



PAOLA ARDIZIONI: FOX SEARCHLIGHT, 2003

Atmospheric

Malkovich directs understated, intelligent film.

THE DANCER UPSTAIRS: Directed by John Malkovich. Written by Nicholas Shakespeare, based on his novel. Produced by Andres Vicente Gomez and John Malkovich. Executive producers, Lianne Halfon and Russ Smith. Cinematography, Jose Luis Alcaine. Original music, Alberto Iglesias. Editor, Mario Battistel. Production design, Pierre-Francois Limbosh. Costumes, Bina Daigeler. Starring Javier Bardem and Laura Morante. With Marie-Anne Berganza. Juan Diego Botto, Elvira Minguez, Alexandra Lencastre, Oliver Cotton, Luis Miguel Cintra and Abel Folk. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2003. R. 128 minutes.

John Malkovich directs *The Dancer Upstairs* with the same dedication and focus that he brings to his best work as an actor. For instance, he's deliberate in his portrayal of an android learning to act human in Susan Seidelman's 1986 comedy, *Making Mr. Right*. Although darker and not as playful, *Dancer* also draws on the minimalist art of doing nothing and doing it well. It's a thoughtful, serious film that tackles the roots of terrorism, its appeal to oppressed people and its ruthless disregard for culture and innocence in pursuit of political goals. It opposes a corrupt military government that also ignores and brutalizes its people.

A sad love story is layered over and laced throughout the terrorist theme. A lonely, idealistic lawyer turned police captain, Agustin Rejas (Javier Bardem) falls in love with his daughter's dance teacher, Yolanda (Laura Morante), in the midst of a massive man hunt for a murderous Maoist folk hero named Ezequiel (Abel Folk).

The film is set in an unidentified Latin American country during an unspecified time, but it's based on some of the facts surrounding the capture of Abimael Guzman, the leader of the 1980-1992 insurrection in Peru called Sendero Luminoso or The Shining Path. For authenticity, the cast is made up of uniformly excellent Latin actors — Bardem (Spain), Morante (Italy) and Juan Diego Botto (Argentina), who plays Sucre, Rejas' partner.

The film opens as a truck grinds its way up and over an empty mountain highway in the dark, blasting its way through a poorly manned government checkpoint. Later, the truck ap-

proaches another crosspoint with two armed guards. The guard on duty, Agustin Rejas (Bardem), asks the driver to come inside, makes congenial conversation, takes notes, types an application and snaps a Polaroid. The driver gets back in the truck and speeds off into the night.

Five years later, the guard is now a police detective in the capital. Captain Rejas and Sucre find dead dogs rigged with dynamite hanging from lamp posts, along with crude, hand-lettered signs in support of "President Ezequiel." The terrorists grow bolder, executing officials and using children as suicide bombers. Rejas gets hold of a video of the brutal execution of a Catholic priest by a child.

So he slips out of the city and into the countryside, where he talks to ordinary people. No one opposes Ezequiel, he learns. The farmers hate the way they're treated by the government, and Ezequiel speaks for them. Rejas has an informative meeting with an old colleague and returns to the city disturbed by what he has heard and seen. Rejas and his squad begin to put together pieces of the Ezequiel puzzle.

Meanwhile, Rejas has complications at home. He adores his daughter, Laura (Marie-Anne Berganza), but his wife, Sylvina (Alexandra Lencastre), loves her social life and has no idea, it seems, about the world her husband lives and works in.

These characters are on a collision course with history, and nothing Rejas can do will change that fact. He will survive, but his ideals may not. Bardem plays this principled, professional man with restraint, showing emotion only to Yolanda and Laura. Malkovich lets the camera linger on him. An unconventional thriller, *The Dancer Upstairs* challenges the viewer to slow down and pay attention, and it rewards those who do. The score by Alberto Iglesias (*Talk to Her*) is sublime. The film opens at the Bijou Friday, June 20. Highly recommended. **EW**

A sad love story is layered over and laced throughout the terrorist theme.

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DUMB AND DUMBERER* (PG-13) 10:20, 12:40, 3:05, 5:25, 8:00, 10:20	DADDY DAY CARE (PG) 11:25
HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE* (PG-13) 10:15, 1:10, 1:35, 4:05, 7:15, 7:45, 10:15, 10:40	THE ITALIAN JOB (PG-13) 10:50, 1:45, 4:40, 7:50, 10:45
RUGRATS GO WILD* (PG) 10:05, 11:50, 12:35, 2:15, 2:55, 4:35, 5:20, 7:20	2 FAST 2 FURIOUS (PG-13) 10:30, 1:20, 4:15, 7:20, 7:55, 10:10, 10:45
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"The Dancer Upstairs resonates with emotional intelligence of Graham Greene...its rhythms take hold and pull you in!"
— Elyse Abtschell, NEW YORK TIMES

THE DANCER UPSTAIRS directed by John Malkovich
5:30 & 8:15 Nightly
SAT & SUN MAT 2:45 [R]

Billy Bob Thornton Morgan Freeman
Holly Hunter Kristen Dunst
Levity Ed Solomon's expertly crafted parable of forgiveness and redemption.
— Kenneth Turan, L.A. TIMES
ONE WEEK ONLY!
9:10 Nightly SUN MAT 3:10
SCREEN: OWNING MAHONEY [R]

MAN ON THE TRAIN
In French with English subtitles
5:15 & 7:10 Nightly SAT MAT 3:10
MUST END SOON! SCREEN: SPECIAL DOUBLE [R]

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SPUN Jason Schwartzman John Leguizamo Brittany Murphy Mickey Rourke
11:20 Thurs-Sunday [R]

Tsui Hark's Vampire Hunters
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coming: Terminator (circa 1984-see the original!) [R]

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*RUGRATS GO WILD - PG 12:40 2:35 4:30 6:25
2 FAST 2 FURIOUS - PG-13 8:30
FINDING NEMO - G 1:15 3:40 6:00 8:20
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*RUGRATS GO WILD - PG 12:40 2:40 4:40 6:40
FINDING NEMO - G 1:00 3:40 6:10 8:30
DADDY DAY CARE - PG 8:40
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*DUMB AND DUMBERER - PG-13 12:05 2:05 4:20 6:20 8:40
*HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE - PG-13 1:20 3:50 6:30 9:00
2 FAST 2 FURIOUS - PG-13 12:30 2:45 4:59 7:20 9:40
ITALIAN JOB - PG-13 1:40 4:10 6:45 9:20
BRUCE ALMIGHTY - PG-13 12:20 2:35 4:50 7:10 9:30
*MATRIX RELOADED - R 12:00 2:55 5:50 8:50
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