000, dir. Darren Aronofsky)

Darren Aronofsky's 2000 feature *Requiem For a Dream* is an utterly devastating look at the despairing effects addiction brings upon people. It follows Harry Goldfarb (Jared Leto), his girlfriend Marion (Jennifer Connelly), and his best friend/partner Tyrone Lewis (Marlon Wayans) on their quest to achieve drug trade success while also falling victim to severe substance abuse. There is a separate storyline that follows Harry's mother, Sara Goldfarb (Ellen Burstyn) on her mission to be on TV. What is so captivating about these stories is the way they mirror each other; the deterioration of the characters' fates all reflect one another.

The editing, by Jay Rabinowitz, is flashy, and contributes to the loud tone of the film. This is a movie which knows exactly how it is going to make viewers feel, and Rabinowitz utilizes that knowledge to incorporate techniques not typically seen on screen. Scenes involving Harry and Marion would be sometimes split, a reminder that these characters are alone, but alone together. This may not be a hard symbol to dissect but it is undeniably effective. Also, a choice is made to show a sequence of eyes dilating whenever the drugs are used. It goes by quick, like in the blink of an eye, showing the audience how fast the actual high lasts, and the misery that comes after.

Ellen Burstyn gives an outstanding performance, certainly making each scene with her the highlight of the film. Her convincing facial expressions and the way she delivers dialogue so passionately demonstrate dedication to the portrayal of such a complex character. A loving mother, a former wife, a woman who desperately seeks something to be alive for, and somebody who is just so terribly alone are all defining characteristics of

Sara, which Burstyn translates wonderfully to screen. (Matthew Libatique, the cinematographer, filmed a scene where Ellen Burstyn delivers a monologue about being old and was unable to have the camera stay on focus because he could not stop from crying. Aronofsky used this take in the final version.)

Aronofsky designs the story so the characters are destined for failure from the very beginning. Knowing this, however, does not make Burstyn's ending less emotional in any way. Compared to the other characters, she manages to garner the most sympathy: she is an old lady with a dream that destroyed her.

Requiem for a Dream has been executed extraordinarily, and inspects the real definition and consequence of addiction. I wish to recommend this film to all, but

warn against seeing it on a good day. It is too full of anguish to be viewed on a day like that. Also, I advise against putting this on while having a terrible day—it will definitely make it worse.

Emily Auringer

■

The Whistlers

(2019, dir. Corneliu Porumboiu)

An ambitious deadpan crime thriller from Romania, *The Whistlers* follows Cristi (Vlad Ivanov), a police officer deeply entangled in a web of dangerous criminals, including Zsolt, a prominent money launderer, recently arrested in Bucharest. At the beginning of the film, Cristi arrives at the Canary Islands for a single purpose,

to learn Silbo Gomero, a whistling language developed in the islands, as part of an elaborate plot to free Zsolt. What follows is the most polarizing film I have seen in a while.

The borderline convoluted plot of *The Whistlers* is told in a nonlinear fashion, with the narrative cutting between various extended flashbacks that only begin to make sense around the halfway mark. This choice never feels fully justified and contributes to a feeling of confusion that lingers until the credits roll. As a result, the audience never has a chance to grow emotionally invested in any of the characters or the relationships between them.

As can be expected in a thriller like this, there are many twists, turns and betrayals throughout, many of them involving Gilda



(Cartinel Marlon), Zsolt's girlfriend and *The Whistlers'* resident Femme Fatale. The possible romantic relationship between Gilda and Cristi becomes a major plot point in the lead up to the climax, but instead of feeling earned, it feels like a contrived set-up.

From a purely production standpoint, *The Whistlers* is exceptionally well-made. The lightning and sets are atmospheric, with a clear eye for detail, including a fun *Psycho* reference for audiences to pick up. Too bad that attention to detail didn't extend to the editing or script.

Joseph Hillyard

■

The Whistlers is a dark, yet riveting thriller about crime in Romania that follows a police officer, Cristi, who both enforces and strays from the law.

