

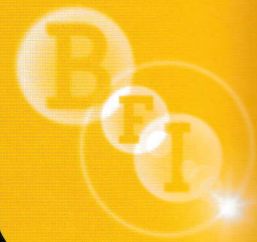
Sight & Sound

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE



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THE BEST FILMS OF 2011

OUR WRITERS CHOOSE THEIR HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

PLUS

MARTIN SCORSESE
ventures into 3D with 'Hugo'

PETER KOSMINSKY
television's rebel insider

DREAMS OF A LIFE
Carol Morley's shocking doc

MOLLY DINEEN
the nosy documentarian

NANNI MORETTI
on 'We Have a Pope'

LAS ACACIAS
and the new New Argentinian cinema

EVERY NEW
FILM
REVIEWED

MICHEL HAZANAVICIUS'S TRIBUTE TO THE SILENT ERA

THE ARTIST



THE ROUND-UP

MELISSA ANDERSON

'The Village Voice', USA

The Arbor (Clio Barnard, UK)

A Dangerous Method (David Cronenberg, France/Ireland/UK/Germany/Canada)

Jane Eyre (Cary Joji Fukunaga, USA/UK)

Mysteries of Lisbon (Mistérios de Lisboa) (Raúl Ruiz, Portugal)

To Die Like a Man (Morrer Como um Homem) (João Pedro Rodrigues, Portugal/France)

Highlights: Film critics are constantly humbled by how much they haven't seen, even in the oeuvre of a favourite performer.

While researching a piece on Catherine Deneuve I watched *Ma saison préférée* (1993) for the first time. In the third of six films she's made with André Téchiné, Deneuve plays Emilie, a woman growing estranged from her husband and her two late-adolescent children (including real-life daughter Chiara Mastroianni in her screen debut). Emilie's distance is understandable: her mother is growing frail and she and her younger, erratic brother (Daniel Auteuil) share the guilt of failing to care for her adequately. It's one of Deneuve's best, most undersung performances, a perfect distillation of a woman torn between the desire to relinquish all family obligations and the desperate need to hold her kin close.

GEOFF ANDREW

Head of Film Programme, BFI Southbank, UK

What a strange year! So many fine films and so many of them frustratingly, even fatally flawed. A large number of enormously impressive films this year fell foul of overkill, cliché or some other niggling shortcoming. (I'm thinking of the dinosaur's discovery of mercy in *The Tree of Life*, for instance, or Michael Fassbender's final, pathetic-fallacy collapse in *Shame*.) If this makes me sound permickety, remember that I'm not saying I didn't find much to enjoy and admire in these and other works; merely that 2011, for me, provided fewer fully satisfying films than usual. That said, the following certainly did the trick:

Footnote (Hearat Shulayim)

(Joseph Cedar, Israel)

The Kid with a Bike

(Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne)

Once upon a Time in Anatolia

(Nuri Bilge Ceylan)

This Is Not a Film

(Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirahmashb)

Panahi invites us into the actual and imaginative realm of his apartment, where he's confined by the sentencing of the Iranian authorities. A man who clearly lives and breathes film, he uses the camera—trained on himself more or less throughout

the movie—as a means of liberation, sending his thoughts, experiences and feelings into the wider world. At once utterly specific in its focus and wholly universal in its relevance, it's perhaps the bravest and most important home movie ever made.

True Grit (Joel & Ethan Coen, USA)

Highlights: Best screening: the Sunday-morning Cannes press show of *The Artist*—fun at last!

Best scene: the final (Guerín-directed) shot in *Correspondence: Jonas Mekas*—*JL Guerín*: Ozu, Kiarostami and other masters paid subtle, touching tribute.

Best film by a newcomer: Nick Brandestini's *Darwin*—documentary at its most compassionately, curiously humane.

Best revivals: Truffaut's *Silken Skin* (1964) and Jacques Deray's *La Piscine* (1968)—two very different but likewise piercing French studies of desire turned sour, each deserving of far greater renown.

NIGEL ANDREWS

'The Financial Times', UK

Melancholia (Lars von Trier)

Le quattro volte

(Michelangelo Frammartino)

Poetry (Shi)

(Lee Chang-dong, South Korea/France)

13 Assassins (Jūsan-nin no shikaku)

(Miike Takashi, Japan/UK)

Rango (Gore Verbinski, USA)

The first four voted themselves in on a first viewing: movies that surprise, disorient, tease, shock, provoke, excite—everything great cinema should do. *Rango* took a second viewing to reveal all its delights: a Hollywood digimation comedy spectacularly fearless in its surrealism, with the year's best voice-acting from Johnny Depp as the titular lizard lost in the far West.

Highlights: Most memorable happening at a festival: the Lars von Trier rumpus at Cannes, which sorted the censoriously self-righteous from those who think artists should have the freedom to make fools of themselves, provided they keep making good films. Most memorable cinema visit: seeing *Paranormal Activity 3* in an American cinema, with a late-night Saturday audience volubly and near-deafeningly freaked out as the fright moments accumulated.

ROBIN BAKER

Head Curator, BFI National Archive, UK

Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Werner Herzog, Canada/USA/France/UK/Germany)

A Separation (Asghar Farhadi)

Le quattro volte (Michelangelo Frammartino)

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson)

Weekend (Andrew Haigh, UK)

Highlights: The transformation of Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la lune*, 1902) through the reintroduction of his hand-painted colours.

After the British successes at Venice and Toronto, remembering that this was a vintage year for TV drama too, with *Appropriate Adult* (Julian Jarrold), *The Promise* (Peter Kosminsky) and *The Shadow Line* (Hugo Blick).

