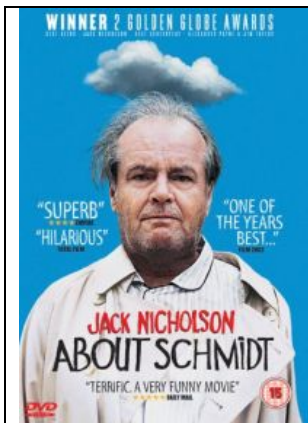


Miércoles 5 noviembre 2008 a las 19 h – Casa de Cultura – aula 2 planta primera

ABOUT SCHMIDT



Film Specs

Film Released: 2002 / Film Country: United States of America / Director: Alexander Payne

Starring: Jack Nicholson-Kathy Bates-Hope Davis-Dermot Mulroney-Len Cariou - June Squibb - Howard Hesseman

Similar Releases: Election / Genre(s): Comedy Drama / Running Time: 120 minutes
Subtitles: English

Special Features: Deleted Scenes - Woodmen Tower Sequences Theatrical Trailer

There are a number of things which make About Schmidt a remarkable film. Firstly, it's a study of grief and loss which never resorts to sentimentality or pat, 'Hollywood' answers. Secondly, it's a road movie which avoids almost every cliché of that genre. Thirdly, and most extraordinarily, it demonstrates that Jack Nicholson, latterly a lazy ham who delivers the same schtick in film after film, is still capable of giving a great performance.

The film is a combination of road movie and character study, concentrating on Warren Schmidt (Nicholson), once VP in charge of sales of Woodmen Insurance but now put out to pasture. At the mercy of his wife Helen (June Squibb), he is resigned to a life of daytime television, trips away in their luxurious mobile home and constant nagging, finding some comfort in a sudden desire to become a foster parent to an African child. But, quite suddenly, Helen dies while vacuuming the kitchen floor and Warren finds himself alone for the first time in forty five years. Realising that he can't cope on his own, he attempts to persuade his daughter Jeannie (Davis) to postpone her imminent marriage to water-bed salesman Randall Hertzell (Mulroney) and stay to look after him, but when she refuses he is plunged into depression. However, his feelings change considerably when he discovers that his wife, seemingly a faithful partner throughout their time together, had engaged in a long-term affair with his best friend. The knowledge that this, along with many other things in life, has passed him by sends Schmidt into an assertive frame of mind and he decides to drive out in the motor home to Jeannie's wedding, with the intention of stopping her marriage to Randall before it's too late.

The first thing that strikes you when watching About Schmidt is how sad it is. I don't mean the Channel 5 afternoon movie kind of "sad" where tears are wrung out of you by one of a selection of 'tragic' true life stories accompanied by heartrending strings. I mean, genuine sadness resulting from a truthful portrayal of a wasted life. There's no manipulation here, no straining for effect, just a quietly devastating study of a man who suddenly realises that his life has, fundamentally, done nothing to impact significantly on anyone else's. This builds throughout the film, resulting in a final payoff in the last scene which is as moving as it is, cautiously, uplifting. As you watch, you keep dreading the 'big scenes' which seem inevitable - the public crack-up at the wedding, an "I love you Dad", "I love you Jeannie" exchange, the tearful acknowledgement of heartbreak. But none of these scenes come. Instead, we get a low key and entirely convincing account of a man who comes to seem totally real. There are certainly key moments of self-realisation and emotional expression in the film but they are small and deliberately muted. The director, Alexander Payne, knows how to keep things in proportion - as he demonstrated in the superb Election - and this style is entirely appropriate for Warren Schmidt, a little man who never quite made it and can't express his own desperation except in a series of hilarious rants. These are shown in the form of letters composed to Ndugu, his African foster son, and they are beautifully controlled so as not to become simple stand-up comedy routines. As with everything else in this lovely film, the comedy comes out of the characters.

In this, Payne is assisted by his star. Jack Nicholson has always been a fine comic actor and has often managed to tug the heartstrings as well. But it's only been very occasionally that a director has managed to force him to go inside a character and make his mannerisms disappear. Sean Penn managed it with his two Nicholson films, The Crossing

Guard and The Pledge; indeed, Nicholson's finest moments, for me, were both in relatively low key performances, during the last half hour of Five Easy Pieces and in the much underrated King of Marvin Gardens. This actor has done so much simplistic, lazy overacting in his time that it's only in films like About Schmidt that he shows how good he really can be. Nicholson delves deep inside Schmidt, dispensing with his usual sly charm, all grinning and winks to the audience. His Schmidt is weighed down by years of little disappointments and personal failures and in his slouch we see a man who has finally admitted defeat at the hands of life.

Most of all, About Schmidt is that rare beast; a film which is hysterically funny while being deeply moving. We laugh at Warren Schmidt's naivety and his procrastination but we never find him ridiculous. Your heart breaks for him at the end because his honesty about his failure is, perhaps, uncomfortably close to home - especially for those of us who aren't getting any younger. It's also a marvellous showcase for Jack Nicholson, an actor who has rarely been better than he is in this film.

Backlinks

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SOME LIKE IT HOT (Con faldas y a lo loco)

You will not be able to find this movie at rental shops, but you can buy it at FNAC. Plaza de Catalunya. Barcelona. You can use it instead of sleeping pills when you feel depressed.



Director: Billy Wilder
Cast: Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon
Produced in 1959.
One of the best films ever...

Sit back and enjoy this comedy, I don't believe in greatest this and that when it comes to films, but boy, this is superb. The acting here is fantastic, all actors, even Monroe are on top form. The direction by Wilder is superb, the guy's style in this picture is perfect. He directed this film in a very clever way, by using one camera for the majority of the scenes, he could easily edit the film together without studio interference. The script is well written. The dialogue between Lemmon and Curtis is beautifully balanced. Monroe is just too hot for the screen in this picture. Although, Monroe had major off-screen problems (83 takes to get things right) she is fantastic on-screen. She may not have the best lines, but what the heck! She plays the role very well. Overall, this is awesome, it really is.

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