



The Main Feature

Season 43 – Issue 4 – Screening 26 October 2023

Rams

Australia 2020
120 mins. Certificate 12

Director	Jeremy Sims
Screenplay	Jules Duncan (based on the film by Grímur Hákonarson)
Cinematography	Steve Arnold
Music	Antony Partos

Cast

Sam Neill	Colin Grimurson
Michael Caton	Les Grimurson
Miranda Richardson	Kat
Asher Keddie	Angela
Wayne Blair	Lionel
Leon Ford	De Vries



Tonight's presentation is a gentle comedy-drama set in remote, rural Western Australia.

Two ageing, dishevelled, bachelor brothers - Colin (Sam Neill) and Les (Michael Caton) - live on adjacent sheep farms, breeding rams. They fell out many years ago, and now communicate via messages carried by their shared sheepdog (who answers to the names of Kip and Floss). Colin is affable, serene and relatively organised: Les is foul-mouthed, short-tempered and partial to a drink or two, resulting in occasional bouts of sunburn whilst comatose. When Les's prize-winning ram is diagnosed with an incurable and highly contagious bacterial illness (Ovine Johne's disease or OJD) the authorities order a purge of every sheep in the valley. Colin slyly attempts to pull the wool over the department's eyes, while Les opts for angry defiance. Eventually, and against a backdrop of bush fires, Colin and Les are forced to work together.

The film is a remake of the 2015 Icelandic drama, which won best film in the "Un Certain Regard" category at Cannes. This was written and directed by Grímur Hákonarson; the brothers'



surname in this version is a tribute and you may notice them wearing Icelandic sweaters in an early scene. The original film is decidedly darker and more downbeat, with a sombre ending.

Rams trades on the chemistry of the two male leads. Sam Neill (whose well-received memoir “Did I Ever Tell You This?” was published last year) is a veteran actor (IMDb currently lists 149

appearances). He was born in Northern Ireland but emigrated to New Zealand when he was 7. His most famous roles include *Reilly*, *Ace of Spies* (1983, TV); *A Cry in the Dark* (1988); *Jurassic Park* (1993); *The Piano* (also 1993 and shown by WFC the following year) and *The Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016, shown by the club in 2018). He auditioned for the role of James Bond in the mid-1990s (but lost out to Pierce Brosnan). Michael Caton is a familiar face in Australian TV and movies, who largely resisted the siren call of Hollywood, and is probably best known in the UK for his role in the broad comedy *The Castle* (1997).

The supporting players are sadly underdeveloped, especially Miranda Richardson, an attractive but lonely flame-haired “Pommie vet” who develops romantic feelings for Colin (that are sadly not reciprocated). Leon Ford plays a young, irritating bureaucrat from the Department of Agriculture who lacks any empathy for the brothers’ predicament.

Released in October 2020, the film debuted at number 1 at the Australian box office, grossing a total of \$3.6m over its run. It received a low-key release elsewhere and (no surprise) was quickly signed up by streaming services in many territories.



Critical reviews were broadly appreciative. The Guardian commented “[it] develops into an interesting perspective on loneliness and masculinity... how men often shrink inside ourselves; how we so easily shy away from expressions of feelings; how we deploy various techniques to shield ourselves from the stabs of memory...I told ewe this wasn’t a dopey comedy about sheep. It’s funny at times – but also tender and touching: the cinematic equivalent of a gently moving turn of phrase.” Empire summarised the film as “easy-going but likeable...funny, a little bit rambling, winning.” The Times was less impressed, describing it as “[a] gratingly whimsical Australian remake.” Variety’s positive review included the news that another remake in South Korea was underway!

Eugene Smith



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Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by Wednesday 1 November 2023

Remakes

The 2021 Guardian article by Simran Hans¹ nominated 10 remakes that bettered the original. It drew 1,691 responses from readers – most of which disagreed and suggested a battery of alternatives!

“A Star Is Born” (2018) - This classic tale of an ingenue whose career is aided by an older man whose own star is fading has been remade no less than three times. Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson’s 1976 rock incarnation might be the best-known version but, most importantly, Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper’s 2018 film has the biggest tunes.

The Fly (1986) - Horror master David Cronenberg’s gross-out sci-fi takes Kurt Neumann’s 1958 B-movie and turns it into a Hollywood blockbuster. Geena Davis and Jeff Goldblum, as the mad scientist turned insect, are brilliant as two weirdos drawn together. The film begins like a romcom before descending into a gory nightmare of heartbreak and corrosive vomit.

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo (2011) - Swedish writer Stieg Larsson’s bestselling crime tome was faithfully adapted by Niels Arden Oplev in 2009. The English-language remake was hot on its heels. Directed by David Fincher just two years later, it’s cooler, meaner and way more stylish, with a memorable opening credit sequence soundtracked by Karen O’s cover of Immigrant Song.

