

2007

1. Rescue Dawn, Werner Herzog, USA, Wednesday 24-1, 4

In 1997, Werner Herzog made a documentary about the German-born US Air Force pilot Dieter Dengler, entitled Little Dieter Needs to Fly. Herzog's fascination with the life story and the character of Dengler is understandable for those who know his oeuvre.

Dengler was the first American prisoner who ever successfully escaped from the Pathet Lao, the Laotian communists. After being shot down on a secret mission above Laos, he found himself in a prison camp where he and the other prisoners were tortured and almost died of starvation. And the jungle that separated them from the border with Thailand, as Dengler also knew, was not friendlier than the cruel guards. The end of the movie is too much Hollywood like, however.

2. Container, Lukas Moodyson, Sweden, Thursday 25-1, 1

Lukas Moodysson becomes more and more radical. The images and soundtrack in Container are formally separate: the voice-over comprises the entire soundtrack until the closing minutes, when it is accompanied by an electronic drone, and bears no direct relation to the action on screen. The image track follows a depressive transvestite, sometimes accompanied by a young woman, through a number of locations in an unnamed city, a landfill site and a seemingly deserted hospital. The soundtrack is a continuous off-screen monologue by someone who may or may not be the American actress Jena Malone. A film to walk out of.

3. Running Out of Time, Johnnie To, Hong Kong, Thursday 25-1, 4

Great action movie with much humour. Een genrefilm die helemaal op het lijf van twee grote sterren werd geschreven. Andy Lau speelt de innemende gentlemanboef Cheung die het opneemt tegen de door Lau Ching Wan gespeelde politie-inspecteur Ho. Ho is een onderhandelaar voor de politie en Cheung lijkt er genoeg in te beleven een spel met hem te spelen. Als blijkt dat Cheung ernstig ziek is - hij heeft kanker - wordt zijn motief voor een roof in een hoog gebouw in

Hongkong onduidelijk. Kennelijk deed hij het niet alleen voor het geld.

4. Playing the Victim, Kirill Serebrennikov, Russia, Friday 26-1, 4

Interesting urban Russian movie (unlike rural free floating) Playing the Victim is, in de woorden van de makers, 'een absurde zwarte komedie over het moderne leven, met een daverende filosofische climax aan het eind, en met verborgen citaten uit Hamlet.' De film is doortrokken van absurdisme en humor. De net afgestudeerde Valja (Joeri Tsjoersin) krijgt een bizar baantje: hij moet op allerlei plekken waar een misdaad is gepleegd in een reconstructie spelen, in aanwezigheid van de verdachten die hem gedetailleerde aanwijzingen geven. Dat wordt allemaal nogal amateuristisch gefilmd door Ljoeda, een naïeve politieagente (Anna Michalkova; zie ook de film Relations) en ondergeschikte van de rechercheur (Vitali Chaev). De misdaden en de figuren variëren, maar zijn even absurd als de rest van het gebeuren. Van het in stukken snijden van een vrouw en die stukken proberen weg te werken in een chemisch toilet, tot het uit raam gooien van een vrouw en het neerschieten van een collega in een Japans restaurant. Valja speelt steeds de rol van het slachtoffer, totdat dit merkwaardige baantje z'n leven op een vreemde manier gaat beïnvloeden.

5. Ça brûle, Claire Simon, France, Friday 26-1, 2

During a sweltering summer in the sleepy countryside of southern France, a girl falls madly in love with a married fireman. Her fiery and virulent passion will stop at nothing. A hyper-realistic portrayal of a realistic and melodramatic story. With a most devastating forest fires at the end of the film. Story is rather unconvincing and very stereotypical at the end.

6. Love conquers all, Tan Shui Mui, Malaysia, Friday 26-1, 4

Interesting movie from Malaysia, showing how people can take the wrong turn in their live. Ah Peng is a Chinese-Malay girl from Penang. She comes to the capital Kuala Lumpur to work in the simple food stall run by her aunt. At first she doesn't seem to have time for the joys and dangers of the big city. She doesn't go

looking for them either. She allows her new life to come at her the way it comes. And the way it comes is not always the way you want. The role of Ah Peng is played by debutante Coral Ong Li Whei. The candour of the young actress matches wonderfully the way in which Ah Peng faces up to the unexpectedly harsh life of the capital. Ah Peng starts a beautiful friendship with her younger cousin Mei. They become like sisters. Mei maintains a secret correspondence with an unknown pen pal. It looks like a playful announcement of what is awaiting Ah Peng: a love that is not what it seems and is not what it should be. Soon after her arrival in the city, Ah Peng is noticed and followed by John. The fact that she has a boyfriend in Penang does not stop him from pursuing his fairly aggressive advances. Ah Peng doesn't really resist, nor for very long. Even when John unashamedly explains to her how a pimp works, she seems deaf to any warning. And equally imperturbably, with a minimal use of means, the film follows Ah Peng's fate.

