

FILM TRaC*

Fall 2021

*teen reviewers and critics





REVIEWS

Prism

(2021, dirs. Rosine Mbakam & Eléonore Yameogo & An van. Dienderen)

Prism is an experimental documentary that discusses the inherent racism present in the film industry, stemming from the camera failure to portray darker skin tones accurately. This raw and often uncut documentary is based around dialogues that happen within studios, theaters, film schools, and street corners of Belgium. These dialogues take a philosophical tone to clearly communicate honest and insightful sentiments on the issues they discuss. The space between these dialogues is filled with excerpts from poems and quiet still shots centered around figures staring intently into the camera.

This documentary sets out to address and discuss the ongoing effects of film's exclusion of dark skin, but takes it a step further, and dives deep into the trauma of being inaccurately perceived, and how it can affect one's self image. These discussions cut to the aforementioned quiet still shots that are demonstrative of the discussions they precede.

Although the structure of this film is unclear at times, I think it does exactly what it sets out to do. The subjects of racism and exclusion of non-white people in film are mainly discussed from first person experience which brings out many insightful and unseen perspectives on this issue. I went into this movie knowing nothing about it but its subject matter and was able to enjoy it thoroughly despite its slow pace, long silences, and piercing stares from the actors. These artistic choices may seem odd or unwelcoming on paper but on screen they add to the dialogue-heavy scenes that separate them.

Jin Coggins



Prism is an unorganized documentary that successfully throws one into the prison of thought but leaves much to be wanted. This film follows three directors as they explore the camera's connection to race, and mixes poetry, film, and conversation. It includes zoom calls, avant-garde repetition, and interviews.

I would suppose the thesis to be that cinematography was founded on making white skin look good, but through confusing cuts and endless rambling the film doesn't clearly carry it out.

It's not that I don't think it was beautiful, I do: there were incredibly artful choices that inspired emotion, but these choices



just didn't feel necessary. The film felt like multiple ideas shoved into one shaky structure—leaving an audience member overwhelmed. No idea was given the time or standing to be fleshed out.

The people who were chosen to be interviewed were brilliant choices, like the smoking French intellectuals who, while teetering between bullshit and enlightenment, babbled on until they contradicted and supported the thesis at the same time. On the other hand, the cinematography was shoddy. (Side note: it's 2021 and everyone is very sick of zoom calls—we don't need to go to a movie theatre and just see more of our life).

The film was interesting, the film was

almost well done, but the film did not need to be made. It would have made more of an impact as an article and a book of photographs.

Miranda Henry

©

Prism is a documentary regarding film not being created for black skin and the racism of it being catered to white skin, and how it was never adapted, when it could have been. This film is broken up into three different parts: there are scenes with interviews with people like directors, and people who study film, and an actress who talks about her experience as being a

black woman in the film industry. There are also a lot of repeating images, like a woman sitting down staring at the camera and a set that's gray with insects crawling on a table, and includes zoom calls with the film makers. It is very slow paced and some parts do seem to disengage the audience.

Overall, I do think it's a beautiful documentary but not engaging enough to remember all parts of the film. With a topic as important as this, it is crucial to keep your audience engaged so they can understand the importance of catering to black skin in film as much as it is to white skin. I do think someone who's interested in camerawork and studying film would find this interesting though.

Alana Garcia

■

Prism is an unconventional documentary that addresses the issue of racism in film. The film's narrative is somewhat slow and can seem boring, but the director takes creative freedom to go deeply into each aspect, and give the time that he deems appropriate to each act and to each director or cinematographer who shares his philosophy and his own understanding of cinema. Art and photography are undoubtedly one of its strongest points, and even though almost the entire film is in French and it can get tired to read subtitles, the film wraps us with its story.

Sebastian Ortiz

■

The French Dispatch

(2021, dir. Wes Anderson)

It is not unusual for a Wes Anderson film to stun an audience visually and emotionally. Through symmetrical shots, a pastel color palette, and quippy dialogue, a film of his usually succeeds in subtly mastering a thesis with spectacularly

human strategies of relating to everyday life.

The French Dispatch accomplishes all this and more. The film has the ultimate cast: it has the classic Anderson ensemble including Bill Murray, Tilda Swinton, Willem Dafoe, et cetera, but also a refreshing youthful perspective with new members such as Timothee Chalamet and Lea Seydoux.

It included old but not tired Anderson habits but incorporated color in a way I have never felt before, especially not in one of his films. Color wasn't just used for pleasure or aesthetic in this film, but as a means to an end. On the surface, color in *The French Dispatch* (mainly oranges and reds) represents youth or art, but as the repetition of it proceeds, so does the message that color represents a moment when you feel impassioned, connected to your fellow humans, and ecstasy: a moment when you feel like yourself.