Very early on audience members understand that Cristi is engaged with money launderers and various other criminals, and he seems to be in over his head. The film starts with him arriving in the Canary Islands to learn a language of simply whistling. There he meets many more criminals, and he encounters Gilda, a beautiful, cunning, and quick woman who acts as love interest to Cristi, without the audience ever truly understanding her feelings toward him.

This film moves very non-sequentially, and it takes a while before audiences fully understand what's going on. While Cristi is the main character, the story is told in different narratives. This leads to disconnected chapters and storylines that leave viewers trying to understand what is happening for the majority of the film. Thus, it is challenging to be completely immersed in the movie. The audience never actually has the opportunity to truly understand each character. There is no investment in the characters' personal plot, and so while you may be rooting for a happy ending for a specific person,

emotions don't tend to get in the way of enjoying this film. The consequence of this is, when the film is over, the audience cannot contemplate how the film made them feel or reflect. Rather, they are still trying to piece together the plot.

While there was a lack of empathy for each character, it was exciting following a story that showed so many perspectives and was filled with action. Although this film at points was confusing, it was entertaining the entire time and soon enough I forgot about the subtitles altogether and was fully immersed in the story. I recommend this film to people with a thrill for crime.

Sophie Kelleher

■

Moonlight

(2016, dir. Barry Jenkins)

Moonlight is an empowering coming-of-age story that shows the hardships of living in a rough Miami as a homosexual with a single parent with a drug addiction.

The film is split into three chapters. In chapter one, Chiron is a young boy who didn't speak much, very timid and hard to open up. He meets this fatherly figure almost out of nowhere (it's hard to connect how he was able to find him). Juan wants to take him out to eat, and does all of these things for him, like let him stay at his place and eat at his house, despite being quiet and not saying much. Juan notices this and also wants to speak to his mother about him. He's the one that deals drugs to Chiron's mom, so he knows that Chiron's

mom was negligent and wasn't doing the best job raising him. Chiron's mom does not want him to get into her son's head, even though she has a drug problem and won't do a good job raising him by himself.

In Chapter two, Chiron is still quiet and antisocial. His mom is still a drug addict and people at his school continue to make fun of him because of his sexuality, even though he doesn't publicly show that he's a homosexual. A new friend is introduced in this chapter whose name is Kevin. He's a very friendly person to Chiron. Kevin comes off as heterosexual during the first half of the chapter. Chiron doesn't show any feelings towards him or anyone/anything in general. Chiron's experiences toward Kevin change throughout the chapter. He has his first sexual experience

rehabilitation center, and he is dealing drugs in Atlanta. He is seen as someone tough on the outside, but inside clearly vulnerable and dull. In the middle of chapter three, he gets a call from Kevin. It's been ten years since they've last seen each other and Kevin wants to know how Chiron is doing so he invites him to the diner that he works at. They meet and have a conversation about what each had been up to. Chiron still seems quiet and subtle when he speaks to him, almost as if he'd never met him before. Chiron's personality pretty much remains unchanged, until he finally comes clean about his emotions. As the movie reaches its end, Chiron and Kevin are seen sitting together: a sign of long awaited acceptance.

This movie was very thought-provoking to watch. It allows viewers to think about

what other people may be going through in their lives. Chiron is a perfect example as to why a person who is young would be as quiet and antisocial as he was. Growing up homosexual is one thing, but when you have a single parent in your household, who is addicted to drugs, and on top of that you don't even have any siblings, it can have a huge impact on the

mentality of ones well-being. The movie calls for a stir of emotions in each chapter, raw in all aspects, and it makes sense as why it would end the way it did.

Litzy Estrada

■



with him. That doesn't change him much, though.

