



ADVOCATE *insider*

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Cannes Day Three -- Woody Allen, Mike Tyson and the Rumba

No, sadly, Woody Allen and Mike Tyson did not do the rumba on the red carpet at Cannes. In a day pretty lacking in queer content, about the best I can offer is old footage of Mike Tyson berating a heckler at a press conference back in his boxing glory days and ironically calling the man a faggot while insisting Tyson will f--- him in the ass in front of everybody.

Un Conte de Noel/A Christmas Tale -- The day began with "A Christmas Tale," an extremely French drama about a family (to call it "dysfunctional" would be redundant, no?) that gathers together for the holiday. Two and a half hours long and featuring Mathieu Amalric of "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly" and the beautiful, enigmatic Catherine Deneuve, about the most amusement one gets from it is the casual way all the characters treat affairs. A very familiar story of long-held resentment, secrets and so on, enlivened somewhat by an excellent cast.

It's Hard Being Loved By Jerks -- The Trial -- A French documentary shot while the editors of a French satirical magazine were on trial for re-publishing the Danish cartoons that poked fun/mocked/defamed Islam and the prophet Muhammed (take your pick) and after much prodding and exaggeration and lies (including the widespread dissemination of cartoons that were NOT created by the Danish cartoonists and which were intentionally created to shock and anger Muslims since the genuine cartoons had sparked no widespread outrage in the Muslim world) ultimately engendered angry demonstrations and murders around the world. The film is strictly talking heads, but the heads talking are voluble and entertaining and the subject itself is fascinating (yes, they do show both the genuine cartoons and the false ones).

Rumba -- One of the movies I've most anticipated at Cannes.

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It's from the team behind the little seen "L'Iceberg," one of my favorite films of 2007. In the spirit of Keaton and Chaplin and Jacques Tati, "L'Iceberg" told a nearly wordless tale of a woman accidentally locked into a walk-in freezer overnight who becomes obsessed with icebergs and leaves her family to sail for one. Hilarious physical comedy and a winning, guileless take on the world (as well as the charms of gawky lead actress Fiona Gordon who looks like a Canadian version of Shelley Duvall), "L'Iceberg" is well worth renting on DVD. Having urged everyone I know to watch it, I was thrilled to see their new movie (co-written, co-directed and starring Gordon, her husband Dominique Abel and their friend Bruno Romy) was showing. It may not have quite the breezy charm of their debut film, but "Rumba" is sweet and fun nonetheless, with Gordon and Abel a happily married couple who teach at a school and win every rumba contest in sight. A car accident causes Abel to lose his memory and Gordon her leg, which leads to some amusing bits both with crutches and a weighty replacement for her appendage. They are separated but it's in little doubt that true love will triumph. NOTE: After thinking about the film for a while, I had to admit I was being a bit generous. I would definitely want someone to see "l'Iceberg" rather than starting with this. It has its charms but there's no engine, no obsession that really drives these characters forward. The rumba comeptitions are also misleading -- though goofy dances serve as time-filling interludes, the dancing doesn't play an important role. For example, once the man's memory is lost, it would have made sense for them to reconnect some way via dance. But that doesn't happen and the damcing falls quickly by the wayside. There is still charm to spare in this movie and it certainly gives you the flavor of what they do. But the plotting and motivation isn't as tightly worked out this time. Still, can't wait to see their next movie and every time I saw Fiona walking around the fest I wanted to rush up and start chatting because I felt like I knew her.

Vicky Cristina Barcelona -- The new Woody Allen and this being France the screening is mobbed, despite the fact that Allen has made about one decent film in the last decade. Happily, "VCB" is not bad, almost as good as the solid but not great "Match Point." That alone is a relief for a director who has made so many weak, uninteresting or just plain awful movies since 1992's terrific "Husbands and Wives" that you could actually see his once towering reputation get lowered with each new release. In this romantic comedy that gains a little emotional heft towards the end, two young American women -- Scarlett Johansson and Rebecca Hall -- head to Barcelona for

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the summer. Vicky (Hall) is uptight and focused on commitment. Cristina (Johansson) is a sensualist. They bump into a tempestuous painter (Javier Bardem) who had a famously violent divorce from the ex-wife he is still obsessed with. They both sleep with him, Johansson moves in and eventually of course his ex-wife arrives in the hilarious form of Penelope Cruz. She plays one of Allen's classic unhinged women (see *Husbands and Wives*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, etc.) and is very, very funny here, jumping back and forth between Spanish and English, which somehow makes her tantrums even more amusing. A menage a trois soon develops and we get a flashback to Johansson and Cruz kissing passionately in a photography darkroom, though they are never seen in bed together. It all flits by pleasantly, even the ever so slightly serious ending. Don't expect to be wowed, but you won't be embarrassed by it either.

Tyson -- A James Toback documentary that presents boxer Mike Tyson as a deep thinker. Beyond the silly shots of the boxer strolling on a beach and offering philosophical musings, the movie is an interesting portrait of the man's life. It humanizes Tyson, who is quite self-aware and self-critical, though calling him noble, as Toback did, or trying to insist he's complicated is a stretch. Tyson isn't remotely complicated. He's a poorly educated kid from a very poor background who became fabulously wealthy and famous and then -- like so many others -- frittered it all away in drugs, sex, boorish even criminal behavior and sheer stupidity (bad contracts and the such). Tyson does take responsibility for his actions, though he still doesn't have anything but bitter words for the woman he was convicted of raping in the 90s. On the other hand, most of the film is just Tyson talking on camera and given his lisp, high-pitched voice and propensity for mangling vocabulary, it is very notable that the film is in fact engaging and interesting. I wouldn't have imagined Tyson could hold forth at length. The deepest he gets in analysis is to say he was surrounded by leeches and that he and Robin Givens were just kids, but still. Among the many boxing and interview clips, we get to see Tyson's harangue at a heckler during a press conference where he repeatedly uses homophobic slurs (because of course that's the worst thing he can imagine), telling a man off camera that he'll "fuck you in the ass in front of everybody, you faggot" and on and on. That makes his cameo in "Black and White" where Robert Downey Jr. hit on him all the more amusing.

Finally, I have to wonder: why was Tyson greeted with a roar of applause by the French crowd at the premiere? Polite applause? Sure. But frankly I expected director James Toback -- who has a

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distinguished career -- to get more applause from a bunch of cineastes. But fame apparently trumps all.

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One of the other publications is conducting a poll on which song they propose as an anthem for Pride 2008.

It seems to me that they are being frivolous in a time when there is a need to focus. It's been a long and winding road, the victories have been sweet and hard fought and further struggle lies ahead through November. These may well be the "Best Days", but there are more ahead.

More fitting then is Graham Colton's "Best Days" and I have made a music video in that regard.

Please let me know what you think.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZG78RzXEOdo>

~GARi~~~

Posted by: [GShotsTV](#) | [June 04, 2008 at 05:42 AM](#)

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