



Friday 16th February 8.00pm

Three Seasons

Dir Tony Bui 1999, Cert 12, 113 mins

Starring Don Duong, Nguyen Ngoc Hiep, Zoe Bui, Nguyen Huu Duoc and Harvey Keitel

Three Seasons is an American film which reflects the uniquely ambivalent tenderness of an immigrant looking back to the old country. From "Fiddler on the Roof" to "The Joy Luck Club" to "Angela's Ashes," the realization that the traditional society of one's ancestry is being transformed or even vanishing under the tide of history is a distinctive marker of the American experience. That the old country was often the site of tremendous suffering and deprivation -- our ancestors usually had good reason to leave, after all -- only heightens the sense of sad ambivalence.

Just as Bui's Saigon is a place where wealth and poverty; city and country; capitalism and socialism; and ancient and modern collide, "Three Seasons" is a film with a divided sensibility. Its gorgeous, almost painterly composition shows the influence of Asian cinema, but its unsparing and deeply compassionate portrayal of city life, viewed from the bottom up, owes a debt to Italian neorealism, especially to the greatest of all urban-poverty films, Vittorio de Sica's "The Bicycle Thief."



Friday 16th March 8.00pm

Brokeback Mountain

Dir Ang Lee, 2005, USA Cert 15, 134 mins

Here is a love story from director Ang Lee in which the taboo word "love" is never spoken. In fact the whole movie is a rich, spacious, passionate way of showing, not telling, feelings that dare not speak their name - and doing so with superb intelligence and magnificent candour. Brokeback Mountain is an adaptation of a piece of writing from 1997 by Annie Proulx that already bears the burdensome reputation of being the best short story ever to be published in the New Yorker magazine: the tale of two itinerant ranch-hands in the early 1960s, Ennis and Jack, who get a summer's work shepherding on Brokeback Mountain in Wyoming. They are played here by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal.

Beautifully composed and wonderfully acted, this film is massively superior to the last Proulx adaptation - the woeful Shipping News - and far better than Ang Lee's last cowboy movie, his very moderate civil war drama Ride With the Devil. Most literary adaptations are crushed, concertina-ed affairs in which a novel's various chapters, scenes and characters are squeezed out. There is a real sense here that the dimensions and space of the film have been stretched, and screenwriters Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana have developed and extrapolated the source material with flair, in particular giving a dramatic presence to the women in Ennis and Jack's story.

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Cressbrook Film Club
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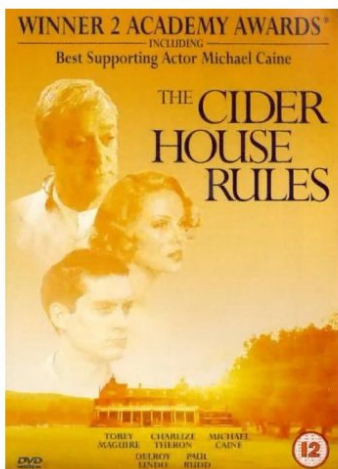


Friday 13th October 8.00pm

The Constant Gardener

Dir: Fernando Meirelles, 2005, UK, Cert 15, 129 mins

There are some films which have Oscar-contender written all the way through them like a stick of rock. This version of John Le Carré's 2001 novel is conceived on a grand, almost operatic scale with fervent and features passionate performances from its actors. Its shrewd producer, Simon Channing-Williams, had the inspired idea of hiring the Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles to direct, and Meirelles has brought to this conspiracy-thriller-cum-love-story the unceasing energy and attack that characterised his sensational debut film City of God. There is a terrific pulse of energy in this film, a voltage which drives it over two hours. It is not just an intricate, despairing meditation on the shabby compromises involved in maintaining Britain's interests and waning foreign prestige. There is real anger here, and a real sense that it is worthwhile striking back against wrongdoing. The Constant Gardener is a romance that packs a punch to equal The English Patient of 10 years ago.



Friday 10th November 8.00pm
The Cider House Rules

Dir: Lasse Hallström, 1999, USA, cert 12, 126 mins,

Simple movies are very difficult to make. For all that we yearn to see something exciting and different, for all the times we cheer innovative and original filmmaking, the old-fashioned well-crafted drama -- a picture that's emotionally straightforward yet compelling, with a story that leaves you wondering what will happen next -- is an increasingly rare creature. In that vein, Lasse Hallström's "The Cider House Rules" breaks all the rules simply by following them. Its simplicity is almost shocking. What makes it work is that Hallström makes choices that are traditional in a sense, and yet never exactly obvious. The picture moves with a grace and clarity that never wobbles into predictability. And no one in the ensemble of actors ever missteps: There's nothing overdone or overwrought.



Friday 8th December 8.00pm
Brief Encounter

Dir: David Lean, 1945, UK, cert PG, 86 mins

This misery can't last," thinks Celia Johnson in an exquisite English trance of unhappiness, "not even life lasts very long." David Lean's 1945 drama of a couple committing adultery in their hearts is superb and Noël Coward's crisp script is a classic of passionate reserve. Trevor Howard was never better than here - his tendency to frazzled cynicism is absent - and Celia Johnson is outstanding as the suburban housewife with no outlet for her repressed emotional life other than listening to Rachmaninov on the walnut-veneer record player and peeping over into the unthinkable abyss of infidelity. A must-see.

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Friday 19th January 8.00pm
De Battre Mon Coeur S'est Arrete (The Beat That My Heart Skipped)

Dir: Jacques Audiard, 2005, France, cert 15, 107 mins

American pulp novels by the likes of Jim Thompson, David Goodis and Cornell Woolrich have frequently been adapted by French filmmakers. But French remakes of Hollywood films are rare enough to border on the unique. Such a film is The Beat That My Heart Skipped (aka De Battre Mon Coeur S'est Arrete), Jacques Audiard's excellent version of Fingers, James Toback's 1978 debut as writer-director

In transposing the film to Paris, Audiard has stuck fairly closely to Toback's plot, though he's dispensed with both the transgressive sex and the fascination with macho black culture. Audiard's film is altogether smoother, less raw and more coherent than Toback's. As in Audiard's last film, the dark thriller, Read My Lips, the background has become the shadier side of the real-estate business, and the new film can be seen as something of a companion piece to A Self-Made Hero (Un Heros Tres Discret). In that masterly 1996 movie, a young Frenchman reconstructs his identity in the confused final days of the Second World War.

Dark, handsome Romain Duris, who played the fin-de-siecle gentleman-thief in the recent costume blockbuster, Arsene Lupin, is a charismatic presence as the hero Tom, a confident, sharply dressed, chain-smoking, real-estate man who by day attends meetings with his shifty employer's clients and by night unleashes sacks of rats into unwanted tenants' apartments.

The Beat That My Heart Skipped is a work of authority, maturity and intensity that improves on Toback's original film without appearing to patronise or despise it.