

Event Blog

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Rome

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The What's On in Rome Event Blog

First hand accounts of events in Rome, past and present:

RIFF: Rome Independent Film Festival

Date Monday, April 18, 2005

I managed to see 3 films at the Rome Independent Film Festival, though I wish I had had time for more. There were so many films I wanted to see, but they were all packed into a week's time and it's difficult to make it to the cinema every day.

I first went with a friend on Monday, April 18 to see 2 short films and a documentary. The first short film was "El otro sogno americano" and dealt with the disappearance of women in the border town of Juarez. I was familiar with the phenomenon, as I had seen a report on RAI Tre. The film was very difficult to watch, well done, but hard to watch.

The second short was called "The Moustache", and focused on the importance of the moustache for the Turkish man. It was amusing at first, but went on a little too long. 25 minutes of moustaches. Several men talked about their wives loving their moustaches, but we never got to hear from any of the women.

The film I really went there for was "The Tenth Planet, A single life in Baghdad" by Turkish director Melis Birder. This was a documentary filmed in Baghdad and follows a young outspoken woman, Kawkab, in her daily life in the war torn city. Her name means Planet. She remarks that there are 9 planets in the solar system, and she is the tenth.

It was interesting to see another side of Baghdad as opposed to what we're fed on the nightly news. You see her at the hairdresser. There is another woman having her hair and make up done for her wedding. Then the power goes out so they can no longer dry her hair.

The film follows her to the university where she works. She takes the cover off her computer and starts hitting the keys on the keyboard. And then says, "The electricity is off. We have a generator but no fuel for it."

She also takes us into her home and to visit friends and relatives. Many express their opinions on the war, the occupation, Saddam and Bush. Some are hopeful for the future, though they can't yet imagine it. For the most part people are angry at having to struggle through their daily lives, angry about the promises of improvement that have not been kept, angry about the occupation and disappointed with the Americans.

The director was supposed to be there. We waited around a bit and then realized she apparently wasn't coming. A Mexican woman stood up and kindly offered to explain the film regarding Juarez for anyone who wanted.

Description I went back the next night with the same friend. We saw two shorts and another documentary, all from Spain. The first was, "Las Viandas" about a man who stops at mountain restaurant for lunch and has quite an unusual experience. The second was called "Aerosol" about graffiti artists from Madrid and Barcelona. I found this one extremely boring. Perhaps I just don't

know how to appreciate graffiti.

The documentary of the evening was again on Baghdad, "Baghdad Rap" by director Arturo Cisneros. He wanted to appeal to a young audience, hence the use of rap music, which was a bit too much at times. The film was good and showed the real effects of war on the Iraqi people. The filming started just days before the bombing and continued during the raids.

The film was for the most part in English, which came as a surprise for me. There were interviews with Iraqis, with journalists and human rights workers. An interesting interview was just starting regarding the use of depleted uranium when there were problems with the DVD. They tried for some time to get it working again.

They finally started the film over from the beginning! We couldn't believe it. They were fast-forwarding (slowly) but we had no intention of waiting through the entire film again. So we got up to leave, as did others.

Then we found that we were locked in! Apparently the door sticks sometimes; at least this is what we were told by someone there. She suggested we bang on the door, which we did. Fortunately the other people had a scooter helmet, which made a lot of noise.

They finally came and let us out.

I went back on Thursday with my husband. There hadn't been too many people at the screenings, but this time the place was packed. We soon found out it was because they had just screened "Fatti della Banda della Magliana", a film about a band of criminals in Italy. Apparently a big draw.

We were there to see "Story Undone", by Iranian director Hassan Yektapanah. The film is about a director and a cameraman filming a documentary on Iranians fleeing their country. This was a great film. It was really well done and incredibly interesting. It takes you into the lives of people who have decided to risk everything to leave their country. And of course, they did not want to be filmed, nor did the human traffickers. The filmmakers were therefore required to be quite inventive. Highly recommended.

This time the director was present, so we had an interesting discussion afterwards.

Great film festival. Interesting films from all over the world. Bravi.

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