

# CANNES REVIEWS

## LAND AND FREEDOM ★★★

*Starring Ian Hart and Rosana Pastor. Directed by Ken Loach. Written by Jim Allen. Produced by Rebecca O'Brien. A Gramercy release. Drama. In English and Spanish. Not yet rated. Running time: 109 min. Won Ecumenical Prize.*

A huge hit at Cannes, "Land and Freedom" follows David ("BackBeat's" Ian Hart), a young Briton, who sets out for Spain in 1936 to aid the fight against fascism. There he joins an international militia of idealistic freedom fighters and experiences with them the passions of battle. But, when personal and political conflicts develop, the young rebels must face the painful and often senseless consequences of war.

Though it runs long in the middle and occasionally gets bogged down in political dogma, the film is marked by strong central performances from Hart and Rosana Pastor as lovers united and then divided by their beliefs. Scripter Jim Allen has framed the period sequences in a 1990s context: Leafing through his old papers, David's granddaughter discovers what the war meant to him. This device renders the historical passages accessible, pertinent and especially moving.

## L'AMORE MOLESTO ★★

*Starring Anna Bonaiuto, Angela Luce and Peppe Lanzetta. Directed and written by Mario Martone. Produced by Angelo Curti, Andrea Occhipinti and Kermit Smith. A Lucky Red and Teatri Uniti production; distribution pending. Mystery. Italian-language; subtitled. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min.*

With mixed success, "L'Amore Molesto" explores a mother/daughter relationship against the backdrop of a Neapolitan mystery. When her elusive, enigmatic mother (Angela Luce) suddenly turns up dead, Delia (Anna Bonaiuto) decides to investigate her mother's life in the days before her death. Through her search, Delia is forced to revisit and confront her own childhood, her parents' complex relationship, and some hideous memories she had repressed.

What work best in "L'Amore Molesto" are the black-and-white flashbacks to Delia's childhood. Some are appealing, others repugnant, but all are effective. The modern color sequences, with Delia running from one apparent trap to another, are less powerful. Despite an intriguing structure, the film ultimately fails to connect with its audience.

## THE MONKEY KID ★★★★★

*Starring Fang Shu, Fu Di, Yang Guang and Yang Lin. Directed and written by Xiao-Yen Wang. Produced by Wei-Wei Wang. A Beijing/San Francisco Film production; distribution pending. Drama. Mandarin-language; subtitled. Not yet rated. Running time: 95 min.*

In this charming autobiographical film, director Xiao-Yen Wang focuses on a young girl's daily life during the Cultural Revolution in China. The title char-

## BOORMAN AT CANNES

### BEYOND RANGOON ★★

*Starring Patricia Arquette and U Aung Ko. Directed by John Boorman. Written by John Boorman, Bill Rubenstein and Alex Lasker. Produced by John Boorman, Barry Spikings and Eric Pleskow. A Columbia release. Drama. Rated R for depiction of violent political oppression. Running time: 99 min.*

"The trip was Andy's idea," says American physician Laura Bowman (Patricia Arquette) of the plan by her sister (Frances McCormand) to help Laura escape her domestic tragedy (husband and son murdered) by bringing her to Burma in August 1988 for some rest. "She meant well." Instantly, Laura becomes caught up in that time's countrywide protest against a brutal military regime and finds herself fleeing for Thailand with disident professor named U Aung Ko (played by Burmese expatriate actor U Aung Ko), students, monks and other innocents as government soldiers try to kill all of them before they reach the border.

British director/co-writer John Boorman ("Hope and Glory," "The Emerald Forest") brings a resolute passion to this Castle Rock production, as does Arquette. The script, however, doesn't keep pace; in place of the backstory on Laura Bowman we need to understand why this woman undertakes her dangerous odyssey, the script races forward with action sequences better suited to co-writer Alex Lasker's earlier "Firefox." Also, the film's political theme is presented as dogma; one longs for a little looseness, like the boy exulting "thank you, Adolph!" for the Luftwaffe's destruction of his school in "Hope and

Glory." There's even some bad looping. However, even working in a minor key Boorman is always interesting, and his efforts here are nicely aided by the Asian-tinged flute and bell music of scorer Hans Zimmer and cinematographer John Seale's orange-hued images.—*Kim Williamson*

### TWO NUDES BATHING ★★★★★

*Starring John Hurt, Charley Boorman and Angeline Ball. Directed, written and produced by John Boorman. A Yorktown production; distribution pending. Drama. Running time: 31 min.*

In this witty, irreverent short, director John Boorman offers an explanation for the origin of one of the Louvre's most famous unsigned paintings. The work, hailing from the Fontainebleau School, depicts two young women in a bath, one holding the nipple of the other between thumb and forefinger.

In Boorman's version, the two women are the repressed daughters of a strict French aristocrat (John Hurt) who commissions a painter (Charley Boorman) to depict the duo in their clothed, virginal state. The painter obliges but, as the work progresses, the two curious subjects demand he instruct them in sexual behavior. Unbeknownst to their father, he paints another version, the one hanging in the Louvre.

Certainly it's capricious, but "Two Nudes Bathing" blends history, art and light humor so smoothly that Boorman's explanation seems plausible. The film is so likable that it could pleasingly beget a series of similar shorts, perhaps by different directors, on the real-life origins of unsigned masterworks.—*Lael Loewenstein*



Patricia Arquette stars in Columbia's "Beyond Rangoon."

acter, nine-year-old Shi-Wei (Fu Di), is a mischievous child who, in the tradition of Francois Truffaut's Antoine Doinel, balances on balconies five stories high, shows up late for school, and tumbles, unrestrained, down mountains of gravel.

At the same time, her teacher (Yang Guang) lectures the students on the im-

portance of conforming under Mao Tse-tung. By choosing her own path, Shi-Wei manages to escape the drab, dull rhythms of the Cultural Revolution. Comparisons to Truffaut's "400 Blows" are inevitable, but Wang acquits herself admirably with "The Monkey Kid," her first feature.