Coda (2021) - In 2014’s *La Famille Bélier*, the hearing daughter of deaf parents dreams of becoming a singer. Cringy, raunchy French comedy doesn’t exactly scream global smash, yet Sian Heder’s English-language remake was a huge Sundance hit. She ups the sincerity and, unlike in the original, wisely casts deaf actors in the deaf roles.

Ocean’s Eleven (2001) - Steven Soderbergh’s Las Vegas-set heist has a blast bringing the Rat Pack circa 1960 to a 00s audience. George Clooney does Frank Sinatra; Don Cheadle fills

Sammy Davis Jr’s tux and Brad Pitt is a modern Dean Martin. Crucially, there’s chemistry here, unlike in 2018’s gender-flipped spin-off.

The Parent Trap (1998) - A rare example of Disney improving one



of its existing properties: America’s greatest working classicist, Nancy Meyers, ingeniously deploys a precocious Lindsay Lohan as identical twins who meet for the first time at summer camp. (Arguably, Lohan’s Freaky Friday trumps

the original, too.)

The Talented Mr Ripley (1999) - Anthony Minghella wasn’t the first to adapt Patricia Highsmith’s scammer novel for the screen – that would be René Clément with 1960’s *Plein Soleil*. Minghella’s take retains the sultry, seething vibe of Clément’s film but raises the stakes by amping up the gay subtext between grifter Tom Ripley (Matt Damon) and the object of his obsession, Dickie Greenleaf (a golden, sculpted Jude Law).

The Thomas Crown Affair (1999) - John McTiernan’s glossy thriller riffs on Pierce Brosnan’s suave Bond persona, recasting him as the delinquent playboy portrayed by Steve McQueen in 1968. Even more inspired is Rene Russo, aged 44, as the insurance agent Faye Dunaway played at 26. Russo is whip-smart and slinky, with convincing alpha energy (and the power suit to match).

The Departed (2006) - Andrew Lau and Alan Mak’s 2002 mob thriller *Infernal Affairs* made strong source material for Martin Scorsese, who saw unlikely parallels between Hong Kong and Boston. With an A-list cast, including Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Wahlberg, Jack Nicholson and Matt Damon, at the peak of

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/aug/20/the-best-remakes-that-are-better-than-the-original-films>

their powers, it's no wonder it won 4 Oscars, finally securing Scorsese a win for best director.

Casino Royale (2006) - Daniel Craig's nihilistic, 21st-century take on the character of 007 was a far cry from David Niven's in the 1967 spy spoof movie, adapted from the same Ian Fleming novel. It's easily the best of Craig's James Bond films, the actor's wounded masculinity adding much-needed grit to the otherwise camp and dated franchise."

I have to disagree with most of this list!

I would suggest a worst remake list would have to include *Get Carter* (2000); *The Italian Job* (2003); *Alfie* (2004); *The Pink Panther* (2006); *Psycho* (1998); *Dr Doolittle* (2020) and *The Ladykillers* (2004).

Feel free to add your own suggestions on the comment sheet after tonight's film!

Eugene Smith

Comments and reactions to: **Three Colours: Blue**

No of reaction slips received = 22

Average score = 6.18

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

Rather slow but lovely swimming pool

Excellent cinematography, high tension

A haircut in search of a story. Pretentious twaddle

A rather beautiful, if sombre, film

If there's such a thing as a typical French film, this is it

Powerful and emotional

Great camera! Dead-pan acting. Good storyline

Good acting and story – shame music too loud

A beautiful film but a bit slow

A French classic. Need to see Red and White to see how it ends

What can I say? I will have to go home and think about this one!

Great acting and direction, but not to my taste.

Position	Film	Average score
1	Mrs Harris Goes to Paris	7.58
2	The Banshees of Inisherin	7.06
3	Three Colours: Blue	6.18

Forthcoming attraction: 9 November 2023 – **The Lost King**



2013's *Philomena* was a moving and gently funny account of one woman's real-life hunt for a lost son. The screenplay, by Steve Coogan and Jeff Pope, went on to be nominated for an Oscar. The creative team behind that film (Coogan and Pope, plus director Stephen Frears) reunite here for another real-life search of a missing person, only this time, it's for the 700-year-old skeleton of Richard III — if not with quite as much emotional poignancy as their last get-together. Empire

Hawkins breathes tremulously vulnerable life into a character who overcomes apparently insurmountable obstacles to prove to the world that she deserves to be taken seriously — the true heart of the piece. Whatever its inconsistencies, *The Lost King* is an underdog story that proves a perfect vehicle for Hawkins's reliably winning screen presence. Observer.