

Hick town homecoming



A slice-of-life movie about small, quiet things can be as well-done as ripe cheese or smell as bad as a Rotorua fart.

Junebug has some moments of beauty. It's not the film to watch if you are after a *Sixth Sense* ending or into big car chases, political strife or someone trying to gun down the goddamn president of the goddamn United States.

The plot is a simple one that could have been ruined if the cast hadn't been right. I mean, a movie about the homecoming of the family golden boy to a rural North Carolina town? Well,

Film
Junebug
Starts October 12
Academy Cinema
Directed by Phil Morrison
Reviewed by Karen Tay

thank God for wonderful actors!

Amy Adams sparkles and shines as the naïve, never-lived-anywhere-else, pregnant teenage bride. She manages to pull off the role with a minimal annoyance factor. She is so convincing in her part there were moments when I wanted to slap her.

So many actors try to make their characters loveable that you end up hating them more. But you'll love Ashley because she reminds you of the kid sister who wanted to follow you everywhere.

Madeline (Embeth Davitz) is gorgeous as the older seductress who marries her toy-boy after a week-long sex fest. Most of their relationship is played out in the bedroom, but I suppose there's nothing else to do in a hick town in America.

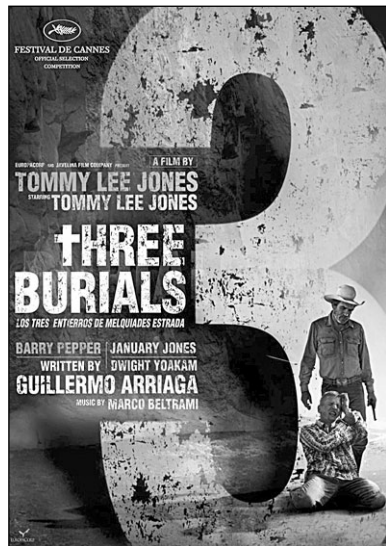
If there is one weak link in the chain, it is George (Alessandro Nivola). He is eye-candy, and

there were times when I thought his character would go somewhere...but it didn't.

One scene where he sings a tear-wrenching hymn could have been the perfect point to create some depth for his character but is instead wasted on more booty screen time.

This film has won a plethora of awards so it hardly needs my endorsement, but it's a lot better than the other tripe they try to pass off as films out there. You'll see it if it's your cup of tea, amen.

Iconic tale of redemption



Ruled less by shoot-em-up abandon than by the importance of a decent funeral, the Western genre gets a modern-day reworking in Tommy Lee Jones' directorial debut *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*.

The film is set on the border of West Texas and Mexico, where Mike Norton (Barry Pepper) moves from Cincinnati with his wife Lou Ann (January Jones) to take up a job on the border patrol and quickly earns a reputation for brutality. In a revision of the Western tradition of glorified batlers against "Injuns", the film slots Norton into the more contemporary "stupid white man" archetype while sympathetically portraying the aspirations of illegal Mexican border-crossers.

The dream of America gets its inevitable post-modern battering. There's little gun-slinging glamour in this little frontier town, where desires have dried up into unmitigated boredom and Lou Ann wiles away interminable days smoking in the diner and soaking up TV soap opera.

Film
The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada
Rioito Cinema
Directed by Tommy Lee Jones
Reviewed by Carmen Gray

She looks for inspiration to ageing waitress Rachel (Melissa Leo), who relieves the drudgery by cheating on her husband – though even that amounts to consoling the impotent sheriff (Dwight Yoakam) with assurances of what Viagra can do.

Even though this town is more Todd Solandz than Sergio Leone, a laconic and rough-edged cowboy turned outlaw still emerges to drive the action. Jones himself plays Pete Perkins, deservedly taking home the Best Actor award at Cannes for his trouble. When trigger-happy Norton accidentally kills illegal immigrant ranch hand Melquiades Estrada (Julio Cesar Cedillo) and the local police turn a blind eye, Perkins takes justice into his own hands. He kidnaps Norton and forces

him to dig up the body then join him on a long journey by horseback into Mexico to fulfil a promise to return Estrada home.

The cinematography deftly captures the arid landscape's brutal expanse – this is a no-man's-land so disinclined towards life that crossing it requires almost an act of faith. The eccentric methods Perkins resorts to for preserving the body along the way are played for grotesque humour, but the obvious affection which drives his actions means this never slips into tastelessness. Rather, the corpse's physical decay is a comedic counterpoint to the film's core message of spiritual redemption.

