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2006 MONREAL OUT GAMES 2006

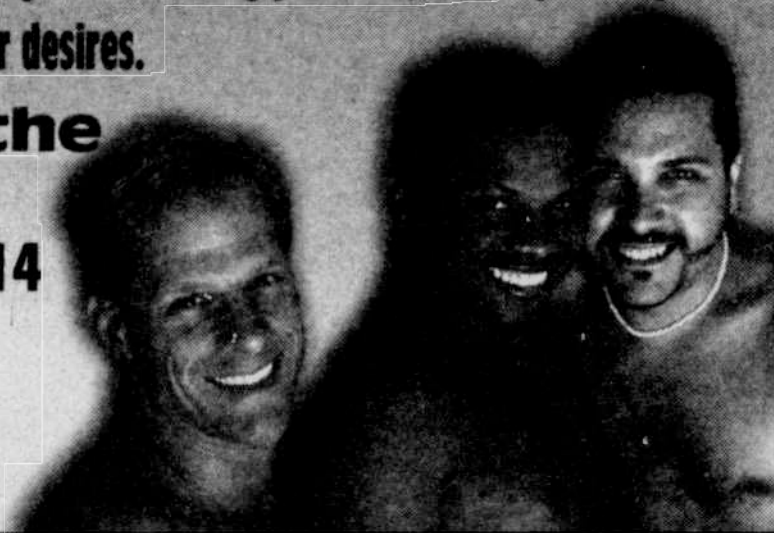
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FILM

REVIEWS

ENDURING LOVE

Nov. 12 to 18, Fox Tower Cinemas

In McEwan's subtle, unnerving 1997 novel is given the big-screen treatment by director Roger Michell and screenwriter Joe Penhall, and the results are almost a textbook example of the pitfalls of adapting a novel for the cinema.

In McEwan's version, a male writer and his female professor fiancée live a serene life in upscale London before a traumatic event brings a male stalker into the writer's life. The couple are subjected to escalating mental, emotional and physical menace as the young man develops a mysterious, fanatical, relentless, almost entirely asexual attachment to the writer.

Michell and Penhall have made many small and some noticeably not-so-small excisions and alterations. They've come up with an aesthetically inventive film containing the characters and story of a conventional thriller, robbing us of McEwan's very precise yet emotionally complex rendering of the fraught scenario.

Daniel Craig and the ever-riveting Samantha Morton (whose singularly corporeal screen presence makes the film almost worth seeing) play Joe and Claire, the couple; Rhys Ifans is Jed, the stalker. In the novel, Jed's bizarre pursuit of a same-sex stranger has its cause not in anything so everyday and benign as homosexuality, but in quasi-religious mania, loneliness and, it's revealed, a rare but diagnosable mental illness.

Vito Russo, the late *Celluloid Closet* watchdog, would have had a fit over Michell and Penhall's regressive revision. McEwan took pains in his novel to make a clear distinction between functional gay men and this specific, sexually stunted man, but the filmmakers have (homo)sexualized Jed while leaving him without a shred of the humanity and empathy offered to, say, Matt Damon's murderous but human queer in *The*

Talented Mr. Ripley. Michell and Penhall's Jed is the laughably outdated Deranged Homo Killer, with an openmouthed kiss at knifepoint between him and Joe (entirely the filmmakers' lunkheaded invention) depicted, ridiculously, as the ultimate horror.

Frankly, Joe and Claire are also short-changed as characters, which brings us to the film's underlying, fatal problem: Michell has some arresting visual ideas and a cast ranging from skilled to brilliant, but the characters, particularly Jed, have been whittled into standard, dull thriller clichés. We're left to wonder which is worse: active, obviously bigoted homophobia that singles out a queer character, or *Enduring Love*'s kind, which is merely symptomatic of the ultimately lazy, one-dimensional thinking behind the work as a whole.

—Christopher McQuain

TARNATION

Nov. 5 to 11, Cinema 21

There are a couple of key lines in Jonathan Caouette's dirt-cheap documentary (supposedly made for \$200 using an iMac). During an interview, his boyfriend, David, says: "You're not paying attention. You are not listening." In another scene, Caouette's grand-

father says to him, "You're trying to scheme something on me!" This is the movie in a nutshell, a surprisingly unrevealing autobiography of an overbearing, narcissistic, exploitative drama queen.

Caouette was raised in a dysfunctional family (like who isn't?)—a mother, Renee, and grandparents unbalanced to various degrees. Much of this gay boy's life from preteen to the present was captured in home movies. *Tarnation* strings together this footage along with interviews past and present with all the principals, and lots of maudlin images of poor Jonathan in various

modes of suffering, and drenches it all in computer-generated split screens, extreme rapid cuts and other staples of experimental footage.

Caouette's mother emerges as a tragic case,



Broadway: *The Golden Age* director Rob McKay strolls down memory lane with legendary dancer and actress Ann Miller, who died Jan. 22

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