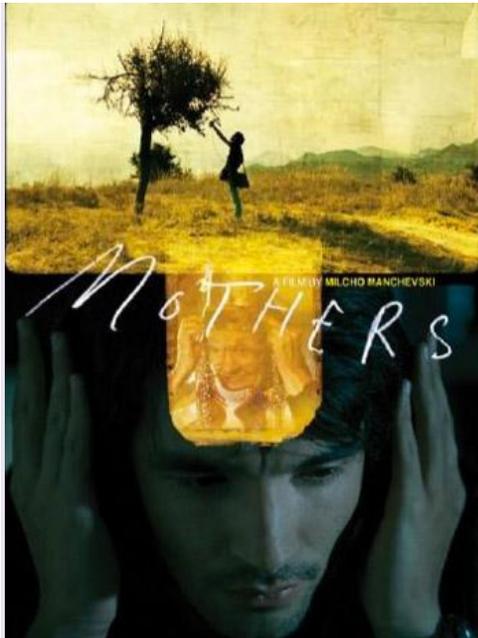


USA

June 15, 2011



MOTHERS, Aruba review!



MOTHERS (2010) by director Milcho Manchevski screened at the 2nd annual **Aruba International Film Festival (AIFF) 2011**. Here find a review of the award-winning film that saw its opening in Toronto at TIFF 2011 and continues to travel to festivals around the globe.

MOTHERS, a rave review!

Fiction, nonfiction, and everything else in between and without- this is the dizzying dialectic of Milcho Manchevski's latest film **MOTHERS (2010)**. **MOTHERS** is a feature film structured as a triptych of three parts, of 'mothers' in modern-day Macedonia where each story is seemingly unrelated to the other, autonomous to itself, and yet linked in an abstract way.

The film begins with a fictional thesis- a story about two young girls upsetting their mother when they make up a story of a lewd man who has been allegedly flashing

them. The girls make their complaint to the police about this supposed stalker. But are the girls sure of what they saw or has their fantasy smudged reality?

The second film acts as another kind of fiction but with an element of nonfiction within it where three young twenty-something documentary filmmakers travel to the countryside of Macedonia. This is where steep tradition and age-old village life are visibly going extinct while technology and homogenous Westernization continue to lay siege in all corners of the world. These documentarians attempt to record what little remains of their rapidly fading culture.

The third and final film proves an antithesis to both previous narrative fiction films in its hard documentary style- dismal lighting, gray colors, depressing subjects, too long and too real, forcing the viewer to question the link between the two previous films and this one. It is a documentary about the mysterious case of a serial rapist and killer in Macedonia who went for many years without being caught.

With all these mixed genres and seemingly very separate stories, what does it all mean? The first film is riveting and leaves one in awe over the inventive imagination of a child and calls to question what we consider truth. And then we move on to the next story, which is told in a beautiful lyrical way, shaped like traditional narrative storytelling with actors, conflict and an arc. This is *BEFORE THE RAIN* (1994) stuff here and Milcho demonstrates his enduring ability to make a poignant, moving narrative film. With this stunning middle tale he draws the viewer in only to slap us in the face with his very jarring final film- the unattractive, tedious and factual documentary. When asked about his strange transition from a harmonious and moving narrative film to a completely unrelated documentary he replied, 'fiction is all nice and pretty but what are we going to do with the ugly reality?' So, what does that say? It was loud and clear what his message was. Milcho wants us to think. Isn't that what great art should do? Disturb us and make us feel something in order to care or be changed by it somehow?

Is the invented story of the two girls in the first film really fiction or does it remind us how real the imagination is and how something dreamed up can become truth if one believes it is? Is the third film, the documentary, trustworthy or could it be a biased point of view steeped with only half-truths? Who says something is 'nonfiction' and why should we believe it is so, just because someone tells us to? Or is the middle narrative film which strives to tell a story with as much verisimilitude as possible and in its poetry somehow hits on a truth that lies somewhere in between fiction and nonfiction? Therein is the eternal dialectic of what is reality and fantasy and our folly in sticking to one side over the other. *MOTHERS* forces us to question these blurred states of being (and non-being if you will) showing us once again as he did so expertly in *BEFORE THE RAIN* that the 'circle is not round'.

Review written by Vanessa McMahon June 15, 2011