Chapter three shifts directly to his adulthood. Chiron is a young adult and even though his appearance is different, he is still a pretty quiet person who doesn't express himself much in terms of his sexuality. His mother is now at a drug

ESSAY

The Wicker Man

(1973, dir. Robin Hardy)



In 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail on a journey to reach India. However, he never did, as there were two continents that blocked the path. It seems that at the time he believed that the landmass was Asia. However, living on the land were many tribes of indigenous people. Columbus and his men enslaved, raped, and murdered countless natives. All while preaching that his way of life was better than theirs, that the natives' cultural practices were foolish and savage.

In 1973, the British film *The Wicker Man* was released to unremarkable fanfare. It tells the story of a devout Christian policeman from the Scottish mainland called Sergeant Howie, visiting an isolated Scottish island to investigate the case of Rowan, a missing girl. While there, he witnesses spectacles he deems heretical through his hidebound skeptical spectacles. The town has paganist values and bases much of its society around it. It has relaxed attitudes towards both sex and death which our protagonist is incredibly disturbed by. He gets extremely frustrated and seemingly fearful when something "immoral" happens. For example, one townspeople tries to seduce him one night, but he resists, only to ejaculate angry words at her the next day.

The townspeople seem to have a close relationship with nature, with rabbits and

trees representing humans after death. They staunchly believe in reincarnation. This theme of death giving birth to life is present throughout the movie, with women jumping over fires in the hope to get pregnant. Howie remarks to the leader of the town, Lord Summerisle, that the ceremony is preposterous, that no woman can get pregnant without intercourse with a man, but the leader retorts that by that logic, the Virgin Mary is just as ridiculous.

The day before May Day, Sergeant Howie is supposed to leave, however, the plane seems to have broken down—it seems foul play is involved—and he must stay for the celebration. After finding a picture of a poor harvest, Sergeant Howie comes to the realization that the villagers will sacrifice Rowan in exchange for a more plentiful harvest. He decides he must save her. He goes back to his hotel, informing the innkeepers that he'll be staying for a while longer.

That night, he tucks himself into bed, but before he falls asleep he hears the innkeepers talking to each other about burning him to death while he sleeps. After they have retreated to their respective rooms, he sneaks in and ties up one of the innkeepers, donning the innkeeper's costume: The Fool.

Attempting to trick the locals into thinking that he's the innkeeper, Howie goes out for the celebration. Together he and the townspeople march in a parade, and eventually come upon the location of a cave, where Lord Summerisle appears with Rowan. Howie takes off his mask and runs to save Rowan. They traverse through



Portrait of a Fool, etching by Philip Galle, 1537

the cave together, townspeople running after them, and Rowan leads him to an exit. However, waiting there on the other side is none other than Lord Summerisle, who reveals that Sergeant Howie was the sacrifice all along. Desperately looking for places to escape, he returns to the edge of a cliff again and again. The townsfolk then force him to a field with a large wooden man in it. He is forced into it and locked inside. Lord Summerisle then lights the

feet of the structure with a torch, and the structure slowly burns. When Howie is trapped inside the Wicker Man, he prays to his God. He prays that maybe he survives—or, if he dies, he's sent to Heaven. He prays that he won't be damned to fire and flames forever. Below him the townspeople sing a cheerful hymn. And while he burns, he is uncertain, but they are not.

In medieval times, there was often a court jester, or a fool. The fool would act



ignorant for the amusement of royalty. He would even be allowed to mock them, where as if others did, they could be punished. Throughout *The Wicker Man*, Sergeant Howie openly disrespects Lord Summerisle and the town's lifestyle, and the townsfolk seem not to notice it. However, the entire time he stayed on the island was a game the town was playing at his expense. He acted ignorant and disrespectful and they let him live. Well, until the last scene.

By then, it's too late: he had many chances to save himself, but he took none of them; that's why he must be sacrificed.

Howie is not only devout, he's iconoclastic to their way of life. Sergeant Howie shows parallels with Christopher Columbus and other colonizers. He forces his religion on the native people of a land, while dismissing their beliefs—typically ones regarding the natural world.

