FILM CAPSULE: A Life Begins (Monty, 2010): Canada

Description

Viewed during the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF)

2011.

A Life Begins, part of the SBIFFâ??s Focus on Quebec, follows first time film director Michel Monty as he tells a heartfelt story based on his real life experiences.
The film is set in Montreal during the early 1960â??s. Monty opens the film with a tracking shot as he follows the action of Etienne Langevinâ??s father, switches to a POV of Etienne Langevin legs to a matching medium close up, equivocating Etienneâ??s close attentiveness to his fatherâ??s persona. Several scenes show Etienne mimicking his fatherâ??s actions and movements. To Etienne his father, Dr. Jacques Langevin, is worthy of such hero worship. The audience is treated to an intimate, playful bedroom scene between Dr. Langevin and his wife Louise, played by the soul-capturing beauty, Julie Le Breton. Monty goes to a close-up of an ear. Anticipation builds. Lips move-in. No words are uttered. We hear the banter of well adjusted seemingly normal children. It appears as though we are witnessing the interactions of a highly functional, representational Quebec family.

However, we quickly come to find out, Dr. Langevin is robbing the pharmacy to feed his out-of-control drug addiction. To his family Dr. Jacques is a model father figure. We see the family out for a joyous Sunday drive with the top down in a used red convertible the Doctor recently purchased. The kids throw their arms up in the air â?? roller-coaster style foreshadowing the cacophony of events that will transpire in this dramatic film.
Dr. Langevinâ??s father, seems to be hypercritical of his son and happens to be the hospitalâ??s president. He confronts Dr. Langevin and regretfully tells his son he is fired. Dr. Langevin is unable to disclose to his lovely wife his addiction to drugs and the fact he has been fired because of his drug addiction. The next morning Dr. Langevin, having spent the night in a alcohol fueled and drug-induced stupor clamors up the basement stairs and goes into cardiac arrest dying as the youngest child playfully fires imaginary gunshots into his father.
Louise distraught and financially strapped sells the family house and moves into an apartment with her three children. She goes off to work leaving Etienne home alone. Etienne is an inquisitive young man and has found his fatherâ??s stash of morphine, uppers and downers. He begins experimenting with the drugs and a tumultuous life surfaces. Louise trudges on displaying depth and strength of character.
In the Q & A that followed the screening Monty shared that in the family he was the youngest child and that Etienne was his older brother. He chose to tell the story through his brotherâ??s eyes as he felt that his brother had the loneliest time after their fatherâ??s passing. Interesting to note that the famous song by rock and roll legend Harry Nilson, â??One is the Loneliest Number,â?• played as the credits rolled.
The film was Montyâ??s first venture into filmmaking. He was able to shoot the film in 28 days. Due to budgetary and time constraints Monty created a shot list allowing for 2-4 shots per scene for coverage.
I really enjoyed this film. The acting was excellent with limited dialogue. As a result, actions, by Director Montyâ??s design, told the story. Warm-heartedly recommended.

Category

1. #SBIFF
2. Santa Barbara International Film Festival

Tags

1. Actor
2. Director
3. Film
4. Film Festival
5. Filmmaking
6. Harry Nilson
7. Julie Le Breton
8. Larry Gleeson
9. Michael Monty
10. One is the Loneliest Number

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hollywoodglee