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## Cannes 2011 Day Three: A Pope, A Pianist, A Philogoiist and More!

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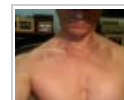
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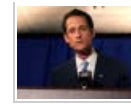
**HABEMUS PAPAM/WE HAVE A POPE** \*\*\* out of \*\*\*\*

It sounds like a high concept spin on *The Sopranos* or maybe *Analyze This* with less cursing and more praying: an unassuming Cardinal is elected Pope and is so overwhelmed with the burden that he starts to see a psychiatrist. That's the pitch for Italian director Nanni Moretti's latest comedy. I expected something much more broad and scathing. But in fact *Habemus Papam* is a sweet, amusing and very sympathetic look at the burden being Pope would actually entail. In reality becoming Pope is just as cutthroat and political a move as becoming a President; men work towards it their entire careers and must be filled with ambition to achieve it -- which hardly precludes a desire to do good but is a fact nonetheless. In this film the joke is that none of the Cardinals want it. When they're voting, we hear each man's inner monologue where they pray that it won't be them and please God let it be someone else.

One Cardinal, played by the great Michel Piccoli, I don't think is shown doing this. It doesn't even occur to him that he could be selected. After several deadlocks among three frontrunners, miraculously his name appears on virtually every ballot. Events soon overwhelm him with Cardinals surrounding him and singing and smiling and praying and everyone heading to the balcony so they can announce to the faithful and the world that "We have a new Pope!" when suddenly our hero lets out a primal scream of fear and runs away. The Vatican is thrown into chaos while the world holds its breath.

In desperation, they bring in a psychiatrist (a very funny Moretti) who tries to have a session with the Pope but must do so while surrounded by all the Cardinals. So many questions are out of bounds that Moretti throws his hands up in frustration. He's politely held captive while the Pope is sent off secretly to have a session with Moretti's ex-wife, the second best psychiatrist in Rome. Soon the Pope escapes his guard and wanders Rome a la Henry V, meeting and taking strength from the people for the journey ahead. Meanwhile, Moretti plays cards with the Cardinals, arranges a volleyball tournament and other diversions while gently sparring with them over this and that. It's a whimsical tale with a bold ending and a very sweet performance from Piccoli who plays a Pope that -- like John Paul II -- was a frustrated actor before he found his calling. It doesn't quite lay the groundwork for the movie's finale but the tale is so endearing you forgive the film its lapses. I liked it more than many, I think, but this is a crowd-pleaser. (I couldn't find an English language trailer but you'll be able to follow this teaser.)

**MICHEL PETRUCCIANI** \*\* 1/2 out of \*\*\*\*



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**Clooney's Girl, Elisabetta Canalis: 'I Will Be Married'**

Michel Petrucciani was a gifted jazz pianist who also dealt with dwarfism and bones so fragile he would sometimes break his collarbone and fingers and the like while performing. To its credit, this valentine to the artist is not a triumphant tale of overcoming adversity. Instead, it's just the story of a complicated, Falstaffian talent who embraced life as often as men and women embraced him to carry the pianist on stage for his concerts. This documentary by Michael Radford makes extensive use of the many interviews Petrucciani granted over the years as well as talking with his family, friends and fellow musicians.

Without being a destructive figure a la Charlie Parker, Petrucciani certainly dove into life, drinking and drugging and staying up till dawn. Long after everyone else was exhausted, Petrucciani was ready for more. He just knew he didn't have long for this world (the doctors predicted from the start he would die young) so Petrucciani never wanted to waste a moment. He was a serial romantic, falling in love almost instantly with women who invariably fell in love right back. If one girlfriend refused to go on tour anymore, he'd meet someone within a week and move on. This happens again and again as we chat with four women who shared his life one after another, including one who gave birth to what I believe is his only son, who has the same handicap as Petrucciani.

The movie is engaging and amusing for quite a while, until it gets bogged down in his personal life, detailing each relationship in unnecessary detail. We get glimpses of his craft, but invariably Petrucciani's solos are seen in brief clips or interrupted with voice-overs. Still, it's easy to see the amazing technical virtuosity he possessed (aided in part by the bones in his hand being lighter than normal).

The film will engage casual jazz fans but leaves quite a few events unexplained. After praising his talent for most of the movie, it's suddenly implied that he was too imitative of the great Bill Evans but finally developed his own sound and style. What was it? What was the change? Suddenly, he's selling 100,000 albums per release rather than 10,000 and playing for the Pope. Can't anyone explain in detail this burst of popularity and how Petrucciani finally found his own voice? That's surely more germane than the leap from girlfriend number three to girlfriend number four. Finally, you shouldn't have to wait until the closing credits to finally hear one complete performance from a pianist the film ranks as among the best. This is a heartfelt work certain to garner Petrucciani more fans but it still leaves the uninitiated with more questions than answers. Of course, there's always the music. Here's Petrucciani playing "Take The 'A' Train," fitting since the film tells us it was seeing Duke Ellington on TV at 4 years of age that made him crazy for the piano.

#### ARIRANG no stars out of \*\*\*\*

Kim Ki-duk is a Korean filmmaker who turned out a movie a year for more than a decade than hit a wall. He had international festival success, especially with Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring. But he had a crisis of conscience (perhaps because a woman was almost seriously injured on one of his sets, I think) and quit making movies for three years. He oversaw two assistant directors who made the leap to director but otherwise felt creatively blocked.

