



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Just a heads up...our AGM will be held in our cinema before the screening on Sunday 21st September. The cinema will be unlocked early (9am) for our members to arrive to be part of the meeting and doors will be locked at 9.30 for 20 minutes or so, whilst we have our AGM.

For some obscure reason, the Department of Fair Trading decrees that all not- for-profit organisations have an AGM, so we must oblige. I understand that you may not feel inclined to attend, however, do bear in mind that we need a quorum.

Best wishes to all from your committee,

Roz Garwen



FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

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Membership is closed

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ACE INTERNET SERVICES HIGHLAND CREATIVE

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 21st September 2025

8.15 pm Tuesday 23rd September 2025

HOLY COW [Vingt Dieux]

Synopsis:

Reality catches up with 18-year-old Totone when he has to take care of his sister and find a way to make a living. He sets out to make the best Comte cheese in the region.

Review: Helen Hawkins:

Director Louise Courvoisier has put herself firmly on the film map with this story of young Totone and his little sister, carving out a living in the modern-day Jura [Eastern France] countryside after being orphaned. Think the Dardenne brothers with more sunshine and less angst, a way of life where young calves are transported to market in the front seat of the family car.

Courvoisier is from the village featured and cast her film from the locals working there. All are amateurs, all are naturals. Her Totone is a poultry farm worker, Clément Faveau, an 18-year-old with the ruddy cheeks and tell-tale half-tanned arms of the outdoor labourer. When we first meet him, he is dancing on a raised platform at a village dance, being egged on by his mates to strip. Which he duly does. He leaves the party totally drunk with a woman who turns him out of her bed at dawn, before her mother gets up. He has failed to perform, possibly out of tiredness as well as excess booze. Now he has to be picked up by his father to go on milk-collecting rounds. "Do you want to vomit?" is all his father need say to indicate his fatherly concern and total understanding of his son.

Totone's dissolute teenage life is cut short when his father dies, leaving him to care for his much younger sister Claire (Luna Garret), a little girl with the solemn face and striking outsize eyes of an ancient wise woman. The relationship between her and Totone is touchingly caring. He's a punk kid, but one with a tender heart. His friends, especially Francis (Dimitry Baudry), a stock-car racing nut whom we see readying a custom car for a big race, are equally nurturing, assisting him in his quest to make his own Comté cheese for a contest with a big cash prize and making big sacrifices along the way.

The cheesemaking is as fascinating as anything else in the film. Totone uses po-faced how-to videos online, full of happy locals in historic costumes, plus the experience he gains in a brief stint at a local cheesemaking plant, to create his own wheel of cheese. His friends lampoon the old copper vat he polishes up to warm his milk in as "Obélix stuff", but he is indefatigable, rustling the milk, quizzing the lady cheese-making demonstrator (a local prison guard in real life) at a local farm about her technique and constructing from scratch a pulley system for lifting out the muslin bag of curds.

The film is being described as feelgood, but it is no soft-centred fairytale, where Totone triumphs over the odds to a resounding victory. It doesn't make a meal of his hardships any more than he does, but it is sage and unsentimental about the lives of people like him and his mates. They have to learn how to drink and dance and still be able to get up at 4am the next day to milk their herd or collect other farmers' output. They become tough-minded people who internalise their emotions and drive hard bargains with each other.

Totone's liaison with a local farmer, Marie-Lise (Maïwène Barthélémy), is typically no-nonsense. She instructs him in how to connect the hose that transfers the milk without getting

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covered in spray, how to assist a cow in labour and, not least, how to perform oral sex when his libido is still *en panne*.

The hardship in this lifestyle is mitigated by the beauty unearthed by Courvoisier's film-making, which winds through early morning mists down country lanes with its subjects. A soundtrack by Courvoisier's brother Charlie and mother Linda, classical musicians before they became farmers, adds an almost tribal vibe to these scenes with its unison humming voices, underpinned by a solo cello. This landscape isn't romanticised, even though it may show wide open spaces where wild palominos canter away at the camera's approach. It's not a glamorous idyll, it's folksy, almost like a western, with "Kisses Sweeter than Wine" also popping up on the soundtrack.

Courvoisier's cast are her crowning achievement, each one an ideal choice. Faveau has the insouciant charm of a young man growing up fast, his slight pout softening when he smiles, some of his youthful innocence still in play. His friends, despite their devil-may-care behaviour, are equally sound allies in extremis. As Totone's love interest, Barthélémy (an agriculture student) is a gift, a hint of hardness in her face but a sense of humour in her attitude as she roars around on her quad-bike. Most captivating of all is young Luna Garret as Claire, the quiet boss of them all, calm and capable. It's a film that doesn't give up on insisting on life's possibilities, even as they seem to be seeping away.

Source: www.theartsdesk.com ~ Helen Hawkins 11/4/25 – Edited extracts accessed 12/6/25

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COMING UP:

October	<i>Sons</i> [Denmark/Sweden]	Sunday 19 th & Tuesday 21 st
November	<i>An Unfinished Film</i> [China]	Sunday 16 th & Tuesday 18 th
December	<i>The Movie Teller</i> [Chile/Spain]	Sunday 14 th & Tuesday 16 th

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Some thoughts on: *Paris, Texas*

This 95% Rotten Tomatoes rated, and, recipient of the 1984 Palme d'Or at Cannes, among many other accolades, is one of those classic films that had escaped my actual viewing until now, (despite being aware of its reputation and credentials). How does that happen?

Life I suppose, but wow, it was just so worth the wait! I LOVED this film, so beautifully captured, so emotionally engaging and moving in narrative and acting performance. This was a wonderful choice, FISH, and having finally seen it, I can't wait until I am able to secure another viewing.

That heartbreaking and heart-warming conclusion was brilliant, and shall be remembered forever. A stunning conclusion that was just one of so many superb elements.

Among my favourite highlights were, most obviously, the glorious cinematography capturing the gorgeous blue desert skies and vast, barren, sun baked terrain.

Having recently been remastered, the end result was a visual treat for the eyes. The landscape is virtually another character representing isolation, loneliness, silence and escape to state just a few aspects of its impact.

The direction and wonderful performances from the entire cast, were just so effective and engaging. Who could ever forget Travis leaving, having successfully reunited his son Hunter with his mother, Jane?

What thrilled me in the story line was the silence and lack of communication throughout, (the empty landscape, Travis's refusal to speak, Jane's unseen but unannounced initial disappearance etc, etc), were resolved in a place of intense personal, unavoidable communication. Jane and Travis reaching resolution in that strange booth that was designed to be anonymous, was pure cinematic magic. The mirror becomes two-way and Hunter's return to his mother is successfully achieved. This was extraordinarily powerful cinema. I know for sure that my rapidly moistening eyes, were not the only ones working overtime as Travis heads back to Paris, Texas.

For me, the icing on the cake of this deeply engaging masterpiece, was the brilliant soundtrack provided by the wonderfully evocative slide guitar work, performed by Ry Cooder. This style of 'sound' is often heard in films featuring Monument Valley in Arizona and other desert locations. *Thelma and Louise* and *Young Guns* are two examples that pop up in my mind. The soundtrack is just about perfect, as its slow, sad, lonely and evocative notes create the backdrop to this sublime film.

Many thanks once again, FISH, for another few hours of absolute cinematic bliss.

Ross Armfield [Reviewer in Chief]