A new thing for Anderson, much of this film—which is broken up into three separate but connected stories—is black and white. So, Wes leaves his own stereotypes behind by not just manipulating color but mastering the lack of it. The wannabe French auteur truly acted in a courageous manner of staying true to his style while trying new things—and it paid off.

Miranda Henry

■

The French Dispatch is very well written; the film revolves around a French newspaper and its journalists, divided by chapters, and every so often we jump to a completely different story. Anderson explores different narrative visions such as changing colors to black and white or following the story but in the form of animation. I would have liked to see more colors and not black and white so much, and I could not empathize

with certain characters sometimes, since their development has to be very fast, even though all the performances were undoubtedly phenomenal.

The French Dispatch is pure cinematography. Wes Anderson created a piece that magnifies his vision and beautiful style. The visual resources used by the production are fantastic, the composition of each scene is created very meticulously in order that each frame is precious. The lighting and the camera movements immerse us fully in the world of the film.

Sebastian Ortiz



In the small French town of Ennui, we see many perspectives and stories written by *The French Dispatch*. The

cinematography is colorful, dorky, visually captivating and, in a word, breathtaking. The scenes are very colorful and action-packed.

While watching the film, I was very engaged and liked the change between multiple stories, from a painter in an asylum, to a man writing a manifesto with a woman he's having an affair with, to a kidnapping. This and the exquisite color palette helped pave the way. All of these stories were connected and paint a bigger picture which I loved.

This movie was emotional: I felt nervous, anxious, excited to see what would happen next.

I did not enjoy how long the movie was: some scenes were a little slow and boring which made it hard to follow each story. Nonetheless, I recommend this movie to a wide range of people. It's cooky, crazy and overall, very exciting! For someone who



watched this as their first Wes Anderson film, I am dying to watch more!

Sasha Leitner

■

The French Dispatch is both a typical Wes Anderson film and his most adventurous yet. While his films usually follow a strong and cohesive formula (still front-view shots, simple pans, eye-catching color palettes, etc.), this film took more risks with the photography which included more dynamic and handheld tracking shots, but also with subject matter as well. Wes Anderson never shies away from heavier subject matters, but with this film he dives deeper into these issues on an individual basis focusing on issues like suicide, incarceration, and mental illness. However, he still manages to approach the subject matters with the lighthearted and easily digestible tone that he has come to be known for.

Jin Coggins

■

The film *The French Dispatch* is based off of a newspaper based in a French town. The art design of the sets and costumes really added to the film and even though

I live in America, I could tell it had a lot of elements that made it very French. The vividness of the coloring in the cinematography engages the audience by itself alone. The sets kind of rolled in and out like in plays which I thought was very different and intriguing how it played out.

The film is broken down into different storylines and subjects and is very easy to follow. It also has enough comedic relief really adding to the quirkiness that is known of Wes Anderson films. The acting really adds to this movie, each actor sold their role whether it was big or small.

I would recommend this movie to anyone wanting to watch a film outside of the mainstream media, wanting to see something original and yet so beautiful and entertaining.

Alana Garcia

■

Dune

(2021, dir. Denis Villeneuve)

Dune is jam-packed with action, character arc, and plot. We see our main character and Arrakis is filled with a lot of spice and the emperor of Arrakis, has sent Paul, who is part of the house of Aretis, to “go make peace”. Paul is becoming stronger,



and getting in touch with his “prophecy” which is teased throughout the film with his visions that he gets.

Throughout the whole movie we see Paul developing and being stronger and in sync with his capabilities. Accompanying these scenes of Paul’s arc is the amazing score by Hans Zimmer.

The cinematography was beautiful, it was cool toned inside and warm toned

La Haine

(1995, dir. Mathieu Kassovitz)

La Haine is a crime drama that follows three friends Vinz, Hubert, and Said as they navigate through the decline of French society on the outskirts of Paris. The film is structured around a day in their lives while they hang out, smoke weed on rooftops, have philosophical discussions,



when out in the desert. A lot of close ups of the faces of some characters in intense scenes. By the end of the movie there is a set up for *Dune part 2*, introducing new characters.

With a smooth pace to keep the audience interested, this is a beautiful movie. It is character-driven, and helps create a connection with the audience, but I do think the plot kind of gets lost. We never really understand why the emperor called the House of Aretis, when another house was involved with Arrakis. And it felt more like a set up movie than being a standalone movie. But you can definitely put that aside when watching the film. I would recommend this to fans of action movies and future meets old times setting in a film.

