

Imaginary Neighborhood with Reasonable Charm

Paris 36 slight but enjoyable

PARIS 36 (FAUBERG 36): Directed by Christophe Barratier. Written by Barratier and Julien Rappeneau, based on an idea by Frank Thomas, Jean-Michele Derenne and Reinhardt Wagner. Music, Reinhardt Wagner. Lyrics, Frank Thomas. Starring Gérard Jugnot, Clovis Cornillac, Kad Merad, Nora Arnezeder, Bernard-Pierre Donnadiou and Maxence Perrin. Sony Pictures Classics, 2009. PG-13 120 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

Christophe Barratier's *Paris 36* takes place in an imagined Paris district in the sping of 1936 — a tumultuous time, not least for the former employees of the Chansonnia, a neighborhood theater closed by its nasty landlord at the turn of the year. The political landscape is changing, but times are particularly bad for Pigoil (Gérard Jugnot), who had worked at the theater for 30 years. His job is gone, and so is his accordion-playing son, taken to the country by his cheating mother and her new fella.

Pigoil is *Paris 36*'s center, the person around whom a colorful group of neighborhood personalities revolve. He's an everyman sort of guy, a disappointed, unambitious fellow who nonetheless finds the resolve to reopen the Chansonnia with a ragtag collection of unemployed folks, including Milou (Clovis Cornillac), who used to spend his time encouraging factory workers to go on strike, and Jacky (Kad Merad), the Chansonnia's former sandwich-board man turned would-be "Prince of Imitators." The turning point for them all is the arrival of Douce (Nora Arnezeder), a fresh-faced, small-town beauty harboring dreams of being a star in Paris. Her talent turns things around; her history changes everyone's lives even further.

For the most part, *Paris 36* is sweet and slight, beautifully shot by Clint Eastwood's frequent cinematographer Tom Stern, who pulls beauty out of barely lit scenes with remarkable frequency. It lures you into the

backstage world of the theater with a long shot that swoops from the city outside, through the theater, and right up to Pigoil, behind the scenes, doing the job he's done for so long. While packing in troubled romance, longtime friendships, the details of life in the neighborhood and the efforts to reopen the theater, the film also glances at the pre-WWII political situation in the neighborhood: Milou helps Pigoil's son escape a a broken-up factory strike, and Jacky finds his principles tested when theater owner Galapiat (Bernard-Pierre Donnadiou) offers to help with his career

— if Jacky will just do a bit of entertaining for his right-wing group. This latter moment is truly uncomfortable, and one of the times the film's political nods don't feel like a well-done, era-appropriate bit of set dressing (to be fair, it is a nifty set). The real world is relevant, present and accounted for, but only as it butts in on life at the Chansonnia, where old stagehands, hotheaded socialists and newly minted stage stars

Kad Merad, Gérard Jugnot and Nora Arnezeder in *Paris 36*

pull themselves up by their bootstraps just in time for a cheery musical not-quite-finale. France has given us a good number of unforgettable films in the last few years; *Paris 36* isn't one of them, but its easygoing nostalgia is reasonably charming all the same. **EW**

Paris 36 opens Friday, May 8, at the Bijou.

Charming, Doomed Art Boys

CONVERSATIONS WITH JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT: Directed by Tamra Davis. Jean-Michel Basquiat, Tamra Davis. Arthouse Films, 2006. NR. 22 minutes.

THE UNIVERSE OF KEITH HARING: Directed by Christina Clausen. Fab 5 Freddy, Keith Haring, Bill T. Jones, Grace Jones, Yoko Ono, Kenny Scharf, Andy Warhol. Arthouse Films, 2007. NR. 90 minutes.



Jean-Michel Basquiat

Since Jean-Michel Basquiat died of a drug overdose at age 27 in 1988, the art world and art historians have re-evaluated his gorgeous, skilled, thickly referential painting out of the "street" classification and into the academy.

Since Keith Haring died of AIDS at age 31 in 1990, his pop-inflected designs have become ubiquitous and synonymous with gay activism but also coloring books and joyful, colorful street art. You can see a little of Basquiat and a lot of Haring in these two movies, showing at the Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts this weekend.

A longer, feature documentary about Basquiat should come at some point from Arthouse, happily. There's an awkward juxtaposition between the white pop artist's hour and a half hagiography, gloriously revealing of early 1980s gay life in N.Y. and of Haring's ebullience as it is, and the 22-minute interview with Basquiat. That's even more apparent when Basquiat says that profiles have focused on his personality instead of his art because of racism, and the next words out of his interviewer's mouth include "well-spoken" and "articulate." The Basquiat movie is redeemed by many shots of his work, and the Haring shows a time and a culture that Haring, a small-town guy from Pennsylvania, fully inhabited and definitely shaped. Losing both so young means we'll really never know what we lost, and seeing Basquiat's work makes the weight of that tragedy more apparent than ever. — *Suzi Steffen*

Conversations with Jean-Michel Basquiat and The Universe of Keith Haring show at DIVA, 110 W. Broadway, at 5 pm and 7:20 pm Thursday, May 7; 5 pm, 7:20 pm and 9:40 pm Friday, May 8; and 1 pm (with discussion), 5 pm, 7:20 pm and 9:40 pm Saturday, May 9. \$6.