What separates modern religions from

older ones is this, the relationship to the world around you. As society has grown, we regard ourselves and our actions less and less as a part of nature, even though we are. Sergeant Howie forces his monotheistic views down the townsfolk's throats, all while shaming them for holding "absurd" beliefs. And while the island believes in sacrifice, it doesn't seem to be motivated by fear. Everybody but him wants to participate.

The Wicker Man is an alternate history. "What would have happened if natives had fought back, and won against the colonizers?" It shows a more simple way of life. By the end, you aren't hoping that Howie survives. You feel more empathetic to the islanders. Why should some fool tell them how to live their lives?

Sasha Wolf-Powers

REVIEWS (cont.)

Uncut Gems

(2019, dirs. Safdie Brothers)

Uncut Gems, the latest film from the Safdie Brothers, is a tense, stressful, and chaotic crime dramedy that follows

Whenever Howard gets any closer to paying off his debt, he chooses to make bets with the money. He is a character who does not learn his lesson but you cannot help but sympathize and wish the best for him.

Adam Sandler does an excellent job in his portrayal of the character. He is



Howard Ratner (Adam Sandler) a Jewish jeweler in the Diamond District in 2012. Ratner gains possession of a gem said to be worth a lot and plans on using it to pay off a debt to his brother-in-law. The film focuses on Howard over the course of a few days as he faces many problems trying to pay off this debt, juggle his gambling addiction, his relationship with his ex-wife, and his affair with a mistress, and the henchmen of his brother-in-law who are in search of the money he owes.

It is clear that Howard is obsessed with gambling—he lives off the adrenaline rush he gets from making bets. In order to satisfy his addiction, Howard continuously borrows money and then bets the money.

charming and charismatic. This results in the audience always rooting for Howard, even after he digs himself deeper and deeper into a hole.

Uncut Gems leaves the audience on the edge of their seat the whole way through. The sound design is really hectic, characters are shouting loudly at each other as they argue, and there are multiple conversations occurring at the same time. The cinematography of the film is very rugged and anxiety-inducing. There are many close-ups and heavy movements that easily grab your attention. The pacing is very fast and tense; it keeps the audience glued to the screen and rarely gives them any chance to relax. The score is made of

magical synths that give an 80s vibe, and the music changes based on the emotional intensity of a scene it complements the setting perfectly.

This all culminates in a climax in this exhausting roller-coaster of a film that will leave the audience in a sweat and with a racing heart beat.

Roniel Pimentel

■

Le Samourai

(1967, dir. Jean-Pierre Melville)

Jean-Pierre Melville's 1967 feature, *Le Samourai*, serves as a good introduction to his neo-noir style. The film opens with a silhouette of a man, later revealed to be Jef Costello (Alain Delon), presumably in his bedroom, where there is little decor. There is a caption that reads "there is no solitude greater than a samurai's unless perhaps it is that of a tiger in the jungle."

The very first word spoken only comes at the ten minute mark. Instead of dialogue, Melville relies on a powerful score that is strikingly loud for a purpose of conveying the mysterious nature of the characters. And boy, these actors commit wonderfully to the ambiguity they are meant to portray!

Jef's past is unspoken of, and his

emotional detachment from each situation and person is apparent in the way there is nothing behind his eyes. Cathy Rosier, who acts as Valérie, is spectacular with the way she refuses to allow her motives to be obvious. Nathalie Delon also puts on a wonderful performance, making her character's gullible nature be both sympathetic and exasperating.

The film builds to an intense second half. Jef not only has to hide from the police force, but the people that hired him as a samurai in the beginning. Everyone is out to get him, except the two people willing to bestow their love or trust upon him; love and trust he is unwilling to accept.

The cinematography is brilliant. It's raining almost always. The palette is made up of every dark color you can think of on the color wheel. The portrayal of Paris is not romanticized within this film, it depicts it as mundane and somewhat frightening. Cinematographer Henri Decaë certainly does not encourage viewers to visit France through his visualization of one of the most talked about places in the world.

The ending is uncertain, as the ultimate resolution leaves more questions than answers. It is a reasonable assumption to make that Jef is a relatively intelligent man based on context in the film, so, why would he do what he did? I am unsure, and being



unsure is intertwined with the entire theme of mystery within the film.