7. Free Floating, Boris Khlebnikov, Russia, Saturday 27-1, 3

Interesting movie. Deze tweede speelfilm van Boris Chlebnikov (die mederegisser was van Roads to Koktebel) is een lichtvoetige komedie over een dorp aan de Wolga en zijn merkwaardige inwoners. In Rusland wordt de film een plattelandskomedie genoemd. Hoofdpersonage Ljonja leidt hier een rustig bestaan. Het dorp heeft één fabriek, één school en één kleuterschool. Ljonja's leven lijkt zich te voltrekken volgens een rotsvast patroon; net als zijn dorpsgenoten heeft hij weinig keus. Ljonja doet wat hij altijd doet: werken, met zijn vrienden naar de disco gaan, een praatje maken met zijn moeder. Dan sluit de plaatselijke fabriek echter onverwacht zijn deuren en moet hij op zoek naar een ander baantje. De dame van het arbeidsbureau heeft niet veel in de aanbieding, maar Ljonja probeert toch een paar baantjes. Ten slotte wordt hij wegwerker, met nog twee vreemde karikaturen van arbeiders, en hij vindt zelfs een nieuwe liefde. Eindelijk lijkt het geluk Ljonja toe te lachen, tot hij merkt dat zijn nieuwe baas een schurk is. De zomer, zijn baan en de liefde: het is alsof alles tegelijk ten einde loopt, en opnieuw moet

hij werk gaan zoeken. Deze aardige film levert in een gemoedelijk tempo realistisch en zachtaardig commentaar op het alledaagse absurdisme van het Russische provincielevens – dat ook doorklinkt in het taalgebruik.

8. Suely in the Sky, Karim Ainouz, Brazil, Saturday 27-1, 2

The position of women would appear to be the major theme of Brazilian cinema these days. When life in cosmopolitan São Paulo gets too expensive for her, the beautiful 21-year-old Hermila returns with her young child to her poor birthplace in northeastern Brazil, under the assumption that her husband will soon follow. When he doesn't turn up after a long wait, she has to adjust her pink-coloured view of reality. But Hermila's lust for life, courage and mood swings know no bounds. Even though she seems able to count on warmth and love in her birthplace, unknown happiness lures her away to other climes. Determined to make more of her life than her best friend, the prostitute Georgina, she thinks of a way to escape country life. Under the name Suely she organises a lottery in which the winner can spend the night with her. For me, the movie is a bit too chaotic and it is not very clear why Hermila makes her choices the way she does.

9. Ten Canoes, Rolf de Heer, Australia, Saturday 27-1, 5

Ten Canoes is set in the Arafura Swamp in the northern point of Australia and takes the viewer along on a journey through time, to when the aboriginal population of the marshes still lived in huts, made canoes from birch bark and went out hunting goose eggs. The film was made using aboriginal actors, who act out the traditions of their people in their own language. It was difficult to cast because the actors needed the right blood bond with their characters. The film set was crawling with crocodiles, mosquitoes and leeches. And no one knew how the canoes were made any more. Seventy-year-old photographs, taken by the anthropologist David Thomson, provided the answer. The photographs also formed the original inspiration for actor David Gulpilil and directors Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr to make this unique film about a world that has disappeared. But Ten Canoes is much more than a profound anthropological portrait of 'noble savages'.

From the very first scene, it is filled with risqué jokes. The narrator David Gulpilil (well-known from The Tracker) tells tales with many witticisms and asides about a young hunter who has taken a fancy to one of the wives of his elder brother. In order to get the boy back on the straight and narrow, his brother tells him a story from times gone by. Also about a boy who fell in love with his brother's wife. A story about spears, revenge, magicians and a fat old man lusting after honey – with a wise lesson at the end. Great movie.

10. Jardins en automne, Otot Iosseliani, France, Saturday 27-1, 2

When a successful minister is kicked out of office, he loses his power, his mistress and his money. Condemned to a simple life, a much more valuable life unfolds in front of him. An allegory that plays with clichés and expectations filled with irony. With Michel Piccoli as the very old mother (!) of the protagonist.

I got the impressions that it was made by a director that probably made some good movies in the past, but who no longer has a real message and now sticks to the type of Louis de Funes humour that only the French can understand..

