CCA Cinema News

Paul Barnes’s Weekly Update on What’s Happening

Happy New Year to our faithful CCA audience!

This week (January 5-12) CCA will be opening Society of the Snow, a harrowing drama from Spain based on a true story of a rugby team surviving a plane crash in the Andes. It’s Spain’s submission to the Oscars for Best International Film!

And for all you Santa Fe foodies, CCA will open Frederick Wiseman’s latest documentary about a legendary French restaurant, Menus–Plaisirs – Les Troisgros. Still going strong at 92, Wiseman’s film just won the Best Feature Documentary Award at both the New York Film Critics and the Los Angeles Film Critics annual awards.

In addition, on Thursday, January 11 at 6pm, we will be screening Yasujiro Ozu’s Good Morning (1959) in our Closer Looks series. In one of the Japanese master’s rare comedies, two young brothers go on strike when their parents refuse to buy a TV. This film is presented by CCA’s Justin Clifford Rhody.

An intense, powerful, true story of survival

Director J. A. Bayona’s Society of the Snow is based on a true story. In 1972, Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571, which had been chartered to fly a rugby team to Chile, crashed in the heart of the Andes. Only 29 of its 45 passengers survived the accident.
Bayona is a very fine filmmaker, and a protégé of Mexican director Guillermo Del Toro. He’s best known for *The Impossible* (2012), another true story based on the experiences of a Spanish family that lived through the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami that devastated one of the most popular tourist destinations in Thailand. The English-language film starred Ewan McGregor and Naomi Watts, and two remarkable young boys who played their sons. The film was emotional and gut-wrenching, detailing how the four family members were separated by the tsunami, but eventually came together again. It was a critical and box office hit, and netted Naomi Watts several Best Actress nominations.

While researching *The Impossible*, Bayona came across Pablo Vierci’s book *Society of the Snow* about the Andes plane crash. Vierci’s book documents accounts of all sixteen final survivors of the crash, many of whom Vierci knew since childhood. Impressed with Vierci’s honest, searing account, Bayona immediately optioned the book as a future film project.

Thirteen years later, the completed film premiered at the Venice Film Festival and in December 2023, it was released in Uruguay, Spain, and the United States.

One of the first Spanish reviews stated that, “*Society of the Snow* will generate emotional reactions in the viewer, without being afraid to show everything it has to show.” Spanish critic Sebastien Zavala Kahn wrote in *Me Gusta el Cine*, “*Society of the Snow* is one of the best things Bayona has done; an intense, emotional and powerful survival film.”

And if ever a film was a BIG SCREEN film, *Society of the Snow* certainly qualifies. From the absolutely terrifying plane crash that Bayona has recreated, to the many harrowing emotions the survivors go through, to the absolute beauty but scary desolation of the rugged Andes peaks they are trapped in – all of it attains an intensity that only the Big Screen can give you. Plus, the film’s stunning sound design can be heard in all its glory through the CCA Cinema’s excellent sound system. I offer you, the CCA audience, the chance to see J. A. Bayona’s excellent directorial work as he wanted it to be seen.
I’ll give the final word on this to Chase Hutchinson of *Collider*:

*Society of the Snow* from writer-director J.A. Bayona is only popping up in a handful of theaters before being streamed. It still feels disappointing each time this happens. While all releases deserve to be seen with the best visuals and sound, there is also the communal aspect of going to the movies that would serve a film like this rather well.

Hearing the way people react to moments of terror, triumph, and everything in between is what makes the experience of taking in a shared cinematic vision such a special one. Not to get too romantic about it, but there is something irreplaceable about it that feels like it is being increasingly lost. **That even a film like Society of the Snow, a well-made and even potential late awards contender, isn’t in theaters across the globe just brings this perplexing state of affairs into focus.** As it is now, *Society of the Snow* could have left more of an impact had people gotten the chance to go out to see it. It’s a little imperfect, with some narration undercutting it at key moments, but the technical details and immersive presentation make the film emotionally profound.

So come and see this film on our BIG SCREEN Cinema with its terrific sound system, the way director J. A. Bayona meant you to see his film!

Click Here to Buy Tickets

**A celebration of French cuisine!**

Meanwhile, national treasure Frederick Wiseman at age 92 has released *Menus—Plaisirs – Les Troisgros*, his 43rd film in a five-decade career. Claudia Puig of LA’s NPR writes, “If you're a fan of films about cooking... This is the king of them all.”

Founded in 1930 in central France, the Troisgros family restaurant has held three Michelin stars for 55 years over four generations. Michel Troisgros, the third generation to head the restaurant, has turned over the responsibility for the cuisine to his son César, the
fourth generation of Troisgros chefs. From the market to pick fresh vegetables, to a cheese processing plant, a vineyard, an organic cattle ranch, to the backyard garden supplying the restaurant, Wiseman takes us on a mouthwatering and sense-pleasing journey into the family’s three restaurant kitchens. *Menus–Plaisirs – Les Troisgros*, is an immersive experience, showing the great artistry, ingenuity, imagination, and hard work of the restaurant staff in creating, preparing, and presenting meals of the highest quality.