Emily Auringer

■

Magnolia

(1999, dir. Paul Thomas Anderson)

Magnolia is a drama that follows nine perspectives and plots, but one story. It takes place in California and follows the story of a dying old man whose life is full of regret, his nurse, his wife, a middle aged man who was a child genius in his youth, a current child genius on a game show the dying man produced, the game show host, his emotionally unstable daughter, and a cop who is interested in dating the host's daughter. Although they don't seem to have much in common, as the movie progresses viewers can see how their plots correlate and interact.

Magnolia shows deep self reflection, self-loathing, and regret. Just when the plot seems as though it can't get anymore complicated, the supernatural occurs and frogs fall from the sky. The meaning behind the frogs falling from the sky is never made completely clear, leaving audience members to wonder what the message behind it is. Personally, I found it hard to understand the purpose of the frogs, or even what the meaning behind the film was. *Magnolia* is three hours long, following multiple perspectives of different plot lines, and it is easy for the essential meaning of this film to lose its purpose to the audience.

I did appreciate how Anderson kept his viewers thinking and reflecting on *Magnolia* long after it ended. It is an intense and emotional movie that requires introspection. I highly recommend this film to anyone looking for a drama.

Sophie Kelleher

■



The Social Network

(2010, dir. David Fincher)

Mark Zuckerberg is a strangely unemotional man. His infamous reaction to getting into Harvard circled the internet for being so devoid of emotion. It would be shocking that a film about him and fellow entrepreneurs who seem to only care for success could be so interesting. Yet, director Fincher and writer Aaron Sorkin work brilliantly together and manage to create something incredibly memorable.

Told through chronological flashbacks, *The Social Network* cuts between Zuckerberg's (Jesse Eisenberg) time developing Facebook in Harvard to him in a deposition room being sued. Eduardo Saverin (Andrew Garfield) is introduced as his best/only friend, the one person who can put up with Mark's quirks and detached temperament. The ultimate degradation of their friendship is portrayed slowly, making later revelations in the film all the more chilling. More trivial than Eduardo, but still a necessity to the story, are the rowing-obsessed Winklevoss twins (both played by Armie Hammer). Their lawsuit may not carry as much emotional weight on the plot, but it adds to how much of a pain Zuckerberg was at nineteen.

Everything in this movie works, but Sorkin's screenplay works best. The

dialogue bounces, creating a constant banter that leads to characters with such distinct personalities, it convinces viewers of the unethical means they live by.

Some of the best lines are given to Eduardo—who can argue with the genius of “sorry, my Prada's at the dry cleaners along with my hoodie and my [redacted]-you flip flops?”—though, another line really stands out. Zuckerberg addresses his junior defense lawyer (Rashida Jones), saying he's not a bad guy. Her response to that was she knows, emotional testimony is typically 85% exaggeration and 15% perjury.

Not only does this reveal Zuckerberg's thought that his actions are right despite who they've hurt, it is a commentary on the movie itself. Sorkin knows not all of what he's written happened, but it's a movie and most biopics are 85% exaggeration anyway.



Fincher, known for using yellow or blue in his films, has his own style with color grading, relying on monochromatic visuals. *The Social Network* is where his use of a gritty yellow shines. The color reflects

each scene of the film, varying shades of yellow used according to how empty Zuckerberg acts. Fincher also chooses to constantly emphasize the multiple degrees Mark and Eduardo's friendship go through. This movie really would not be the same without Fincher, he inserts his own style and unique take on the story that makes for a compelling ride.

Emily Auringer

■

See You Yesterday

(2019, dir. Stefon Bristol)

A familiar story with a topical twist, *See You Yesterday* follows C.J. and Sebastian, two Brooklyn teens whose pursuit of time travel takes on an unexpected purpose: to save C.J.'s brother Calvin from being wrongfully killed by a police officer. Despite

its grim subject matter, *See You Yesterday* is optimistic in mood and some well-placed moments of humor keep the film from being a complete downer, although its bright packaging and lighthearted tone can



occasionally feel at war with the central premise.

