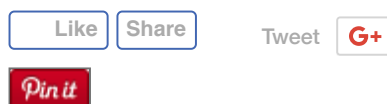




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From Pub Crawlers to Night Crawlers

By [Erica Abeel \(Http://Www.Filmjournal.Com/Taxonomy/Term/93\)](http://www.filmjournal.com/Taxonomy/Term/93) Sep 8, 2014



ScreenerBlog

The French are making a strong showing at TIFF this year, with a slate of 36 features and 5 shorts. Benoit Jacquot is back with "3 Hearts," a dark parable about how accident and quirks of timing can impact 3 interconnected lives. One night in a provincial city, Marc (Benoit Poelvoorde) meets Sylvie (Charlotte Gainsbourg). They wander the streets until morning and set a date to meet in Paris a few days later. When Marc doesn't show up on time (a health crisis intervenes) the twist of fate leaves him romantically torn between Sylvie and her sister (Chiara Mastroianni). In an inspired stroke of casting, the sisters' mother is played by Mastroianni's real life mother Catherine Deneuve, who seems to know the characters' hearts before they do.

In foregrounding the primacy of physical passion over just about everything else -- children, family, social decorum -- this film could somehow only be made in France. It's hard to imagine such folies d'amour in the U.S. Why two gorgeous women would be gaga over Poelvoorde, nerdy, hardly leading man material, and a tax inspector to boot, is a mystery the film never divulges. Yet Benoit Jacquot reliably delivers a neatly packaged love triangle that is never less than absorbing, its dark outcome telegraphed by the ominous tone of the score.

Arthouse darling Mia Hansen-Love weighs in with "Eden" about the French electronic music scene -- think garage and Daft Punk -- in the 90's. Her latest effort disappoints because more than anything it feels like a concert film, with the characters relegated to the background. Charming, charismatic Paul (Felix de Givry) is taking his first steps as a DJ. With his best friend he creates a duo called "Cheers, and they rapidly find their audience. They are quickly caught up in a euphoric and short-lived rise to fame and Paul, blinded by his passion for the work, overlooks his own life.

What's appealing is the evergreen theme of young ambitions traced through to later life, with all its disappointments. The director's impressionistic handling of the club scenes and scooter rides through Paris magically capture youthful abandon. In one indelible moment a couple on a scooter

all but veer out of the frame as the sound track goes silent. The clipped editing style, which ends scenes before they end, is reminiscent of Noah Baumbach's in "Frances Ha."

Yet the characters fall in and out of affairs with so little affect it's hard to care. Greta Gerwig makes an always welcome appearance as Paul's flaky American older woman gf and Pauline Etienne shines as perhaps the love of his life. "Eden" fluidly handles the passage of time and death of dreams but it goes on way too long, the rave scenes become repetitive, and its tone of too cool for school holds the viewer at a distance.

The debut of writer/director Dan Gilroy, "Night" showcases the talent of Jake Gyllenhaal in a fully invested performance. Borderline psychotic, his character Louis Bloom (and why do I dislike the fact that the name's Jewish) is a criminal low life who stumbles on a career of supplying video of L.A. accidents and murders to a low-rated TV station sporting the motto "If it bleeds it leads." That Bloom is ruthless, amoral, and disciplined enables him to rise like scum to the top of this swamp. Gyllenhaal famously lost some thirty pounds for the role (perhaps out-losing Christian Bale and Matthew McConaughey). He wanted, he's said in interviews, to look hungry -- and in fact in this film his sock puppet face indeed resembles some famished nocturnal creature with huge staring eyes that you might find hanging off a tree.

Gilroy uncorks sly humor from Bloom's penchant for dropping motivation speak, which he learned from an online business course, on both his boss at the TV station (Renee Russo) and his sole employee, a wonderful tk Assiz. Example: when a competing night crawler offers him a gig, Bloom replies "Working for myself is more in line with my career goals." He has no authentic language other than the inspirational jargon he's absorbed off the internet.

I think Gilroy intends Bloom not only as a perverse, values-free version of Horatio Alger, but as a smalltime version of America's white collar corporate criminals. Perhaps the real star of the film, though, is DP Robert Elswit. Truly, you could watch this film for the cinematography alone. From the opening credits Elswit creates a mesmerizing L.A. urban nocturne, a string of images worthy of hanging in a museum. Electric blue is his signature color, and he also likes garish yellow moons and cars wearing bonnets of light. Even a red and yellow Shell Station becomes a thing of beauty.

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