The collective gasp of horror (and delight) from the audience at the premiere of the BFI's restoration of *The First Born* (1928) as Miles Mander meets his nemesis in the form of a paternoster lift.

Clear proof that the British documentary lives and thrives on the big screen: *Senna* (Asif Kapadia), *Waste Land* (Lucy Walker & João Jardim), *Project Nim* (James Marsh).

Ken Loach's generous decision to donate his papers to the BFI National Archive.

The indefinable brilliance of a widescreen Ann-Margret singing the title and closing tracks in Sony-Columbia's Eastmancolor restoration of *Bye Bye Birdie* (George Sidney, 1963).

Favourite movie scene of the year? A toss-up between the dog/truck/Roman centurion shot in *Le quattro volte* and Charlotte Gainsbourg and Kirsten Dunst facing the apocalypse in a hut of twigs in *Melancholia*.

PETER BRADSHAW

'The Guardian', UK

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius)

A glorious film for which I am temporarily suspending my rule never to use the word 'perfect'.

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick)

Arrugas (Ignacio Ferreras, Spain)

This animation premiered at San Sebastian this year. Based on a graphic novel, it's about a care centre for people with Alzheimer's—funny and heartbreaking.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson)

Dreams of a Life (Carol Morley, UK/Ireland)

Chilling, gripping psycho-archaeological documentary about London loneliness: the case of Joyce Vincent, the young woman who lay dead, undiscovered, in her North London flat for three years

NICOLE BRENEZ

Critic, France

Abel Ferrara in Lucca

(Gérard Courant, France/Italy)

A modest and faithful record of some moments at the Lucca Film Festival in October 2010, with songs and speeches by Ferrara.

The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu

(Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceausescu)

(Andrei Ujica, Romania)

Far from Afghanistan (John Gianvito, Jon Jost, Minda Martin, Travis Wilkerson, Soon-mi Yoo, Rob Todd, Pacho Velez, USA, in progress)

To commemorate the tenth year of the invasion in Afghanistan, a collaborative work analysing the logic and consequences of American imperialism.

Impressions (Jacques Perconte, France)

Digital fresco about Normandy landscapes that renews the forms of editing.

Video Letter (Adachi Masao, Japan)

Adachi, still a political prisoner in Japan in the sense that he cannot travel abroad, sends a video letter to his audience to explain his ideals.

Highlights: Book: *Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000* (edited by Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid), a scientifically and visually magnificent survey.

Film/Exhibition: 'Correspondence(s)/The Completed Letters', curated by Jordi Ballo for the CCCB (Barcelona, Spain): five video-letter exchanges between filmmakers from different parts of the world, including

José Luis Guerín and Jonas Mekas, Albert Serra and Lisandro Alonso, Isaki Lacuesta and Noami Kawase, Jaime Rosales and Wang Bing, Fernando Eimbcke and So Yong Kim.

Retrospective: 'Minding the Gap: The Films of Dick Fontaine', curated by Michael Chaiken at the Anthology Film Archives, New York. A great British stylist and fighter with a knack for working exactly where the wind of history begins to blow.

EDWARD BUSCOMBE

Critic and academic UK

This year I was again on the jury for the Satyajit Ray prize, awarded to the best first feature shown at the London Film Festival.

There were 40 films in contention. The standard was high, and we would have been happy to give the award to any of four or five films. Two stood out. One was:

Las acacias

(Pablo Giorgelli, Argentina/Spain)

This had a deceptively simple, even banal plot in which a middle-aged and rather grumpy lorry driver is obliged to give a lift to a young woman and her baby. In the course of the long drive, gradually these two people get to know and even like each other. Properly speaking, one should say three people because the baby certainly has a personality of its own.

Eventually, after much discussion, the award went to the other that stood out:

Li and the Poet (Andrea Segre, Italy)

It's about the relationship between a Chinese immigrant woman and an elderly fisherman, an unlikely story handled with delicacy and aplomb, and set in a wintry Venice, though not in those parts the tourists normally see.

Archipelago (Joanna Hogg, UK)

That rare thing these days, a British film of restraint and precision, minutely detailing the kind of suppressed hysteria that seems so typical of our upper middle class.

As If I Am Not There (Juanita Wilson, Ireland/Macedonia/Sweden/Germany)

I couldn't say I enjoyed this film about the horrors of rape in the Bosnian conflict. It's harrowing and brave, exploring emotions one wishes people didn't have—not all of them belonging to the perpetrators.

True Grit (Joel & Ethan Coen)

Not the Coens' best but it has a wonderful performance by the sainted Jeff Bridges.

DAVE CALHOUN

Film editor, 'Time Out' London

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr)

Once upon a Time in Anatolia

(Nuri Bilge Ceylan)

Pina (Wim Wenders, Germany/France/UK)

We Need to Talk About Kevin

(Lynne Ramsay)

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson)

Highlights: Just getting to Fespaco (the biannual festival of African film) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in the same week in February that events took a distinct turn for the worse in Libya—my original flight was via Tripoli—felt like a feat. But 12 days later, seeing the festival's big award-winners carrying their trophies through a sweaty, packed, post-midnight Ouagadougou airport with everyone clapping, just hours after the closing ceremony in the city's stadium, was a real thrill that made the gap between filmmakers and audiences feel pleasingly small.

I also bumped into Mark Cousins in Ouagadougou, camera in hand, and he deserves a name-check for his masterly TV series *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*.

TOM CHARITY

Vancity Theatre program co-ordinator, Canada

Once upon a Time in Anatolia

(Nuri Bilge Ceylan)