Something I really appreciated about *See You Yesterday* is that both of its leads feel like real, flawed people. Ironically, now that I am in high school, I have grown to dislike most movies, TV shows and books with high-school-age protagonists, mostly because I find them unrealistic and annoying. Thankfully, all of the characters in *See You Yesterday* are well-written and the solid performances of the cast make them a cut above most YA protagonists.

Joseph Hillyard

■

Mommy

(2014, dir. Xavier Dolan)

“I’ll always be there for you. You’re my priority.”

If one knows this film received a standing ovation at Cannes when it premiered, they will probably go in with extremely high expectations. Dolan and his cast exceed them.

The entire film (excluding a dance sequence) is shot on a rare 1:1 ratio. It features a



prominent yellow tint throughout, despite the rather dark premise. There are scenes where one feels happy and the very next devastated, or maybe both at the same time.

Being a 25-year-old director on his fifth feature assures that each of his works has a certain passion inside of it. *Mommy* simply contains so much of that passion and it’s obvious through the bold choices made.

Dolan’s movie about a relationship between a son and mother opens with a false Canadian law stating that it is legal for parents to commit children at will. Mother “Die” or Diana (Anne Dorval) gets reacquainted with her troubled son (Antoine-Oliver Pilon) after his release from juvenile prison. They meet Kyla (Suzanne Clément) who struggles in speaking in full sentences soon after, yet both accept her completely. Soon, the three

become an unofficial family and the movie becomes their journey: the lovely ups and wrecking downs.

Emily Auringer

■

The Butler

(2013, dir. Lee Daniels)

Forest Whitaker plays Cecil Gaines, the son of a sharecropper who grew up in the 1920s as a domestic servant to a white family in the south in the 2013 film *The Butler*, directed by Lee Daniels.

He eventually gets hired as a butler for a hotel and a man notices him and hires him to be a butler in the White House. He served eight presidents as a passive witness of history with the Civil Rights Movement while going through problems of his own at home.

The film makes you ask questions about making the right decision in life; what is the best choice for you. For example, Cecil decides whether he should stick with being a butler at the White House or protest in his own way and fight for his rights. I thought that it was very moving, and it really makes



you think about that moment in history, that time period, and what you can do to help others and make a difference in the world. You definitely have good feelings after watching this film.

Katelynn Kennedy Staggs

■

The Handmaiden

(2016, dir. Park Chan-wook)

Based on the British crime thriller *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters, *The Handmaiden* shifts its setting from the dark and smoke-covered streets of Victorian-era England for the equally grim atmosphere of Japanese-occupied Korea.

Despite the change in scenery, the novel’s structure and complex twist



remain intact. However, unlike its source material, which at times felt overwritten and unnecessarily convoluted, Park Chan-wook's psychological erotic thriller never feels overburdened by its complexity.

By cutting back on the more strenuous parts of the novel, Park and his co-screenwriter, Chung Seo-kyung, create a streamlined version of the novel's plot that moves at a steady pace and avoids large exposition dumps, resulting in a suspenseful, melodramatic, and wildly entertaining thriller that benefits from the strong performances of Kim Min-hee and Kim Tae-ri.

Joseph Hillyard

■

Troop Zero

(2019, dirs. Bert and Bertie)

A competition offers Christmas (McKenna Grace) a chance to be on NASA'S Golden Record, and she gathers a group of kids just like her to become Birdie Scouts. The 2019 film *Troop Zero*, about a misfit girl in rural Georgia in 1977 who dreams about outer space, is comedic and gladdening.

The meaning of the film is friendship, sacrifice and respect for others. The film is also about finding your group, and there is another message in the film which is,



it's okay to be yourself. Overall, it is very colorful, joyful, and filled with hope. It makes you root for the characters and hope that their troop knocks down genderization and class, and they fulfill their dreams. After watching the film, you are satisfied with how the story ends whether they win or not and have positive thoughts about it.

