

# FESTIVAL *wraps*

## Cambridge Film Festival

CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND (7/11-21/02)

By Henry Lewes

The ancient city of Cambridge, England, is by its very nature a place of fantasy and magic. Its medieval colleges and echoing courtyards suggest another world, a perfect backdrop to the modern magic of cinema. This festival describes itself as: "Tracking filmmakers across the globe to bring discoveries and surprises from both up-and-coming and established talent." The result was an extremely enterprising festival, that opened with Pedro Almodovar's *Hable Con Ella (Talk to Her)* and closed with David Cronenberg's *Spider*. In-between came films from countries as far apart as Kazakhstan, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Thailand and, notably, Canada.

The 100 or so films ran in three theatres and were divided into categories such as Before They Were Famous, which included Sally Potter's *The London Story* and Ken Russell's *Amelia and the Angel*; Revivals with Jules Dassin's *Rififi* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre sa vie*; and a Children's Film Festival with Rob Minkoff's *Stuart Little 2* and Gauray Seth's *Passage to Ottawa*.

This year there was a particular emphasis on Canada, with a total of 12 features and shorts, and the ample presence of Peter Wintonick, who both introduced his films and hosted an open forum entitled Talking Shop. Robert Schlaht was also present to speak about his first feature, *Solitude*, set in a rural monastery. The story concerns the interactions of several people who have left their normal occupations for a summer of contemplation. Its strength lies in its documentary quality. Everything is understated and for a while it seems as if nothing is going to happen. Then relationships develop between individual visitors and the monks. Frustration and anger reveal themselves, always convincingly played. At the end, anxieties about faith and identity remain unresolved. "We took our meals in the refectory and questioned the monks about their decisions to become Benedictines," said Schlaht. "Their replies affected how the story developed."

*Treed Murray* (William Phillips) was another first feature. It is an intensely suspenseful drama that unfolds around and up a single tree, during one night. Murray, a successful advertising executive is set upon by a ruthless youth gang while crossing a city park. He escapes up a tree, to be challenged and tormented by Shark, the group's charismatic leader. As the long night draws on, there are fights in the branches and attempts to persuade him to come down. It emerges that Murray is a far from perfect father and a husband who has cheated on his wife. The characters of his attackers are gradually defined allowing a comprehension, if not a sympathy, for their behaviour. Issues of violence, class and race bubble on the surface of this exceptionally well-crafted feature.

Three of Peter Wintonick's documentaries were shown: *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (1992); *Cinéma Vérité: Defining the Moment* (1999); and *Seeing Is Believing*, a work in progress currently running 55 minutes. In *Manufacturing Consent*, Wintonick trailed Chomsky at public rallies across seven countries over three years to record "America's best-known dissident," challenging U.S. foreign policy.



Peter Wintonick



Bollywood Bound