



Reviews Box Office Heat Vision Roundtables



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'In the Intense Now' ('No Intenso Agora'): Film Review

10:48 AM PST 1/31/2018 by John DeFore



Courtesy of Berlinale

THE BOTTOM LINE

A Chris Marker-inspired work that wonders what happens to stillborn revolutions.



Joao Moreira Salles scours archives of amateur films to look at the political unrest of 1968.

A two-part essay film meditating on the joy of mass political protest and the deflation that can follow, Joao Moreira Salles' *In the Intense Now* uses an assortment of found footage to summon the spirit of 1968 in several hotspots. A Brazilian raised partly in Paris whose cosmopolitan mother shot much of the footage used here, Salles is both detached from the events he lived through and sympathetic to the agitators, resulting in an odd flavor of clear-eyed nostalgia. Loaded with present-day relevance one prays won't be prophetic, it will a boon for young cinephiles who know of May '68 (if at all) only via its association with the *Nouvelle Vague*.

Salles (the brother of *Central Station*'s Walter Salles) begins with a couple of relatively innocuous home movies, his affectless voiceover noting things they might reveal about class dynamics or the weight of history. "We don't always know what we're filming," he points out, which was certainly true for his mother: She took a cultural trip to China in 1968, shooting reels of footage Salles didn't see for years. Here, he compares her journal entries, which say nothing about politics and focus on impressions of Chinese art and architecture, with the Maoist slogans and rituals that fill her home movies. Salles notes with seeming regret that his mother took pictures of places she visited but not where she lived: From the evidence she left (and from Salles' own childhood memories), one would think she knew nothing of the turmoil that overtook Paris that May.

So Salles goes to other citizen-documentarians, finding plenty of anonymously shot footage of students taking to the streets. He offers visual analysis of what their framing means, then segues to old newsreels, beginning a detailed look at Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of that May's most prominent radicals. Using a variety of sources, he depicts Cohn-Bendit's thrill at the "theater" of protest, showing how well suited he was to his role and, it seems, how much earlier than others he realized the curtain was falling. Following Cohn-Bendit to Berlin, where he allowed a *Paris Match* photographer to accompany him in exchange for travel expenses, Salles sees a revolution that is already being turned into a product for corporations to market.

(Along these lines and almost heartbreaking is Salles' talk of the movement's Surrealism-inspired slogans — "Workers of the world, *have fun*"; "Under the paving stones, the beach" — some of which he believes may have been the work of ad men.)

Though he pays attention to the actual grievances raised by protesters, Salles is more invested in understanding the effect protest had on them. He sees them here as the happiest they'll be in their lives, despite existing in a cloud in which it seemed "everything were possible *but* taking power."

After observing the end of France's general strike, the film shifts to Czechoslovakia for the end of the Prague Spring. Salles finds two home movies — "Reel 25" and "Reel 127" — that capture the start of the Soviet occupation in very different ways, and he muses while we watch about what each method says about the person behind the camera. Then he finds *Strange Autumn* (a work whose director "V. Rula" gives him- or herself a credit onscreen), which captures "the disheartened air" of a Prague where reformist enthusiasm has been effectively quashed.

This second half (which, like the first, is never confined to one place for long) explores the cost of mass protest movements — the lives lost to violence, the spirits crushed by failure. Less tangibly, with an affecting clip from Romain Goupil's *To Die at 30*, he looks at the "precocious nostalgia" of 20-ish students who intuit that nothing from here on will matter as much as the past month or two. In Salles' vision, figures like de Gaulle and Mao and Jean-Paul Sartre deserve our sympathy but not much investment. More worth remembering are the people who believed unity would last, then lived to see the future.

Production company: VideoFilmes

Distributor: Icarus Films

Director: Joao Moreira Salles

Producer: Maria Carlota Bruno

Editors: Eduardo Escorel, Lais Lifschitz

Composer: Rodrigo Leao

Venue: Film Forum

In Portuguese with English Subtitles

127 minutes

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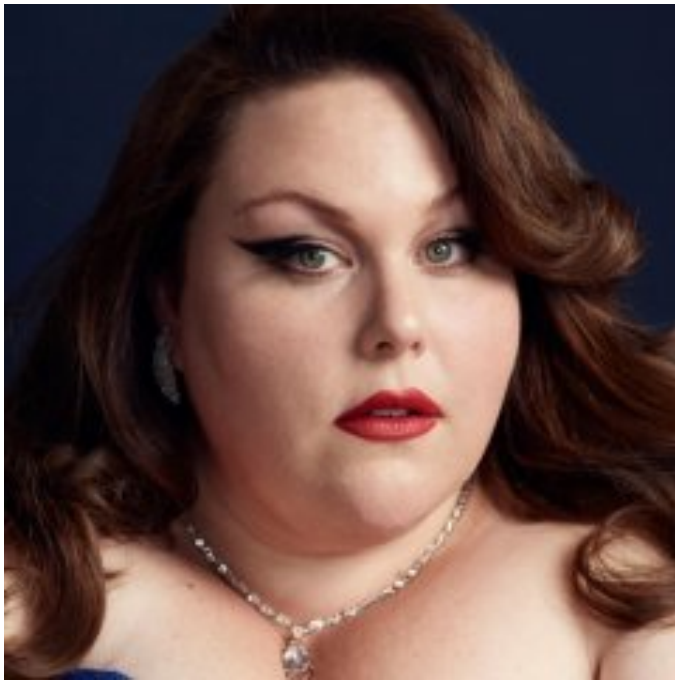
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'Entanglement': Film Review