Katelynn Kennedy Staggs

■

Bad Education

(2020, dir. Cory Finley)

Hugh Jackman has given the best performance of his career through his depiction of Frank Tassone in *Bad*



Education. Starring alongside Allison Janney in a pleasingly strong Long Island accent, they carry a film that prefers actors' talent over a thrilling script or entrancing cinematography. While by no means is this film a bore, it certainly contains a bland tone. Revisiting one of the largest education-related embezzlement scandals, Cory

Finley succeeds only by a thin margin at directing a film which convinces the viewer to care about its subject matter. If not for Jackman's layered execution, Janney's satisfying ability to represent somebody so rapacious, and Rafael Casal's clear knack for acting, this movie would just be simplified to something that should have been made for TV from the start.

Emily Auringer

■

Ordinary People

(1980, dir. Robert Redford)

It will forever be a terrible shame that this tender movie has been swept under the rug ever since its Best Picture win over *Raging Bull* outraged audiences and critics alike. A film adaptation of the novel with the same name by Judith Guest, director Robert Redford does not fail in bringing emotions to the screen. Following the life of Conrad (Timothy Hutton), his mother Beth (Mary Tyler Moore), his father Calvin (Donald Sutherland), and the many relationships formed during and before the start of the movie, it is safe to say the praise given to its cast and story was well-deserved.

This movie radiates empathy. Everything is so real and ordinary, and yet there is something so unmistakably homely about this film. It is a film that relies on

feeling and does so successfully: we care for the story because we care for the characters involved. There are so many quotes that belong in a museum—especially in scenes between Conrad and his therapist, or his mother.

The audience is left with a satisfying, perhaps somewhat harsh, but realistic ending and a movie that could replace a warm embrace.

Emily Auringer



Eve's Bayou

(1997, dir. Kasi Lemmons)

Before she would go on to direct an overdue Harriet Tubman biopic, Kasi Lemmons directed this atmospheric familial melodrama told through the eyes of young Eve Baptiste (Jurnee Smollett), a young girl in the bayou of Louisiana who watches her family's picture perfect existence crumble around her over the course of a single summer.

In keeping with southern Gothic tradition, *Eve's Bayou* incorporates



elements of mysticism and voodoo into its plot, creating an otherworldly atmosphere that adds a lingering sense of menace. That, along with a slew of strong supporting turns from Debbi Morgan, Lynn Whitfield and Samuel L. Jackson, make *Eve's Bayou* a unique and wholly entertaining film.

Joseph Hillyard

■

Rashomon

(1951, dir. Akira Kurosawa)

The 1951 film *Rashomon* is a beautiful foreign film, well directed and with wonderful actors. The film is about three versions of a rape/murder story in Japan.



It was a good crime movie, very full of suspense, but I did get a bit lost in the story line and it took me a bit to realize that we were being told different versions of the murder story.

A few remarkable parts stuck out. One was where Masako's husband and Tajōmaru, a bandit, fight in front of her to prove that they are not weak, and that they are strong men after she tells them that she's not the weak one and that they are. Another part that stuck out to me was when the Woodcutter admitted that he witnessed the whole thing and said that

the dead man was wrong. The Woodcutter didn't want to get too much involved and that's why he didn't mention that he saw the whole scene. He held it in for so long. The last thing that stuck out to me was when the priest said that he believes and trusts in the Woodcutter after saying that he doesn't trust anybody and hands him the baby.

Katelynn Kennedy Staggs

■

Dunkirk

(2019, dir. Christopher Nolan)

Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* takes place during World War II in France. Germany is advancing into France, where allied troops are trapped on the beach. *Dunkirk* follows multiple perspectives: three soldiers fighting on land, two soldiers in the air force, and a father and son and friends who experience trying to help save the allied soldiers stuck on the beach.

I really enjoyed this film, and it is important to note that it won Oscars in sound

mixing, sound editing, and film editing.



