

Shortbus essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Kicking off with the tag line “ Voyeurism is Participation”, writer and director John Cameron Mitchell follows up his 2001 cult classic “ Hedwig and the Angry Inch” with this 2006 Cannes Film Festival release, once again with sex, tragedy, and the human spirit as central theme. This time, though, it’s the Americans getting special attention; New Yorkers to be precise. This light-headed production is a medley of 3 separate stories, and of the club of fantastic reverie which brings them together, Shortbus.

Mitchell continues his habit of plucking unknowns and TV actors and introduces Paul Dawson and PJ DeBoy as gay couple James and Jamie (whose greatest accomplishment is surely to fellate himself as the film begins). At the same time, we meet Sofia (Sook-Yin Lee of Hedwig and the Angry Inch and Sliders fame) – a sex-therapist who fakes her orgasms, and our last contestant, and it feels like a game-show as you’re watching, is Severin, (played by CSI and Gilmore Girls’ Lindsay Beamish) a dominatrix unable to bond and find true love.

With the scene set for chaos, tragedy, comedy, and no-holds barred sexual gratification on the quest for self-discovery this is not a film to watch with your grandparents. Cleverly weaving computer-generated ejaculations as we fly over a 3d New York skyline, and incorporating the cranky and quirky theme tune “ Winters Love” by Animal Collective, we can’t help but fall for witty one-liners such as “ You’ve got to get on to get off” and “ Open Your Mind. And Everything Else” which delicately pepper a background of carnal gyration.

Keep a keen eye and you'll notice that when James and Jamie are talking about Ceth and about their relationship, the dancer in the back goes from topless in one shot, to with a top in the next. Of course, there was no book upon which this piece of reality-style TV-esque cinema was based; this is for the new generation, although you'll be forgiven for finding similarities between Mitchell and Peter Greenaway's voyeuristic tendencies, as exulted in his classic of 1989: "The Cook the Thief His Wife & Her Lover".

In this film, the simple affair is replaced with dilemmas such as finding a partner in a sex club with a Tamagotchi are offered as the norm - "why hasn't this happened to me?" you almost ask yourself. "Why haven't I done that, and can I get one in Anne Summers!" In search of a love which has more taste than vanilla, sex is the pudding through which our cast are eating with big spoons.

The desperation to find something meaningful is beautifully captured by Justin Bond, the iconic transvestite Maitre D': [looking at the clients of the Shortbus, having group sex] "It's just like the 60's. Only with less hope.". His gymnastic tongue and joie de vivre would make his opposite number at La Cage aux Folles blush. Like Mitchell's other productions, this is firmly aimed at the under forties, and is a stark reminder that hypocrisy is painful, sex is complicated, and love conquers all.

Don't miss the tender moment with the ex-mayor of New York. The crescendo is long as the film comes to its own climax, and though some may find the finale a little premature, when remembering this gem, you'll say: yes, it'll shock you with its gratuitous scenes, yes, it may even challenge

some of your until now, dormant prejudices, but above all yes! , you love it for being everything Hollywood isn't: frank, honest, refreshing, and, above all, strangely moving. Get it out, invite some friends round, and " Vive Le Shortbus"!

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