The film won the best screenplay award at Cannes for Mexican writer Guillermo Arriaga – who was also behind *Amores Perros* and *21 Grams*. With *Three Burials*, he again takes on the spiritual preoccupation of *21 Grams* with how much life weighs – with as much flooring emotional power, even if his

latest work lacks the moral complexity of the earlier masterpiece. While the start of *Three Burials* throws the audience into the jarringly fragmented structure familiar to Arriaga's other films, with the pilgrimage it settles into a straightforward narrative in which the way to redeeming action appears clearly mapped out.

Of course, the tribulations of transporting across country a body that is already starting to rot became an iconic American tale through William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. Far from seeming derivative, echoes to the nation's great founding stories lend *The Three Burials* the touch of parable – delivered with enough subtle wryness to ensure it never descends into the preachy or saccharine.

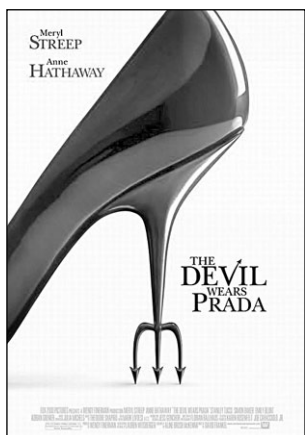
While life may be cheap for the old hands of spaghetti Westerns, here we come to believe in the stubborn vision of Arriaga that you must keep burying a man until his life is recognised as something.

What's on

cinema

The Devil Wears Prada
Cinemas nationwide
Opens October 19

Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway star in the big screen adaptation of the novel *The Devil Wears Prada* about a ruthless and demanding magazine editor seeking the impossible from her new impressionable young assistant. Streep shines in this role that is reportedly based on the true life persona of a previous magazine editor at *Vogue*.



Fast Food Nation
Cinemas nationwide
Opens October 26

Richard Linklater directs this controversial adaptation of Eric Schlosser's book *Fast Food Nation*.



events

New Zealand Music Awards
ASB Theatre, Aotea Centre
October 18
The New Zealand Music Awards celebrate excellence in the music industry, honour the achievements of our home-grown music talent and focus the public and media attention on the local music industry. Expect to hear speeches from Bic Runga and Elemeno P – both are finalists in four categories.

100% Impure New Zealand: a scandalous view from abroad
Red Lecture Theatre, Unitec
November 7
6pm - 7.30pm, \$5 fee
New Zealand's patchy environmental record leaves the country and those who trade on its clean, green image vulnerable to vicious attacks from competitors overseas. Business journalist Rod Oram will take a novel approach to try to portray the power such attacks might have.

Farmers Santa Parade
Queen St, Auckland City
November 26
Grab a kid and join over 250,000 people, 4000 participants and 280 creations of Christmas magic over a 2km route. The parade route follows Mayoral Drive, Queen St, Customs St West and Albert St. If the weather is bad, the cancellation will be announced on Newstalk ZB after 10am on the day. The parade will still go ahead in light rain.

Waiheke Teddy Bear's Picnic Day
Little Oneroa Beach Reserve
October 29

If you go down in the woods today... you'll find loads of fun and music, Waiheke-style. Pack your picnic basket along with sunscreen, hat and Big Ted, of course.

theatre

Allah Made Me Funny: The Official Muslim Comedy Tour
The Opera House, Wellington,
November 11
ASB Theatre, Aotea Centre,
November 12
Stand-up comedy show fresh out of the States, *Allah Made Me Funny: The Official Muslim Comedy Tour* is sure to have audiences laughing out loud and thinking hard. What the founders of this comedy tour have come up with, is a very tasteful way to counter the negative stereotypes and attitudes about Muslims and Arabs by poking fun at themselves, their communities and the prejudices they face.

music

Throughout October, Oxfam is hosting Oxfam - a nationwide month of music with a message: that together we can bring an end to extreme poverty. There are 50 events in Auckland alone, so it is guaranteed there will be something for everyone.

Make Poverty History party
Sponge Bar, Ponsonby
October 14
Party against poverty!

Reclose with Chris Cox and Isaac Aesili
Khuja Lounge
October 14

Oxfam at the Kings Arms
Kings Arms, Newton
October 20
Bands, DJs and more

Details of all gigs are at:
www.oxfam.org.nz