11. Real Online, John Hsu, Taiwan, Sunday 28-1, 5

Real Online plays a game with online games. The world of the game can be left if wished and the real world can enter the computer game. This is the world of the game Ideal Online. In this, figures walk round like the burly Charlie Boy and the spirited Cherry Lips. In this way, the real world is confronted with the logic of the game, in which for instance violence has a very different value and meaning than in the real world. The film is a satire, although it is not always clear of what. Cartoon-esque men and women do not allow themselves to be led by logic, desires or emotions, but by the harsh simplicity of the game world. The occasionally far from subtle humour is very catchy thanks to the consistent game frame. It is of course entirely logical that this film has already appeared in its entirety in chapters on YouTube. Very interesting and funny.

12. Fantasma, Lisandro Alonso, Argentina, Sunday 28-1, 1

Not interesting at all, a director filming the first screening of his own film. Boring and slow.

13. Opera Jawa, Garin Nugroho, Indonesia, Sunday 28-1, 5

Garin Nugroho has never suffered a lack of colourful fantasies, but this can certainly be described as his most colourful and fantastic film ever. It is even exuberant. The film was made as part of the New Crowned Hope project: a Viennese initiative to mark the Mozart year under the artistic direction of Peter Sellers, with former Rotterdam director Simon Field responsible for the film section. Nugroho translated the grandeur of classic opera with his stirring combination of music, drama and setting to match the musical and dramatic format of his country and culture. In that mix, you could say he invented a new art form in which modern dance, music and drama are mixed with traditional styles. As in every opera, there is also a story under the lively spectacle. Here, it is derived from the Ramayana, a narrative poem, thousands of years old, about Prince Rama and his wife Sita who are kidnapped by the demon Ravana. Nugroho did not restrict himself to the courtly story, but made a parallel with the potters Setyo and Siti who are put to the test in their marital fidelity, just like Rama and Sita were. Very beautiful to see and listen to.

14. The owl and the sparrow, Stephane Gauger, Vietnam, Tuesday 30-1, 3

Een gevoelig en sociaal verhaal dat zich afspeelt in hedendaags Saigon. De maker is weliswaar Amerikaans (althans half, hij heeft een Vietnamese moeder), maar hij werkte met een volledig Vietnamese crew en ook vóór de camera oogt alles authentiek. De film volgt een klein meisje dat eerst uit een fabriek wegloopt en later uit een weeshuis moet zien weg te komen. Tijdens haar vlucht raakt ze bevriend met een jonge man die oppasser in een dierentuin is. De oppasser valt voor een stewardess en het meisje wil hem wel helpen contact te leggen. De sterkste kant van de film is de couleur locale. De film geeft een waarachtig en vitaal

beeld van het huidige dynamische en enigszins chaotische Vietnam.

15. La fine del Mare, Nora Hoppe, Italy, Tuesday 30-1, 2

Too little happens in this film without clear message. Todor, een Servische smokkelaar in Trieste, Italië, vergaart zijn dagelijkse maaltje door het verscheppen van nagemaakte merksigaretten. Met zijn kleine bootje vaart hij uit om, als genoeg mist zijn illegale missie mogelijk maakt, zijn ladingen te ontvangen. Op een dag aanvaardt hij met tegenzin een veel grotere vracht. In de krat blijkt een verwonde en gedrogeerde vrouw te zitten. Todor besluit de vracht niet af te leveren en neemt de vrouw mee naar huis. Naar zijn opdrachtgever brengt hij een kist vol stenen, en al gauw wordt voelbaar dat hij zich met deze manoeuvre in de nesten heeft gewerkt. Todor verzorgt de vrouw, die langzaam maar zeker haar angst voor hem overwint. Tegen de tijd dat hij haar een paspoort weet te bezorgen is er tussen hen stilzwijgend een onverbreekelijke band gegroeid en vraagt hij haar samen weg te gaan.

16. Drama/Mex, Gerardo Neranjo, Mexico, Tuesday 30-1, 4

The Mexican Todd Solonz, Eens een luxueus toeristisch paradijs, nu een tweederangs bestemming voor goedkope all-in vakanties: een verloederd Acapulco, waarin zich op één en dezelfde avond drie verschillende liefdesgeschiedenissen afspelen. De jonge Fernanda wordt overweldigd door haar ex-vriend en geeft zich al snel gewonnen. Als dit haar huidige liefde ter ore komt, probeert hij haar met alle macht terug te winnen. De vijftigjarige Jaime, een gedesillusioneerde man die zich na het beroven van zijn werkgever op een stille plek heeft teruggetrokken, overweegt zelfmoord te plegen totdat hij de levendige Tigrillo ontmoet. Zij brengt hem op andere gedachten.

