

Under The Silver Lake

Proceeding his 2014 horror success *It Follows*, David Robert Mitchell presents a Lynchian-Hitchcockian hybrid with a myriad of loose ends. *Under The Silver Lake* follows Sam, a young and utterly unmotivated Los Angeles resident (Andrew Garfield), as he discovers the dark underbelly of Hollywood in a series of surreal twists and turns.

With strong allusions to *Mulholland Drive* (2001), Mitchell certainly attempts a quintessential “LA movie”. Mike Gioulakis’s cinematography gives the film a shiny, polished look, and Mitchell’s writing includes some genuinely funny moments. Unfortunately, the film cannot seem to support itself under the weight of its own absurdity. *Under The Silver Lake* starts off strong and gradually becomes unfocused and gratuitous, reveling in its own obscurity. By the film’s end, *Silver Lake* offers up so much weirdness and so many ‘quirks’ that it eventually exhausts itself.

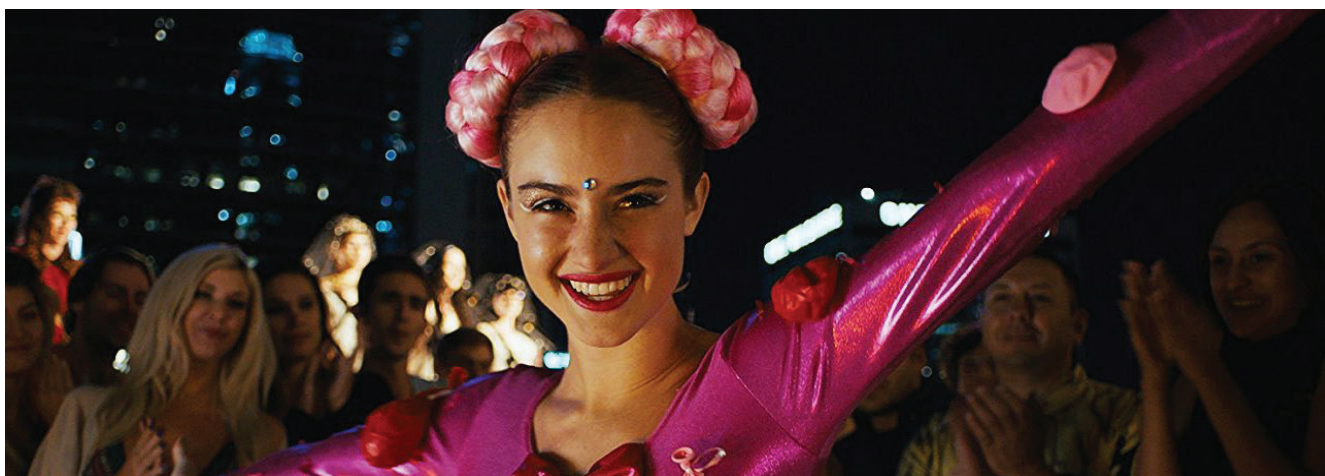
Review by Zoë S. Sherman



Keep an Eye Out

Promoted by VIFF as a kind of spiritual successor to Quentin Dupieux’s previous film *Rubber* (2010), this feature maintains the director’s propensity for surreal dark comedy, though is unable to live up to the legacy held by the aforementioned sentient tire. By largely confining the narrative to a single location where relatively little happens, *Keep an Eye Out* produces a sense of near-constant claustrophobia from which the only relief is the unusual sense of humour that feels right at home with Dupieux’s style. Only in its final moments, breaking from the confines of narrative to destabilize the very framework of cinematic fictionality, is *Keep an Eye Out* able to solidify its connection to *Rubber*, marking a clear interest on the part of Dupieux to watch cinema watch itself.

Review By Jared Aronoff





Happy as Lazzaro

Shot on Super 16mm film, *Happy as Lazzaro* feels like a memory, footage gently faded by the harsh Italian sun. Like the titular character, the soft edges of the frame offer a blurring of the present and past, even as the narrative moves from the countryside to the modern city. Directed by Alice Rohrwacher, the film tells the story of Lazzaro, an infallibly generous young man. He and the other families labouring in the tobacco fields live a life removed from modern society, on a pastoral farm caught in the past. Brutally exploited by the tobacco Marchesa, the workers in turn exploit the innocent Lazzaro. Life for Lazzaro dramatically changes when he is caught up in the life and exploits of the young Marquis, Tancredi.

Happy as Lazzaro is full of stories and fables. We the audience listen as female voices recount tales of wolves, lions, and saints to small children. With its moments of magical realism – a boy who survives an impossible fall only to awake years later unchanged, music that leaves a church to follow a family as they push their truck home in the dark – the film comes to feel like a fable itself. At the centre of this fable is Lazzaro, saint-like with his innocent eyes and his miraculous voyage through time.

Review by Gabrielle Berry



Shock Waves: Diary of My Mind

Directed by Ursula Meier for Swiss television, *Diary of My Mind* presents a unique character dynamic. Esther is a high school teacher, and throughout the film her relationship towards a student is explored after he claims Esther inspired the double murder of his parents. Not quite maternal, not quite mentor, not quite romantic, this unsettling relationship is one that a viewer becomes simultaneously invested in yet also apprehensive towards. Throughout the film our instinct as an audience to place this relationship inside a box is undermined by the refusal of the narrative to codify it through familiar tropes. It is a tense experience to identify with the position of Esther – as she feels simultaneously responsible for, yet fearful towards, this student. The film responds to this by foregrounding compassion from Esther. As a narrative choice this is both optimistic in Esther's selflessness, yet also reflects a fundamental cynicism. Esther takes responsibility for her role in this crime, but is still narratively punished for it, losing her job and maintaining ties to this student well after the film is over. *Diary of My Mind* thus destabilizes our expectations towards the narrative presentation of 'goodness' in fictional characters, displaying a character who at every turn makes the most virtuous possible decision and leaving the viewer wishing for her to act out of self-preservation.

Review by Jared Aronoff