For some reason, he decided to produce this docu-essay drama. Kim sits in a cabin above a small village, with a tent in the middle of the main room. It has almost no amenities but he builds an espresso

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machine, gets water by melting the snow outside and talks and talks and talks into the camera. His meandering monologue is banal and often embarrassing, offering up trite comments on art and life that show no insight or thought. Kim looks like a wild man, with his hair growing out like a mountain man and his rambling musings growing increasingly desperate. He mocks the one assistant director who made the leap to director for abandoning Kim and accepting an offer to make a film from a major studio. Kim wonders why Korea honors him when his movies with festival awards. They must not have seen his films, because those movies can reveal negative details about Korea. (Kim doesn't seem to realize that great art may expose flaws but doing so is a sign of strength, not weakness and brings no dishonor to a country willing to face the truth.) He screams and curses at actors who want to play bad guys because being evil is so easy. And he sings the song "Arirang" over and over again. At one point, he becomes so moved while singing it that he breaks down in tears. At another point, he's moved to tears while watching a scene from what I believe is one of his own movies. He's surrounded by posters for his films and artwork. He even films himself watching footage of himself rambling on, which isn't meta but just depressingly dull. The movie ends with a fake murder/suicide and yet another rendition of "Arirang." Calling it indulgent is too easy. Indulgent implies a certain luxurious giving in to desire of some sort. This film is too flat and uninvolved to deserve a term like indulgent. Indulgence at least takes a little effort.

#### JEANE CAPTIVE/THE SILENCE OF JOAN \*\* 1/2 out of \*\*\*\*

I prefer movies of faith to rely on faith. When this look at Joan of Arc -- which focuses on the French maid when she has been captured and ransomed to the British for trial and then burning at the stake -- lets an air of mystery surround this woman, it works. When we must depend on our own faith in the girl (and the quietly impassioned actress Clemence Poesy who plays her) it can be quite effective. Is she mad, stubborn, vain or genuinely hearing the voice of God. The look on her face when she sees the ocean for the first time makes you wonder; Joan can hear the voice of God in the pounding surf -- shouldn't we?

This Joan has nothing but her faith, which in this film wavers at first. She attempts to kill herself, begging for mercy as she does so and then refuses to talk to God or anyone. Only the kind ministrations of a doctor brought in to care for her gives Joan new life. And then the voices begin again. This is an austere, interesting movie made with care. But it goes seriously off the rails toward the end. When the ocean's roar is silenced and even the British soldiers are struck dumb by this miracle, the only surprise is that they don't immediately set her free and beg forgiveness themselves. Then even stranger is the appearance of a mystical "traveler" during her trial) played by Mathieu Amalric to vanish out of prisons and demand everyone repent for how they treat her. Finally, Joan's love of God is, I suppose, somehow linked to the two very minor characters (a beautiful young woman and her lover) that are suddenly naked and making rapturous love. I can't think of any other reason why they should appear just as Joan is burnt to a crisp. Director Philippe Ramos should have dropped the mysticism and the romanticism and stuck with the rapture of Joan's devotion. If you don't show faith in your actors to capture the holy, then your audiences won't show it either.

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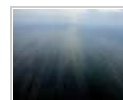
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**HEARAT SHULAYAM/THE FOOTNOTE \*\*\* 1/2 out of \*\*\*\***

Writer-director Joseph Cedar's last film -- *Beaufort* -- was set almost entirely inside a tank. Perhaps in response to those constraints, this film is filled with visual razzle dazzle. It may be set in the vicious world of academia, but Cedar has a lot of fun throwing up notes and lists (like "5 things you should know about Professor Uriel Schkolnik" or picturing the popular academic popping up like a jack-in-the-box on a map when he's giving six lectures in six different locations on a popular religious holiday.

Actually, since blood is rarely shed in academia, the fights are more cutthroat and war never ends. The father and son at the heart of this film are certainly at each other's throats as only family members and scholars can be. The father is a rigorous old school scholar who labored for decades on his magnum opus, only to have a random discovery by a bitter rival undercut his life's work at the last moment. The son, it's quietly noted, became a scholar because he wanted to be like his dad. But the son is far more of a popularizer. The movie begins when the son attends a ceremony that initiates him into a prestigious academy, an honor his prickly father never received. Dad is a little ashamed how jealous he is of his son, though at the same time disdainful of all such awards since he knows the petty men and women that give and receive them and believe these awards -- even the once prestigious Israel Prize -- are tainted by favoritism and lack any true distinction.

That is, until the day the father unexpectedly gets the call from a government official that after decades of being submitted, he finally will receive the Israel Prize in recognition of his long and somewhat overlooked career. Now at least he feels ashamed about how much receiving such an award makes him feel.

This movie is light on its feet, wickedly funny at one moment and deadly serious at the next. Anyone with the faintest knowledge of academia -- or just office politics -- will instantly recognize the bitter festering jealousies that burst out of the blue among long-time colleagues. The added poignancy of seeing father and son wrestle with career jealousy just raises the stakes further. Both Scholomo Bar-Aba and Lior Ashkenazi are superb as father and son and they're surrounded by excellent actors up and down the line, especially Micah Lewensohn as their bete noir Grossman. The score by Amit Poznansky is especially deft at letting us enjoy the humor without ever forgetting the very real emotions at play.

The comments on scholarship and the media are rich and fertile. But it's the ever-changing relationship between a father and son (especially when the father is getting old and the son is more and more in charge every day), the need to tend old wounds and not inflict them on the next generation that make *The Footnote* genuinely moving.

\*\*\*\*\*

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