

## **Educating Movies**

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### **Part 1**

I saw almost every film shown at the European Film Festival recently held at MovieTowne. I was pleased to note how well the public responded to these films, with a packed cinema for almost every screening. On many days there were more people viewing a European film than the traditional Hollywood production being shown on the other nine screens. My interest was not so much that the films were from Europe, but that they were generally excellent productions, carefully selected by the local Embassies and High Commissions to represent quality film-making from their countries. I was also pleased to see that a number of schools sent their students to see the films, especially the French and Spanish language ones. On one afternoon I saw students from St. Joseph's College and Tranquillity Government Secondary enjoying the French film "Mon Idole" ("My Idol"), a damning exposé of the mass media and the erosion of traditional values in postmodern society. The students did giggle at the occasional sexual reference and swear words, but I am certain the film left them a little wiser than before.

All the films shown had cultural, social and, thus, educational significance, and many deserve special recognition. The German films were especially strong on socio-economic issues. "Gegen die Wand" ("Head-on") explores the culture and marginalisation of the Turkish community in Germany, while the comedy "Alles auf Zucker!" ("Go for Zucker!") reminds the viewer of Germany's turbulent past with the reuniting of two Jewish brothers and their families who had lived in the divided East and West Germany.

The Nordic films were thought-provoking. In "Arven" ("The Inheritance"), the son decides to sacrifice his marriage and career as a restaurateur to run the family's steel company in Denmark. In "Nousukausi" ("Upswing"), the disparity between poverty and affluence in Finland is dramatically seen as a middle-class couple decides to experience life with no money, while the Swedish comedy "Adam and Eva" is an entertaining exposé of love, sex, adultery, separation and, once again, love.

The Dutch films were all worth watching. "De Grot" ("The Cave") explores teenage friendship and adult tragedy as two persons plan to earn some easy money by working for a drug dealer they both knew from their youth. Drugs also feature in "Simon," possibly the best film shown at the Festival, as director Eddy Terstall sensitively explores the issue of euthanasia, with the macho hash dealer, Simon, having to come to terms with his mortality. "Verder dan de Maan" ("Sea of Silence"), is a disturbing account of what alcoholism can do to a family.

I had seen most of the English films before, although I enjoyed the Welsh comedy "Plots with a View". There was only one Spanish film shown, "El Abuelo" ("The Grandfather"), the longest and possibly most dramatic film shown at the festival, with powerful acting, as an aristocratic grandfather discovers that only one of his granddaughters is his legitimate heir and he struggles to choose between love and honour.

Perhaps the most interesting film was not a feature film but the docudrama “De Fem Benspænd” (“The Five Obstructions”). This film was shot *cinema-verité* style, and portrays a fascinating journey into the phenomenon of film-making in such locations as Cuba and India.

Unfortunately, many students were not able to see these films, as the packed school curriculum allows the teacher very little time for such pursuits. However, viewing such appropriate films should not be seen as an extra-curricula activity but rather an integral aspect of a holistic education in a media- and technology-rich, global world.

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