17. The Cats of Mirikitani, Linda Hattendorf, USA, Thursday 1-2, 13.30 uur, 5

Jimmy Mirikitani is an 85-year-old Japanese American artist, born in California and raised in Hiroshima, but by 2001 he is living on the streets of New York. He sits alone on a windy corner in Soho

drawing whimsical cats, bleak internment camps, and the angry red flames of the atomic bomb. When neighboring filmmaker Linda Hattendorf stops to ask about Mirikitani's art, a friendship begins that will change both their lives. Tales of his life emerge: childhood picnics in Hiroshima, ancient samurai ancestors, lost citizenship, Jackson Pollock, Pearl Harbor, Americans imprisoned in WWII desert camps... Slowly she begins to piece together the puzzle of Mirikitani's past. One thing is clear from his prolific sidewalk displays: he has survived terrible traumas and is determined to make his history visible through his art. September 11 thrusts Mirikitani once again into a world at war and challenges the filmmaker to move from witness to advocate. In the chaos following the collapse of the World Trade Center, she finds herself unable to passively photograph this elderly man coughing in the toxic smoke, and invites him into her small apartment. In this uncharted landscape, the two navigate the maze of social welfare, seek out family and friends, and research Jimmy's painful past. Jimmy's story comes full circle when he travels back to the West Coast to reconnect with a community of former internees at a healing pilgrimage to the site of his former internment camp.

18. Reprise, Joachim Trier, Norway, Thursday 1-2, 4

Erik and Philip are best friends and both want to become writers. When Erik's manuscript is refused by the publishers while Philip is eagerly welcomed as a young star in the literary firmament their young dreams clash with reality. The successful Philip ends up in a psychiatric institution and stops writing. Erik continues his struggle for literary recognition. This paradoxical result acquires a humorous form in *Reprise*, the Norwegian Oscar submission. It is a debut that lets go of conventional narrative structures and for a long time surprisingly leaves a variety of plot developments open. Joachim Trier, obviously inspired by the *nouvelle vague* and films like *Jules et Jim* by Truffaut, looks with equal amounts of humour and sympathy at the vulnerable world of young people who want to transcend the predictability of daily routine with their creativity. At the same time he shows how few youthful plans are rewarded with life into adulthood. Against the background of a

Norway full of punk music, the transition rites of Erik and Philip acquire unsentimental topicality. How can the two writers guard their own idiosyncrasy in a society that does not always want to recognise their merits?

19. Paprika, Kon Satoshi, Japan, Thursday 1-2, 2

Animation film in which the world of dreams can be entered as if it's an amusement park. A dream machine is stolen from a laboratory. Dream detective Paprika, the alter ego of the female doctor Atsuko Chiba, takes up arms against an intangible enemy. A bit over the top however for me.

20. Running on Karma, Johnnie To, Hong Kong, Friday 2-2, 3

Interesting and many ways confusing movie. Running on Karma looks like a commercial genre film, but then one wonders which genre it is. The film opens like a police film. The inexperienced policewoman Lee (charmingly played by Cecilia Cheung) raids a strip club in order to arrest the male strippers for indecency. Nonetheless, she enthusiastically encourages the strippers to take all their clothes off. Her favourite stripper is none other than Andy Lau, in a kind of comic bodybuilder's muscle suit that makes him impressively big, but also gives him something of a chubby baby look. He is Big, who once gave martial arts training as a monk, but now has to earn his living in a dingy way. On reflection, the film could be a comic action film, but as soon as Big flees the nightclub and falls into the hands of the police, he sees mysterious visions. Big turns out to see karmas – turning the film towards a fantasy drama. As the story progresses Lee and Big become increasingly sympathetic towards each other – an aspect characteristic of most genres. Typical for To's approach is that he mixes several genres together fluently and with bravura, as if the differences never existed.

21. Crossing the Dust, Shawkat Amin Korki, Iraq, Friday 2-2, 4

Again a very good movie inspired by the terrible events in Iraq. Shawkat Amin Korki (born in Iraqi Kurdistan) deals in his first

feature-length film with the recent history of his country. The story takes place in Iraq during the American invasion in 2003 and the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. It is an unusual and unplanned road movie about two Kurdish soldiers, who truck in food supplies to their comrades-in-arms, and a five year-old boy they find lost on the street. One of the soldiers, Asad, takes pity on the boy and wants to help him find his family. The other one, Rashid, is a tougher cookie - certainly after he hears that the boy's name is Saddam. He fiercely refuses to help the child. The two soldiers continue to quarrel about whether to help the boy or not while they carry on their way. They travel in the dust tracks, the boy between them. After their vehicle gets stolen they wander around the dried-out countryside that has been destroyed by war, and where the most common sight is soldiers and tanks. The film is a personal drama in time of war - for the soldiers, the boy and many others

22. Old weird America, Rani Singh, USA, Friday 2-2, 3

This fast-paced and varied documentary film tracks the history of Harry Smith's famous Anthology of American Folk Music from its initial compilation of 78 records from rural Americana to its release in 1952, and its influence on today's artists such as Elvis Costello, Lou Reed, Beck, Nick Cave and many others.