



fish

Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy
(Japan 2021)

Spoiler alert: You may prefer to read this review after the screening

DIRECTOR : Ryusuke Hamaguchi

RUNNING TIME : 120 mins

RATING :

Synopsis:

An ingenious, playful and sparkingly acted collection of three movie tales. The stories united by themes of fate and mystery ask us to consider how the paths we take in life can be governed by the merest chance.

Review: Peter Bradshaw

Japanese film-maker Ryusuke Hamaguchi, has unveiled an ingenious, playful, sparkingly acted and thoroughly entertaining portmanteau collection of three movie tales.

Their themes and ideas are emerging as keynotes for this director: fate and coincidence, identity and role-play, and the mysteries of erotic pleasure and desire. There is a rather European flavour in the mix – one of its characters is a specialist in French literature – and I found myself thinking of Emmanuel Carrère and Milan Kundera. And although there is no formal connection between the stories (other than the thematic echoes) the simple act of juxtaposition creates something pleasingly cohesive.

In the first, *Magic (Or Something Less Reassuring)*, we see a model called Meiko (Kotone Furukawa) going home in a cab after a photoshoot with her friend, an art director called Gumi (Hyunri Lee), and gossiping excitedly about the man that Gumi has started seeing. This marvellous-sounding individual really opened up about his own feelings on their date, talking about the ex who broke his heart. Something about this description makes Meiko very thoughtful, and she goes to see her own ex, a successful young businessman called Kaz (Ayumu Nakajima).

Cont.

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 12th March 2023

8.15 pm Tuesday 14th March 2023

Review: Cont.

In the second story, *Door Wide Open*, a mature student called Nao (Katsuki Mori), married with a child, is having a passionate affair with a young undergraduate, Sasaki (Shouma Kai), who has just been humiliatingly flunked by his professor Segawa (Kiyohiko Shubukawa), an award-winning scholar and novelist. Angry and vengeful, Sasaki asks Nao to try seducing this man, so that he will be disgraced.

And in the third story, *Once Again, Moka* (Fusako Urabe) is a thirtysomething woman who goes to a dismal high-school reunion and only afterwards at the train station runs into the person that she really wanted to see: the woman who was her first love. Nana (Aoba Kawai), though apparently flustered and bewildered, is delighted to see her. But it isn't until halfway through their halting conversation that both women make an alarming discovery.

Hamaguchi shows how each situation is redeemed, or at any rate altered, by a kind of miracle. In the first, Meiko has the magic power to stop and rewind time so that she can play out a certain situation, or conversation, differently. In the second, the dignified thoughtfulness of Segawa means that Nao is deeply moved and this complicates her erotic designs on him. Throughout their conversation he asks for his office door to be kept open to prevent any suggestion of impropriety, but this is also emblematic of his own openness. And in the third, Moka and Nana use role-play to ease their painful emotional burdens.

This trio of stories is elegant and amusing, with a delicacy of touch and real imaginative warmth. The narratives saunter along lightly but fundamentally seriously, asking us to consider how the paths we take in life – the wrong turnings, the right turnings – can be governed by the merest chance. It's a really pleasurable and invigorating experience.

Source: www.theguardian.com Peter Bradshaw 11/2/2022 ~ Edited extracts accessed 16/11/22

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COMING UP

April	<i>A Son</i> [Tunisia]	Sunday 2 nd & Tuesday 4 th
May	<i>The Rose Maker</i> [France]	Sunday 14 th & Tuesday 16 th
June	<i>Hit the Road</i> [Iran]	Sunday 18 th & Tuesday 20 th

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Some Thoughts on: *Days of the Bagnold Summer*

What a pleasant return to the second instalment of the 22/23 FISH season.

In my last review, I commented on the 'lite' nature of Antoinette's donkey frolic across the rugged French landscape. This outing, though light hearted in much of its treatment, had a much greater depth of feeling and displayed the complexities of life that demonstrate the human condition, so much more effectively.

Whose heart was not touched by the isolated, lonely, confused disappointing and frustrating situations both Daniel, and his mum, Sue, found themselves in?

Initially, most of our sympathy was directed towards Sue as she stoically bore the awful insults, lack of engagement, mono syllabic communication and just plain rudeness from a son totally free of empathy.

"Yeah", "nup", "dunno", not your business and no, was not the interactive dialogue that Sue needed as she struggled to cope with her fractured situation. Her perseverance with Daniel, loving, supporting and encouraging no matter what, was a wonderful portrayal of a mother's love.

I loved the way our sympathies were gradually turned to encompass Daniel as well when we were fully aware of his feelings and situation and his emotional frustration at not being able to understand or deal with it. This small-scale film in terms of production, really achieved very high levels of heart and humour. We cared. No doubt, this was helped by the fact that, we could all relate to different aspects of the 'everyday' within it.

I loved this film for the effective way it dealt with hard, heartfelt domestic issues, but was never bleak, balancing tough scenes with either a whimsical soundtrack or a laugh out loud moment. For example, when Daniel moved from sitting across the table in the cafe, to sitting next to his Mum, he explained his move to Sue as, "this way, I don't have to look at you!!!!"

This mean jibe was immediately balanced by a shot of what they were now BOTH looking at.....a bizarre goth of a girl and a brutish looking bloke!

This film was so positive, difficulties and problems could be overcome, or at least, dealt with. Sue never gave in. Her persistence gradually reaped the reward of a much better relationship.

I loved the role of the dog who aided in that coming about. I loved the sleaze bag suitor played by Rob Brydon, who was worth the price of admission alone. I loved the sentimental journey to the beach.

Most of all though, I loved the two strands of clothesline, one featuring light, pale nighties, undies and blouses. The other line bearing gothic black EVERYTHING.

Thanks FISH, a little beauty.

Ross Armfield.

P.S. Despite Daniel's negativity early in the film, I totally agreed with his surly resistance to other family members, 'just having a taste', of the yummy treat accompanying a cuppa. Especially the icing!!

Message from the President

Days of the Bagnold Summer proved a gentle and well received introduction to our 2023 season. Thanks once again to Ross Armfield for his review of the film. His comments are, I think, a wonderful reflection of how we all felt about this film.

The committee has welcomed Helen Jones who has taken over the role of Membership Secretary.

For those of you who were not at either screening, we have introduced a new mail out system for our newsletter which is safe, simple and efficient. If you have any problems please contact us by email.

We hope to see you at our next screening which is the Japanese film, *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy*.

Sandra Gillespie

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FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

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