

Sunday, June 5, 2005

### Six Short Films

A co-worker loaned me a DVD from Film Movement with six shorts on it, and I liked them so much, I thought I'd proselytize a little bit. Plus, it's a slow Sunday and it's hard to get excited about a last-place baseball team, so here it is.

Listed first on the cover was Mt. Head (Atama-yama in Japanese), an animated Japanese movie about a "stingy man" who ends up having a cherry tree growing from the top of his head. It's as bizarre as it sounds, but the narration, by Takeharu Kunimoto, is fantastically weird. As the aforementioned co-worker pointed out, the nose of the "stingy man" bears too close a resemblance to a stereotypical Jewish nose for comfort, but if you can ignore that, it's a pretty trippy little film.

Das Rad ("Rocks," in German) is also illustrated, though in a vastly different style. The idea is that rocks are watching us, having conversations, playing around and generally enjoying life, but on a vastly different time scale. The idea is fantastic, but nine minutes was a little too long for something that's essentially just a really neat idea. In the end, it ended up being cute, but not much more.

Inja (which means "dog" in, I assume, Afrikaans) is about a black boy and a puppy in South Africa who are split up rather cruelly by a landowner. The landowner's methods come back to haunt him in the end, though. This was probably the best of the six films: it was quite beautiful and obviously poignant, but did not try to reach farther than a 17-minute film should. Also notable was Thandie Newton showing up in the "thanks" section of the credits.

Sangam, the name of a spot of pilgrimage in India, is about a recent immigrant to New York who encounters a countryman on the subway. They reminisce, talk, sing, and then things get weird. Overall, I thought it was just okay, with two highlights: the editing and the performance of Sanjay Chandani as Vivek, the man the immigrant encounters on the subway. Chandani has had a minor TV and movie career, according to his IMDB credits, but I think he could be capable of more were he to be given the chance.

I also caught Mira Nair's name in the "thanks" section of the credits.

The First Three Lives of Stuart Hornsley is a time travel story starring Tunde Adebimpe, who is more famous as a member of the band TV on the Radio but who is also a graduate of NYU's film school. If this was a thesis film at NYU (it was produced under the auspices of Tisch, according to the credits), it appears to be one of those that benefits from a larger budget (and a longer runtime: at thirty minutes, it was easily the longest film in this collection) than its peers. That said, it's not a bad movie, but in the end, it was just sort of sweet. Adebimpe was pretty good as the title character, and I liked Isaac Bloch as his young protege Vitaliy, but if you've seen the Simpsons time travel episode, you've sort of seen this movie.

Spike Lee earned a "thank you" in this film.

Finally, the most superficially pleasing of the six was Deathdealer, a mockumentary starring Henry Rollins as a kind of door-to-door businessman dealing with a bit of a midlife crisis. I'm hesitant to say more about the story, though the title gives something away, but suffice it to say that I was greatly amused and thought the film quite clever. It wasn't trying for anything more than amusement, so we oughtn't fault it for not achieving more.

Posted by jason in Movies at 23:04