

Tony Timpone's Elegies: Tony Tours Tribeca

Written by Tony Timpone
Wednesday, 11 May 2011 10:22



This spring, from April 20 through May 1, I attended the ever-growing Tribeca Film Festival again (see more [here](#) , including info on the fest's new distribution platforms). It's always a gas when you have a major film fest in your town and just a short subway ride away. I thought I'd share some of my experiences and screening comments based on the movies I took in during Tribeca's 10th edition run.

BEYOND THE BLACK RAINBOW: This experimental horror/sci-fi Canadian mind puzzler captures the feeling of early Cronenberg movies (shorts and features) in both look and feel. A young woman (Eva Allan) is kept prisoner inside some mysterious health facility, where, it seems, experiments are being conducted to tap into her extrasensory abilities. I think... First time writer/director Panos Cosmatos doesn't explain a whole lot, and BEYOND THE BLACK RAINBOW's 110 minute running time demands patience. But fans of well-made avante garde cinema may take to BEYOND THE BLACK RAINBOW, despite the incongruous last act that seems lifted from a FRIDAY THE 13TH movie. When I asked Cosmatos if I would have understood the film better if I was on drugs, he replied, "Depends on which ones."



GRAVE ENCOUNTERS: As part of its Cinemania section this year, Tribeca showed two "found footage" movies, a subgenre more popular than ever thanks to the PARANORMAL ACTIVITY franchise. I already saw—and loved—Magnolia's THE TROLL HUNTER (see my comments [here](#)

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http://www.fangoria.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2764:elegies-american-film-market-2010-genre-roundup-part-three&catid=85:elegies&Itemid=211, plus watch for exclusive video interviews with the director on this site soon). But whereas TROLL HUNTER was fresh and inventive, the Vicious Brothers' GRAVE ENCOUNTERS is stale and predictable. A GHOST HUNTERS-style show investigates a supposedly haunted psychiatric hospital, cameras in tow, and, of course, it's not long before they begin seeing the real thing. Sean Rogerson mimics those questionable reality TV show hosts perfectly, while Mackenzie Gray provides welcome comic relief as a phony psychic, both giving the impression that GRAVE ENCOUNTERS would have been much more enjoyable if played for laughs.



RABIES: Billed as the first Israeli slasher film, Navot Papushado and Aharon Keshales' RABIES arrives as a clever, original and offbeat gorefest, subverting the genre like SCREAM did in its long-gone prime. The movie follows a variety of characters on their ill-fated hiking trip to a remote nature preserve where a serial killer stalks. But nothing is what it appears in this grisly and darkly humored fright flick, as audience expectations get turned on their head. See [here](#) for Michael Gingold's longer review.



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THE GOOD DOCTOR: Former LORD OF THE RINGS elf Orlando Bloom tries to stretch his dramatic chops in this uneventful suspense thriller (sort of a "STEPDOCTOR") from director Lance Daly. A new medico in residence at a hospital, Bloom's Dr. Martin Blake's career ambitions and creepy obsession with a pretty 18-year-old girl (Riley Keough, playing it like she's on ONE LIFE TO LIVE) take very dangerous turns. Nothing particularly thrilling happens in THE GOOD DOCTOR, and Bloom seems too much of a cipher to generate any real horror or revulsion when we witness his despicable acts (for one, he deliberately sickens his pretty patient to keep her in his "care"). If rising health care costs weren't scary enough...



DETECTIVE DEE AND THE MYSTERY OF THE PHANTOM FLAME: A sort of martial arts Sherlock Holmes, the titular Detective Dee (Any Lau) in this period action fantasy attempts to solve some horrifying murders (the victims spontaneously combusted from within) during the inauguration of the controversial Empress Wu, a stern female ruler. In DETECTIVE DEE, legendary helmer Hark Tsui directs with his customary foot-and-fist-flying action and peppers the tall tale with several fantastical elements (deadly deity curses, talking deer [!], etc.). It's all fun stuff, albeit nothing on the level of a CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON.



SINT: A vengeful, demonic Saint Nicholas goes on the rampage in veteran Dutch director Dick Maas' fun splatter yarn. Huub Stapel stars as the Santa Claus prototype who, ages ago, rewarded the good children and punished the bad (fatally!) until the townspeople turned on him and his minions, burning them alive in their ship. Now, under the full moon of December 5, Sint returns to modern Amsterdam with a job to do... Heavily influenced by early John Carpenter (namely HALLOWEEN and THE FOG), Maas (of THE LIFT and AMSTERDAMNED) keeps things lively and gory for SINT's 85-minute running time. The film's showstopper finds the bloody bishop, astride his mangy gray horse, bounding over rooftops while a cop car chases from the street below. SINT is the perfect present for old-school slasher fans. After doing big business in its home country, IFC opens the movie here this fall.

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Well, man does not live by horror alone, so I also caught a few assorted top-notch thrillers, dramas and comedies at Tribeca, including...

THE GUARD: Brendan Gleeson of 28 DAYS LATER and HARRY POTTER stars in this comedy as a most unorthodox small-town police sergeant. Sort of an Irish Torrente, Gleeson does drugs, hires hookers and insults everyone within earshot, especially the visiting FBI agent (Don Cheadle) tracking a trio of violent drug runners (including DOG SOLDIERS' Liam Cunningham and KICK-ASS' Mark Strong). Writer/director John Michael McDonagh's movie brims with politically incorrect humor and wonderful character bits. Be on the lookout for THE GUARD from Sony Pictures Classics this summer.



BLACKTHORN: A terrific, leisurely-paced Western about a geriatric Butch Cassidy (an Oscar-worthy Sam Shepard) in hiding, BLACKTHORN posits that the notorious bank robber did not die at the hands of the Bolivian army in 1908. Under the cover name Blackthorn, the retired bandit has been living out his senior years in obscurity in the arid South American hills, but yearns to return Stateside. Then an embezzler on the run (THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE's

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Eduardo Noriega) crosses his path, and Blackthorn is off on one final adventure, culminating in a surprise revelation. STUCK's Stephen Rea co-stars as a disgraced Pinkerton agent still on Butch's trail. Spain's Mateo Gill makes his English language debut with BLACKTHORN (from a script by newcomer Miguel Barros), telling a quietly moving and elegiac story. Euro genre buffs know Gill best for writing the great Spanish thrillers OPEN YOUR EYES, THESIS and NOBODY KNOWS ANYBODY. Cinematographer Juan Ruiz Anchía's beautiful location lensing captures BLACKTHORN's bygone era in high Sergio Leone style. Magnolia picked up U.S. rights.



THE ASSAULT: Timelier than ever, this edge-of-you-seat French thriller follows the 1994 true-life plane hijacking of an Air France plane in Algiers and the elite commandos entrusted with taking out the terrorists. The plot sounds very DELTA FORCE, but don't be fooled. Co-writer/director Julien Leclercq (helmer of the intriguing French sci-fier CHRYSALIS) unfolds the recreation in almost real-time and focuses on much of the behind-the-scenes political maneuvering that took place during the tense standoff. The terrorists' secret plans, sort of a precursor to 9/11, will give you chills.



POINT BLANK: Another exciting French thriller, a notch above the usual Luc Besson-style action quickies. When a gravely wounded crook (Roschdy Zem) winds up in the hospital, his

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male nurse (Gilles Lellouche) gets caught up in a web of police corruption, double-crossing hitmen and the kidnapping of his own pregnant wife. Reflected in its generic title, POINT BLANK is not the most original film in the world, but the characters are likable and director Fred Cavayé's propulsive pace (lots of foot chases through the street and subways of Paris) will carry you along.



{comments on}