Alana Garcia

and get harrassed by cops.

The three all have different views on how they should respond to the tense climate in their neighborhood that has become increasingly ridden with violence, rioting, and over-policing. While Vinz contemplates using his police issue revolver (acquired during a protest) to kill a cop as revenge for the beating of a close friend, Hubert and Said try to convince him that it will only complicate their circumstances.

Although many viewers may not be familiar with the 1990s ghettos of Paris, the characters in this film are very authentic and allow the viewer to become fully immersed in their environment, almost to the point where you feel like the fourth friend in their circle. While the acting, writing, and setting are all very raw, the cinematography, camera work, and editing style are clearly intentional, and take this

film from a window into a world to an entire world in and of itself.

Jin Coggins



Porco Rosso

(1992) dir. Hayao Miyazaki

Porco Rosso stands out in the land of Studio Ghibli for its violence but blends in for its beauty. One of the legend's, Hayao Miyazaki's lesser known films, the film concerns an Italian seapilot soldier (man-turned-pig) and his narrow escapes from the law and pirates.

The watercolor backgrounds make you so relaxed you'll forget that people are dying in the foreground and the mesmerizing dialogue forces you to care.

I was truly moved by this film. Although the story is a little unconventional (with disturbing age differences in romance), I thought it was its quirks that made it so entertaining.

The film's main character, a pig-man named Porco who was reminiscent of old American war heroes, was charming but also very complicated and dynamic.

The ambiguity throughout the film



is unusual for a children's movie but not unjustified and the writing was the best I had seen in a Miyazaki film. It might take a little while to get started, and I won't lie by claiming it is for everyone (it is definitely unusual), but if you like movies don't let this one pass you by.

Miranda Henry





House of Gucci

(2021, dir. Ridley Scott)

Money, power and scandal.

House of Gucci is the story of Patrizia Reggiani (now Patrizia Gucci), a woman in her mid 20's working for her father's business, and how she skyrockets to success.

The movie was so well casted and the production, makeup and fashion were spot-on for the time period. This movie captured a beautiful romance and a nail biting tragedy all in one.

I loved the sense of creativity put into this movie especially with set design. The sets flourished in color and were so realistic and detailed. I especially loved the glamour of Italy along with New York's fashion runways. This film not only captured this story very well but there was excitement and action along the way with a new plot twist or setback at every corner. I thought Maruzio and Patrizia's relationship had some vague points in terms of how they got together and what caused

their divorce but overall, this movie was beautiful and portrayed their relationship in a unique way.

Sasha Leitner

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All the Bright Places

(2020, dir. Brett Haley)

This adaptation of the book *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven, from the bat, starts off differently from the book, creating a major tear in the biggest part of the plot.

A story about a boy that loves a girl who would do anything to make her the best version of herself, but he's struggling with bipolar disorder and everything at home and his family is all messed up, and his world is shrinking and pulling away. It follows them around during their wanderings, but is poorly edited and has weird cuts that make no sense.

The cinematography of this movie is aesthetically pleasing. The coloring and dreamy effect of some scenes are beautiful. Besides that, the film does no justice to the book at all, and has two different stories. The plot really makes this film a miss for me, and the casting as well for Finch. I only think people who have not read the book would enjoy this movie, as it could be its own stand alone film.

Alana Garcia



MOVIE SUMMARIES

Paris, Texas

1984, dir. Wim Wenders

The story of an estranged family making amends, while set in the early 1980's, is timeless and can be appreciated by anyone, regardless of age or background. The cinematography, storyline, and use of color are all done so well that each could stand alone and still be just as beautiful. *jc*

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore

1974, dir. Martin Scorsese

Alice and her young son move from motel to motel as Alice searches for the singing career she's wanted since childhood. A painful yet beautiful look at life as a single mother in America. The cinematography and use of color in this film are perfectly executed and gut wrenching when paired with the scenes of Alice's singing and piano playing. This film is as authentic and beautiful as any viewer could hope for. *jc*

Jennifer's Body

2009, dir. Karyn Kusama

Thrilling, bubbling cult film with chemistry and purpose, it uses its teenage angst to build a fun, in-touch film. A unique atmosphere of insanity and entertainment while teetering between being edgy and absurd may not be the best choice for film-snob or over the age of twenty. *mh*

La Haine

1995, dir. Mathieu Kassovitz

A black-and-white French film that writes a love letter to reality-driven characters and personal conflicts with humour, suspense, substance, and breathtaking attention to detail. *mh*

Captain Fantastic

2016, dir. Matt Ross

A cringey, millennial, out of touch, snooze. No bigger waste of time. *mh*

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