Holding on with Nanni Morettiâ??s â??Mia Madreâ??

Description

Mia Madre from acclaimed Italian director Nanni Moretti tells the story of a woman, Margherita, played by Margherita Buy, balancing her harried career life as a director with the demands of her latest movie juxtaposed against a home life with her 13-year old daughter and dying mother.

Characteristically self-reflective and autobiographical, Morettiâ??s latest work, *Mia Madre,* addresses the poignancy of human transience, how we process loss and gain strength through humor. *Mia Madre* premiered in the Main Competition at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival where it won the Ecumenical Jury Prize while actress Margherita Buy received accolades at Italyâ??s 2015 Donatello Awards capturing the Best Actress Prize. Writing credits for *Mia Madre,* were shared among Moretti, Valia Santella, Gaia Manzini, Chiara Valerio, and Francesco Piccolo. Other works Nanni Moretti is known for include *The Sonâ??s Room* (2001), winner of the FIPRESCI Prize and Palm dâ??Or at Cannes Film Festival, *Dear Diary* (1993), winner Best Director at Cannes Film Festival, Golden Globe, Italy, Best Film, and *The Caiman* (2006), nominated for Palm dâ??Or.

Fortunately for Ms. Buyâ??s character, Margherita, Director Moretti hired John Turturro to play against Margherita in the form of a hammed-up Italian-American actor, Barry Huggins, who rarely can think of anything other than himself. Barryâ??s annoying, self-indulgent personality grinds on Margherita and her crew alike during filming as he repeatedly goes up on the delivery of his lines while antagonizing the set crew with impertinent demands for mustache combing and even going so far as challenging directorial authority. However, these tense filming moments add some emotional counterweights to the deep familial moments Margherita engages in with her mother, Ada, played exquisitely by veteran actress Giulia Lazzarini. Ada is a retired schoolteacher, admired, respected and loved by those around her glimpsed by her painstaking attention to her granddaughterâ??s Latin grammar lessons and in her overall well-being.

All in all, the interactions Ada has with Margherita and her thirteen year-old granddaughter, Livia, played solidly by Beatrice Mancini, provide profound insights into the day-to-day struggles professionals like Margherita face off the set and the emotional ramifications that can carry over on to the set. The grief, fear and vulnerability Margherita exudes with Ada adds an enormous sensitivity to her on-set, directorâ??s demeanor. Throughout the shoots, her emotional struggle comes very close to consuming her. And this is where the brilliance of casting comes into play as Turturroâ??s outlandish Hugginsâ?? boasting and audacious behavior off-set provide a much needed respite to Margheritaâ??s â??pressure cookerâ?? life situation. Just when it appears sheâ??s had enough, Turturroâ??s character manages to create a moment in which Margherita is able to release the inner tensions and when she does Buyâ??s character captivates with her big screen emotives.

In my opinion, this is the strength of the film. Yet, Moretti adds a masterful touch with a subtlety sure to appeal to film buffs and scholars alike. While the on-location filming scenes add a emotional counterweight that they arenâ??t real. And they donâ??t feel real nor do they appear real. In addition, the film within a film theme is clicheâ?? with a highly fabricated labor dispute conflict being the core issue complete with nonsensical dialogue adds to the falseness. so much so that at one point, Turturroâ??s Huggins bellows out in frustration that none of what they are doing is real and he desperately wants to go back to real life! Itâ??s almost as though heâ??s harking back to the filmmaking genesis of Italian Neorealism and its quasi-reaction to the state of Italian cinema prior to WWII. Almostâ?¦

Mia Madre opens in Los Angeles and New York August 26th, 2016 (followed by a national roll-out).

Highly recommended!

Category

1. Feature Film

Tags

1. Actor
2. Awards
3. Chiara Valerio
4. Cinema
5. Director
6. Film
7. Filmmaking
8. Francesco Piccolo
9. Gaia Manzini
10. Giulia Lazzarini
11. Italian Neorealism
12. John Turturro
13. Margherita Buy
14. Mia Madre
15. Nanni Moretti
16. Producer
17. Valia Santella
18. Writer

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Date Created
August 16, 2016
Author
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