The Main Feature

WNCC
WOKING'S NEW CINEMA CLUB

Season 31 - Issue 17 (screening 26.5.11)

State and Main

USA Certificate 15 105 minutes UK release 16.2.01

Directed and written by David Mamet
Cinematography by Oliver Stapleton
Music Score by Theodore Shapiro

Cast

Alec Baldwin	Bob Barrenger	Charles Durning	Mayor Bailey
Philip Seymour Hoffman	Joseph Turner White	William H Macy	Walt Price
Rebecca Pidgeon	Ann Black	David Paymer	Marty Rossen
Sarah Jessica Parker	Claire Wellesley	Patti LuPone	Sherry Bailey

The premise of this deft Hollywood satire, which was filmed in Massachusettes , is that the peace and quiet of Waterford, Vermont is shattered when a Hollywood film crew descends on the town to shoot would-be blockbuster The Old Mill. The production has recently been turfed out of its original New Hampshire location (a scandal involving the leading man and a minor), and is losing money by the minute. Trouble looms large from the word "action" when the film's addled director Walt Price (Macy), ruthless producer Marty Rossen (David Paymer) and introvert screenwriter Joe White (Hoffman) learn that the town's mill was destroyed during a spate of suspicious fires back in the '60s. Not to mention the lead actor (a very funny Alec Baldwin) is back to his old tricks again.

The strength of the cast also helps. The standout is, not surprisingly, William H. Macy, who familiar with Mamet's work both on stage and on screen. Macy knows precisely how to deliver Mamet's dialogue, and he brings enough humanity to his part to elevate Price above the level of a caricature.

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Meanwhile, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Rebecca Pidgeon (who has been a regular in Mamet films since marrying the director) bring a little lighthearted romance the package.

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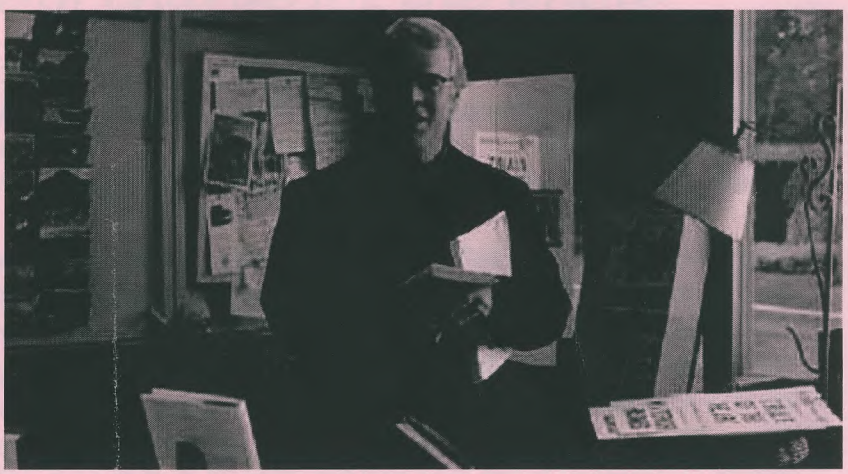
Mamet's talent for writing (this was his 31st script) shines through with comments like: "It's not a lie, it's a gift for fiction", "An associate producer credit is what you give your secretary instead of a raise", and "The better part of valor is to step away, or you, your kids, and your grandkids will die in poverty." There's a brief-but-timely exchange on how absurd the American electoral process is (remember this film was made after the Clinton impeachment and around the time of the Bush election victory and the "chads" debacle in the Florida presidential election).

Macy relished his relationship with Mamet "Most actors are so crazed about David Mamet that they come to set way prepared and they've learned every single syllable. He's loose as a goose about it. I've seen him on more than one occasion when you mess up a line three or four times in a row and he'll say, 'Hold on we'll change the line. There must be something wrong with it or you wouldn't be having such difficulty.' His feeling is if the rhythm is off or if the meter is off it's harder to memorize. Which is true. Bad writing is the hardest thing to memorize. And great writing is the easiest thing to memorize. We didn't ad-lib but he did. He came up with gags and jokes every day."

Over his career, and this was Mamet's 31st screen writing assignment and ninth directorial effort, he had a reputation for creating daring and powerful motion pictures. *State and Main* is neither but its lightness and lack of complexity should not necessarily be viewed as a negative.



Both mocking and tender, *State and Main* is a hilarious, finely crafted, light-hearted send-up of Hollywood society.

Iain McGlashan

Malick's drama The Tree of Life triumphs in Cannes

US director Terrence Malick's drama The Tree of Life has won the Palme d'Or prize for best picture at the Cannes film festival.

The film, starring Brad Pitt and Sean Penn, is about a family in Texas in the 1950s, but is also a meditation on the meaning of life.

The film had divided critics at the prestigious festival, the BBC's arts correspondent Vincent Dowd says.

He says some consider it pretentious and others profound.

Best actor award went to French performer Jean Dujardin for the silent film The Artist.

Best actress was won by US actress Kirsten Dunst for her role in the apocalyptic psychodrama Melancholia.

Melancholia director Lars von Trier was barred from the festival for remarks made at a news conference in which he said he was a Nazi. He said he had spoken in jest.

The Tree of Life is only the fifth movie from Terrence Malick in almost 40 years.

At 148 minutes it is an epic about what it is to be human, with some scenes depicting the beginnings of life on earth.

At Cannes its ambition baffled a few reviewers but it found favour with the nine-member jury, chaired by Robert de Niro.

De Niro said after the ceremony that The Tree of Life had "the size, the importance, the intention, whatever you want to call it, that seemed to fit the prize".

Malick, 67, who is notoriously publicity shy, was not present to accept the award, leaving one of his co-producers, Bill Pohlad, to speak on his behalf.

"I know he is thrilled with this award, as are all of us," Mr Pohlad said.

The Artist, which depicts Hollywood at the end of the silent-movie era, is a French film but made in Los Angeles.

With its period score and winning performances it was a big success at Cannes and has already secured international distribution.

It was the 64th Cannes Festival and, by common consent, one of the best for years, our correspondent adds

Source: BBC website

Reactions to .... **Conversations with my gardener - 12 May 2011**

Score	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Votes	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	10	19	8	~

Total received - 36 **Average Score - 7.95**

Your Comments

What a delightful film – I didn't want it to end. Very enjoyable
A beautiful gentle film but then life interrupted. Excellent
Not much action but an affectionate essay in friendship. Very Moving
Wonderful atmospheric film – French do it so well. Excellent
Charming and authentically French. A change to have a "nice" film
A lovely film – very nostalgic for us: Autiel and Darrousin were splendid
I thoroughly enjoyed it : very gentle nostalgic film.
Excellent interplay between main characters – a joy to watch
A great evening - I shall join the club next season
Ending moving but not manipulative or maudlin.
Just a wonderful film, with two brilliant performances.

Position	Film	Average Score
1st	Invictus	8.02
2nd	Conversations with my gardener	7.95
3rd	An Education	7.83
4th	Le premier jour de reste de ta vie	7.54
5th	Everlasting Memories	7.46
6th	Kongekabale *(King's Game)*	7.36
7th	The Hurt Locker	7.09
8th	A Touch of Class	6.97
9th	Cherry Blossom	6.88
10th	Appaloosa	6.8
11th	Europa, Europa	6.59
12th	Gilda	6.31
13th	Oyster Farmer	6.02
14th	Ushpizin	5.94
15th	Fish Tank	5.79
17th	Paranormal Activity	2.75

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