8:03 PM PST 2/8/2018 by Sheri Linden





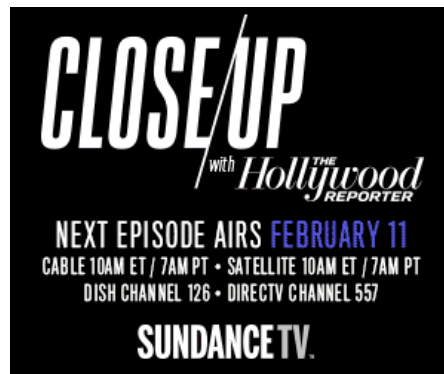
Courtesy of Dark Star Pictures

Jess Weixler and Thomas Middleditch in 'Entanglement'

THE BOTTOM LINE

A tangle of ideas that steadily unravels. [🐦](#)

OPENS
2/9/2018



A family secret sets a depressed man on a quest in a romantic comedy starring Thomas Middleditch, Jess Weixler and Diana Bang.

"I guess I thought it was, like, whimsical," Thomas Middleditch's character in *Entanglement* offers as a defense at one point. Director Jason James and screenwriter Jason Filatrault apparently share that assumption; the movie opens with a sequence that aims to spin gentle laughs from an attempted suicide. From there, the narrative rides the twin tracks of poignancy and humor, with a quantum-physics detour, to diminishing returns. James' assured timing and visual knack almost mask how strained and half-baked the story is.

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But the helmer draws sharp, engaging performances from his cast. *Silicon Valley*'s Middleditch wisely underplays the role of sad sack and would-be suicide Ben Layten, who has been despondent since his wife left him. When you strip away the actor's charm, Ben is an insufferable man-child. For one thing, he still sees his child psychologist (Johannah Newmarch). The film provides not the slightest

inkling of his professional interests or general purpose in life. His possession of carefully curated vinyl albums, an unconvincing nod toward soulful hipsterism, is meant to suffice.

Somehow, all the blank spaces in Ben's personality make him the romantic ideal for a couple of smart women who cross his path. His neighbor Tabby (Diana Bang) might be proprietor of an artsy boutique, but she has time to do some motherly tidying up of Ben's apartment, entering without his knowledge or permission. To Tabby's dismay, a mystery woman enters Ben's life and claims enter stage, schooling him in more daring forms of breaking and entering.

Their paths cross about the time that Ben finds new focus for his Rx-muted days, after his hospitalized father (Eric Keenleyside) takes an absurd stab at a deathbed confession: He reveals that decades earlier a baby girl almost became Ben's adopted sister. Convinced that the phantom sibling is the key to haunting woulda-coulda-shoulda questions, Ben sets out to find her.

The person he finds is Hanna, a free-spirited shoplifter played with welcome zing by Jess Weixler. Call her a manic pixie dream girl or just a male fantasy, she's that and a bit more: droll, defiant and the perfect rule-breaking antidote to the milquetoast Ben's jittery caution. That she pursues him with such intensity is at least as unbelievable as Tabby's unrequited attraction. But in this story of an emotionally underdeveloped male, Ben's brusque mother (Marilyn Norry, very good) turns out to be the only female who doesn't cater to his needs.

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[AFM: Dark Star Pictures Debuts With Thomas Middleditch Comedy 'Entanglement'](#)

Filiatrault's screenplay weaves the idea of quantum entanglement into Ben's story, with Hanna insisting that they're not merely long-lost adoptive siblings but bound particles, forever connected. It's an intriguing premise, but one that's explored in only the most superficial ways. Plot mechanics final undo any possibility of larger meaning, and the story devolves into pat, unsatisfying notions about mental illness and romantic love.

Director James does, however, embellish the mild fantasy with winningly surreal touches — from cartoon woodland critters to images of cosmic orbits — conveying the precariousness of Ben's mental state and also the inspiration he feels around Hanna. Even the quotidian elements of the suburban locations (filmed in British Columbia) have a fluency and sheen thanks to fine work by cinematographer James Liston.

But however seamless the visuals, and despite Middleditch's low-key likability, there's no getting around the preciousness that the film attaches to Ben's immaturity and self-absorption. The story's big twist looms into view well before its intended jolt of surprise. By that point, the filaments of this rom-com alternate reality have unraveled. What's left is as empty as it is uncluttered — certainly good news for Bang's character, who likes things neat and clean.

Distributor: Dark Star Pictures

Production companies: Resonance Films, Goodbye Productions in association with Thunderbird Films

Cast: Thomas Middleditch, Jess Weixler, Diana Bang, Randal Edwards, Marilyn Norry, Eric Keenleyside, Johannah Newmarch, Jena Skodje, Shauna Johannesen, Nicole LaPlaca, Mackenzie Gray

Director: Jason James

Screenwriter: Jason Filiatrault

Producers: Amber Ripley, Jason James

Executive producers: Jhod Cardinal, Tim Gamble, Kirsten "Kiwi" Smith

Director of photography: James Liston

Production designer: Scott Moulton

Costume designer: Sekyiwa Wi-Agedzi

Editors: Gareth Scales, Christopher Watson, Jamie Alain

Composer: Andrew Harris

Casting directors: Barbara McCarthy, Kara Eide, Kris Woznesensky

85 minutes