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Adventures in Short Film Vol 1 - DVD

A breath of indy fresh air

by Neil Queen published on 19 September 2008

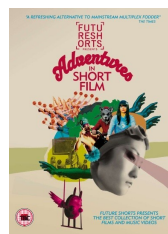
That Forrest Gump chump was right. Life is like a box of chocolates, and so is this engaging compilation of short films, one that offers something for all fans of the visual arts, though of course with a few coffee Revels thrown in for good measure.

Put together by forward-thinking Future Shorts, a team determined to push the boundaries of the cinematic experience - most recently with the Secret Cinema club, which seeks to challenge the tyranny of the multiplex - they've stitched together a staggering wealth of material from all over the globe to feed your eyes.

Short films sorts the men from the boys. With features, there's the back-up of traditional structure and clichés - there's a safety net of convention. But with less time to develop ideas, makers of shorts need to be wildly imaginative, not to mention incredibly disciplined. It's the wild invention that earns this DVD a spot on the site - from Czech surrealist animator Jan Svankmajer to genius pop video directors like Michel Gondry, all have in the past made it in a vibrant medium that will always be worth a look.

Starting with Douglas Wilson's video for the singer Bat For Lashes, a curious blend of BMX Bandits and Donnie Darko that perfectly suits the darkly eccentric What's A Girl To Do, we flit from East Europe to America via Scandinavia, from stark drama to dry comedy, stopping off with the impressively visually rhythmic choreography of a Chinese state display.

There are some cracking moments - the loopy light entertainment terrorism of the Oscar-nommed 7.35 In The Morning and the appearance of an almost cherubic young Martin Freeman in the New Wavey I Just Want To Kiss You, whose presence as a physical comedian is startling even then.



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The animation is as fresh and obtusely playful as you'd hope for - especially the rich and vivid multi-media City Paradise, which follows the bizarre exploits of a Japanese woman as she tries to settle into London.

But the strongest moments come when dealing with timeless human emotions and situations. She Loves Me silently captures the lifespan of a relationship by compacting it into a series of key moments, On S'embresse smartly dissects the mechanics of the break-up of a relationship, while Never Like The First Time is an outstandingly deft piece of animation that interprets real-life tales of lost virginity.

VERDICT

Of course, not all the shorts satisfy, and an afternoon on YouTube may yield equal joy, but it's more about rebooting your synapses and dipping your toes into a vibrant culture, moving away from the cosy consumption of film and TV.

Go on, give it a go, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Rating: 15

Starring: various

Directed by: various

Extras: None

At a glance

What is it?

Compilation

Good

Some truly fresh, striking talent

Bad

The unavoidable unevenness of quality

Verdict

A ragbag of treats that is at best marvellous, and even at it's worst still thoroughly enthralling

Price 14.99 DVD

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10