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Coraline: Henry Selick (*The Nightmare Before Christmas*) adapts Neil Gaiman's creepy, fantastic story into a creepy, fantastic movie about a girl who finds, behind a door in the wall, a fantastic parallel world — complete with her Other Mother, who has buttons for eyes. PG. Movies 12.

Curious Case of Benjamin Button, The: David Fincher (*Fight Club*) takes a different direction with this story of a man (Brad Pitt) who is born at the age of 80 and ages backwards throughout his life. Based on a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald and costarring Cate Blanchett. PG13. 159 min. ACADEMY AWARDS: BEST ART DIRECTION, MAKEUP, VISUAL EFFECTS. David Minor Theater. ★★☆☆☆ (12/31/08)

Directed by Steven Spielberg: The UO film series continues with *Koi Mil Gaya* (May 7) and closes with *Munich* (May 14). Both are preceded by a short talk from a UO grad student. 6 pm Thursdays, 110 Willamette, UO. Free.

Fanboys: A gaggle of *Star Wars*-quoting geeks takes

off on a road trip in hopes of being able to infiltrate Skywalker Ranch. Plenty of cameos from relevant folks (Billy Dee Williams! Carrie Fisher! Kevin Smith!) dot the (doubtless goofy) movie, which stars Jay Baruchel and Kristen Bell. Fellow nerds, do not try to resist. PG13. 90 min. Bijou.

Finding Dawn: Filmmaker Christine Welsh screens her film about the disappearance and murder of aboriginal women in British Columbia. 3:30 pm Wednesday, May 13, Knight Library, UO. Free.

Great Directors Seminar: This DIVA/LCC series features the films of Howard Hawks, including *Bringing Up Baby* (1 pm) and *Sergeant York* (4 pm), Sunday, May 10, DIVA. Discussion led by Thomas Blank. \$7.

Heckler's Night: Mock loudly and cheerfully as the Goat screens the Dennis Rodman-starring *Simon Sez*. Dane Cook's in this? Wacky. 7 pm Wednesday, May 13, Wandering Goat. Free.

Lives of Artists, The: New film series featuring documentaries about contemporary visual artists begins with the short film "Conversations With Jean-

Michel Basquiat" and the feature doc *Universe of Keith Haring*. 5 pm and 7:20 pm Thursday, May 7; 5 pm, 7:20 pm and 9:40 pm Friday, May 8; and 1 pm, 7:20 pm and 9:40 pm Saturday, May 9. First two screenings on Saturday are hosted with discussion. DIVA. \$6. See review this issue.

Next Day Air: When a shipment of high-grade cocaine ends up in the hands of two small-time crooks, everything goes to hell. It's not the plot I want to see this for, though; it's Mos Def, who brightens up the trailers. With Donald Faison, Mike Epps and Debbie Allen. R. Cinemark.

Observe and Report: Seth Rogen stars as a mall cop (another one? Really?) who must take down a flasher, try to charm the makeup-counter woman he adores (Anna Faris) and beat the local cops at their own job. Er, I think. R. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (4/16)

Paris 36: A charming, airy, old-fashioned film about the rebirth of a theater in Paris in 1936. Politics and romance enter into the picture, but Christophe Barratier's film is at its best when it's the story of three

unlikely friends pulling off an unlikelier production. PG13. 120 min. Bijou. See review this issue.

Rivers of a Lost Coast: Documentary about the birth of fly fishing in northern California, and the "mythical" man who led the pack, is narrated by Tom Skerritt. The filmmakers will be at this screening, which partially benefits Trout Unlimited and The Steamboaters. 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm Tuesday, May 12, David Minor Theater. www.oregonflyfishingblog.com

Second Friday Movie Night: Catch the short "Behind Blue Eyes," followed by *The Misfits*, John Huston's 1961 film starring Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable as an unlikely pair who meet in Reno. 7 pm Friday, May 8, New Zone Gallery, \$2 sug. don.

Sprout Film Festival: Annual event presents "positive portrayals of people with developmental disabilities." Films include *Beautiful Son*, about the experience of a family with a son with autism. 12:30 pm (\$5) and 7 pm (\$10) Thursday, May 14, Room 104 of Building 19, LCC. (A reception is at 5:30; tickets to reception and evening films \$30.)

Star Trek: Even crotchety critics are loving the story of the maiden voyage of the *Enterprise* — and the rivalry-turned-friendship of young James Tiberius Kirk (Chris Pine) and Spock (Zachary Quinto). With Simon Pegg, Zoe Saldana, John Cho and Eric Bana. PG13. 126 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Watchmen: Zack Snyder (300)'s adaptation of what the commercials trumpet as the most acclaimed graphic novel, like, EVER, is pretty good — and pretty faithful to Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' book, in which costumed heroes try to solve the murder of one of their own. Among other problems. But Snyder is too busy recreating select moments from the book to bring a vision of his own — beyond highlighting his fascination with violence. R. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (3/12)

Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com

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