



Wrestling with Angels takes a close-up look at politically outspoken playwright Tony Kushner.

Turistas

Americans vacationing in Brazil find themselves hunted by evil men who want to do unspeakable torture to them. The real torture is to the audience, who must sit through this horrifyingly slow film that is devoid of any real suspense and is filmed so chaotically that you can't recognize which cast member is which from lugubriously slow scene to scene. If you feel the need to see *Turistas*, go flush your toilet and watch it, then repeat for 100 minutes. You'll find it infinitely more entertaining. **F**

—Andy Mangels

Viva Pedro!

Cinema 21 gears up for queer Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar's highly anticipated *Volver*, opening Dec. 22, with a retrospective of double features on new 35mm prints. From Dec. 8 to 11 is 1988's *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* with 1999's *All About My Mother*, which won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. From Dec. 12 to 14 is 2002's *Talk to Her*, which won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, with 1995's *The Flower of My Secret*. From Dec. 15 to 18 is 1986's *Matador* with 1987's *Law of Desire*. From Dec. 19 to 21 is 1997's *Live Flesh* with 2004's *Bad Education*.

—Jim Radosta

Wrestling with Angels

Having always been somewhat ambivalent about Tony Kushner—I've never been able, as either a gay man or an observer of popular culture, to give what feels like the proper degree of excited veneration to the Kushner-penned theater event *Angels in America*—I was nicely surprised by the figure he cuts in *Wrestling with Angels*, a close-up portrait of the acclaimed, politically outspoken playwright.

"Portrait" is the operative word, as the documentary is so clearly the creation of a fan; in fact, director Freida Lee Mock rather blithely assumes the viewer is already familiar with Kushner's work. But given his renown, that's not too much to ask, and it frees the film from having to explain what he does.

Instead, we get a day-to-day, comparatively intimate look at who Kushner is—and that person is markedly more down-to-earth and self-effacing than one might expect. He comes across like a much less sweaty, much more self-aware queer

version of Jon Turturro's titular character in *Barton Fink*—someone who means to be a popular entertainer and heroically socialistic Playwright of the People, but who finds the actual creative process so stressful and difficult, it's almost comical (and decidedly humanizing).

The film follows Kushner from approximately 2001 through 2004, a timeline encompassing the productions of two of his pieces, *Kabul/Homebody* and *Caroline, or Change*. More interesting, however, are a trip he takes with his brother to their childhood hometown of Lake Charles, La.; interviews with his father and footage with family; Kushner captured visiting his "fat counselor," delivering a rousing commencement address at Vassar and giving an unlikely speech at a bank's corporate headquarters in honor of LGBT Pride Week; his wedding to partner Mark Harris; and, not least, the bountiful talking-head footage of Kushner himself, in which he passionately and eloquently expounds on pressing issues like Iraq, President Bush, the Taliban, racism, classism and same-sex marriage.

Whatever one thinks of Kushner's plays, the person we meet in Mock's film is an engaging, erudite, thoughtful speaker who is well-informed, extremely opinionated and generally possessed of a congenial, charismatic charm. Opening Dec. 8 at Hollywood Theatre, *Wrestling with Angels* explores Kushner not just as the playwright we already knew about, but also as a deeply humane queer voice sincerely committed to saying something relevant. How well that mission is accomplished in his art might be debatable, but *Wrestling with Angels* finds him accomplishing it very well in his life. **B+**

—Christopher McQuain

Your Mommy Kills Animals

This documentary by gay director Curt Johnson provides a balanced view into the work of animal rights groups. Unfortunately, the film reveals that some respected, controversial or vilified organizational leaders cannot string five words into a complete sentence or form an argument on their sometimes defensible, other times extreme, cause. Of note is the martyred focus on an Oregonian from Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty who is being prosecuted for terrorism. Screens 7 and 9 p.m. Dec. 6 at Clinton Street Theater; proceeds benefit the SHAC7 Support Fund. **B-**

—JRC 10

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