These wins were well-deserved. The sound was effective in transporting audience members away from their homes or theaters and into the lives of the characters in *Dunkirk*. The sound editing was smooth and played an essential role in telling the story as well as moving along the plot.

Sophie Kelleher



The Edge of Seventeen

(2016, dir. Kelly Fremon Craig)

The Edge of Seventeen is a coming-of-age story that shows a socially awkward teen and how hard it is to face change.

Nadine (Hailee Steinfeld) is a junior at her high school who only has one friend. As a young kid, she was bullied and viewed her life as depressing due to the problems she faced with school and her mom. Only

when she met her friend, she became more positive, as if she relied on her friend for her one and only source of happiness. This is where her social awkwardness carries her through her teen years. Any viewer can easily see how it can be a downfall if anything happens between the two of them.

Litzy Estrada



M.A.S.H.

(1970, dir. Robert Altman)

Robert Altman films are typically naturalistic but stylized and sometimes, but not always, very long. The film *M.A.S.H.*, directed by Altman, is a comedic film about surgeons during the Korean War who don't want to think about surgery or war; they want to have fun, and they aren't nice about it either. They were always drunk.

There are some funny parts in this film, especially the football game. It is an extremely long scene, but you are waiting for more to happen.

Additionally, moments of supporting each other were heartwarming. There was a lot of helping each other with work, but also helping others with personal problems.

What stuck out to me is that there is a lot of sexism in this film. All the men didn't really seem to care about how the women felt. The commanding officer didn't even care about their behavior, he didn't pay much attention to the madness.

Katelynn Kennedy Staggs

Double Indemnity

(1944, dir. Billy Wilder)

An ambitious insurance man is drawn into a dissatisfied housewife's plot to murder her husband, however not everything goes to plan. Saying anything else would spoil the suspense and delicately crafted plot.

Barbara Stanwyck is great as the housewife in question, oozing with icy



charisma and quiet menace in equal measure. Raymond Chandler also shines as her unexpected partner-in-crime and the film's narrator, making the most out of what could have been an otherwise flat character. These qualities, along with the stark black-and-white cinematography and sharp script, cements *Double Indemnity's* place as a noir classic.

Joseph Hillyard

■

Annie Hall
(1977, dir. Woody Allen)

The 1977 film *Annie Hall*, about a comedian who reminisces, or rather, recalls his long lost love for a kooky singer played by Diane Keaton, is heartwarming, comedic and romantic.

Woody Allen's character, Alvy, met Annie while playing tennis; his friend introduces her and he instantly falls for her, and so does she, and she offers to take him home, and they have a couple of drinks. They eventually start dating. Alvy and

Annie's relationship in the film has ups and downs but they always make it up to each other, whether it's being in a relationship or remaining friends.

Woody Allen's character, Alvy narrates the story by breaking the fourth wall every now and then, and brings the audience into his life, but his story always includes



Annie. It's truly beautiful, watching the relationship between them change and become something new. This is definitely a film worth watching.

Katelynn Kennedy Staggs

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MOVIE SUMMARIES

Lawrence of Arabia

(1963, dir. David Lean)

An epic in almost every sense of the word that stands as a stunning technical achievement, thanks to David Lean's direction, the sweeping cinematography and a sensitive performance from Peter O'Toole. -jh

A Star Is Born

(1954, dir. George Cukor)

A surprisingly grim musical on the pressures of fame and celebrity. While many aspects can't help but feel dated, stellar musical sequences and a great performance from Judy Garland keep this story emotionally resonant after all these years. -jh

The Interview

(2017, dir. Evan Goldberg)

A satirical take on a worldwide problem, *The Interview* follows an ongoing issue between the U.S. and North Korea. -le

Molly's Game

(2017, dir. Aaron Sorkin)

Based on the true story of Olympian-turned-poker-princess Molly Bloom. Spins a compelling story out of its subject matter, finding well matched leads in Jessica Chastain and Idris Elba, with a sharp script from Sorkin that takes full advantage of their talents. -jh



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