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FILM REVIEW: Gutterbee (Ulrich Thomsen, 2019), Denmark

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson



First film I see for the 35th Santa Barbara Inter y UGG, packs an unexpected, invisible wallop to the sensibilit wing its World Premiere at the SÃ£o Paulo International Film Festival,

Gutterbee, a character-driven, â??social satire about the nexus of identity fear, where religion becomes an intellectual cul-de-sac, and racism, homophobia and intolerance reign supreme,â?• provides, at a minimum, a snapshot of what life in small town, rural America looks like from an international perspective. It also reveals a solution on how to forge an elevated pathway into a better, more inclusive existence without forgetting who we are and where we came from.

Writer/director/producer Ulrich Thomsen encases his deeply felt messaging inside two dreamers who set out to open the â??ultimate German Sausage restaurant: The Gourmet House of Refuge.â?• Anthony Starr (*The Boys*) portrays Mike Dankworth McCoid, a good-hearted bloke who has just been granted a prison release, while Ewen Bremner (*Trainspotting*) portrays Edward Hofler, a German sausage zealot. The two complement and play off one another as well as American film comedy duo, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.

Gutterbee opens with a simple black and white title frame coupled with non-diegetic, Western music. With noir-style composition, Thomsen immediately begins exposing the dark aspects of rural life and culture spouting throughout the Americana landscape with a voice-over narrative of the town sheriff, played by Chance Kelly. Deftly, he reveals current topics of discussion including gender conversion therapy, greed disguised in the form of wealth gospel preachers, racism, xenophobia, bestiality, superstitions, and bullying, and how these behaviors continue to thrive.

Gutterbee is, by choice, not a major film studio production. It is a filmmakerâ??s truth. Thomsen derived the material and created his art from his experience including many years working in the United States, his monitoring of presidential tweets, and historical trivia on the art of sausage-making. Nevertheless, it is a professionally orchestrated production.

Oscar-winner Anthony Dod Mantleâ??s cinematography [Best Achievement in Cinematography Slumdog Millionaire (2008)] is stellar. The cast is strong with authentic performances from W. Earl Brown (*Preacher, Deadwood: The Movie)*, Pia Mechler, Joshua Harto, Clark Middleton, and Gareth Williams. Scott Christopher Clarkâ??s art direction, via the mise-en-scene, keeps the viewer wary and engaged. The costuming, designed by Suzanne Barnes, is spot on. And, the music from George Kallis, Breakthrough Composer of the Year 2018, International Film Music Critics Award, captivates.

In addition to the very noirish low key lighting and dramatic use of shadows, *Gutterbee* employs high key lighting, augmenting a plethora of comedic relief juxtaposed against the garishness of the depicted rural culture. Savvy writing allows for a natural and rhythmic flow adroitly addressing social concerns. The editing from Soren B Ebbe is expertly carried out and the use of jump cuts, a verified comedic device, is nicely woven into the filmâ??s fabric.

Thomsenâ??s artistic snapshot of Americana in *Gutterbee* left me dumbfounded. In a brilliantly executed film, a message of hope is revealed amidst the human condition of rural Americans. Important to note, the majority of rural dwellers in the United States are of Germanic descent. Having grown up in a German-American community, I appreciated the inclusion of Germanic cultural artifacts including, but not limited to, lederhosen and the St. Pauli Girl-style costuming. Seemingly, the hope for the future of America lies within their rich, cultural hands. Ask, or in the case of *Gutterbee*, knock, and it shall be opened. Highly recommended film and wildly entertaining!

Category

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