Frederick Wiseman’s films are often described as in the observational mode, which has its roots in direct cinema, but Wiseman dislikes the term:

> What I try to do is edit the films so that they will have a dramatic structure. That is why I object to some extent to the term "observational cinema" or *cinéma vérité*, because observational cinema, to me at least, connotes just hanging around with one thing being as valuable as another, and that is not true. At least, that is not true for me, and *cinéma vérité* is just a pompous French term that has absolutely no meaning as far as I’m concerned.

Wiseman has been known to call his films "reality fictions." I’m going to let a few critics weigh in on this discussion:

> It takes a rare documentarian to turn a four-hour *cinema vérité* culinary experience into one that’s as appetizing and satisfying as the Michelin-starred meals it observes getting created from farm to crafted table.
> — Randy Myers, *San Jose Mercury News*

There’s the term Wiseman objects to – “*cinema verite*”? As Wiseman said in an interview:

> [My films are] based on unstaged, un-manipulated actions. [But] the editing is highly manipulative and the shooting is highly manipulative. What you choose to shoot, the way you shoot it, the way you edit it and the way you structure...
it — all of those things — represent subjective choices that you have to make.

All aspects of documentary filmmaking involve choice and are therefore manipulative. But the ethical aspect of it is that you have to try to make [a film that] is true to the spirit of your sense of what was going on. My view is that these films are biased, prejudiced, condensed, compressed — but fair. I think what I do is make movies that are not accurate in any objective sense, but I think I have an obligation to the people who have consented to be in the film, to cut it so that it fairly represents what I felt was going on at the time in the original event.

Dana Stevens in Slate noticed, “At the center of it all is an affectionate portrait of the Troisgros family, who have been restaurateurs for generations. They pursue their life’s mission with a zeal that’s inspiring and, at times, amusing...”

And then from our Society of the Snow commenter Chase Hutchinson in Collider:

Precisely edited with a sharp eye for the varied rhythms of the kitchen and all the moving parts that give it life, Menus-Plaisirs — Les Troisgros is a work of art about artists that reflects on the intricacies of collaboration to build to one of the director's best conclusions.

And Wiseman’s conclusion? Well, come and see for yourself!

Click Here to Buy Tickets

And my usual reminder...

If you want to catch All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt, the remarkable film by first-time feature director Raven Jackson; Poor Things starring Emma Stone; or Bradley Cooper's popular Maestro, the last screenings will be on Wednesday, January 4 and Thursday, January 5.

Here are the times to catch each of these terrific films:
• *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* at 11:00am, 4:00pm, 6:15pm, and 8:30pm.

• *Poor Things* at 11:15am, 2:00pm, 4:45pm, 7:30pm

• *Maestro* at 1:15pm each day.

**Join us for a lighthearted intergenerational family satire!**

And finally on **Thursday, January 11 at 6pm**, come and join us for our latest in CCA’s *Closer Looks* series – a screening and discussion of *Good Morning*, a film by one of my favorite film directors, Yasujiro Ozu.

I was so happy my co-curator Justin Clifford Rhody selected this film for the series and here’s what he wrote about it:

> A lighthearted take on master filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu’s perennial theme of the challenges of intergenerational relationships, *Good Morning* tells the story of two young boys who stop speaking in protest after their parents refuse to buy a television set.

Ozu weaves a wealth of subtle gags through a family portrait as rich as those of his dramatic films, mocking the foibles of the adult world through the eyes of his child protagonists. Shot in stunning color and set in a suburb of Tokyo where housewives gossip about the neighbors’ new washing machine and unemployed husbands look for work as door-to-door salesmen, this charming comedy refashions Ozu’s own silent classic *I Was Born, But...* to gently satirize consumerism in postwar Japan.

**One final note to you all...**

As we go through our year-end numbers, I wanted to give you a glimpse into the state of CCA’s financial health: We *doubled* ticket sales.
sales in 2023, our Year-End Appeal exceeded our goal, two “angels” agreed to share the cost of our new Studio Projector, and the dollar amount of gifts from individual donors doubled in 2023.

So, CCA is starting the New Year in very healthy economic shape! Thank you, thank you, thank you all!!!!

So much to see at CCA!
So, this week at CCA you can watch in awe as the remnants of a rugby team survive a horrendous plane crash; you can watch in awe as three generations of great chefs prepare glorious food at a legendary French restaurant; you can watch -- in amused awe -- as two young brothers confound their family by going on strike to get a TV!

Ah,...the glorious variety of cinema...on the BIG SCREEN!

Happy New Year again and come join us for one -- or all -- of these CCA offerings

All the best,

Paul Barnes,
General Manager, CCA Cinemas