

# Hirschfield International Film Series 2008–2009

FILM SERIES



Scenes from: *Eastern Promises*, *No End In Sight*, *Counterfeiters*, *Jesse James*, *I'm Not There*, and *Syndromes and A Century*.

Unless noted with an asterisk (\*), all programs are presented twice on Saturdays, once at 3 P.M. and again at 8 P.M., held in Middlebury College's Dana Auditorium, on College Street. Admission is Free. Films are projected in 35mm unless noted otherwise.

Some of the works in this series may be inappropriate for children; we regret that we are unable to preview the material.

SEPTEMBER 13

*Michael Clayton* [USA, 2007, 119']

Attorney Michael Clayton (George Clooney) is a "fixer," the go-to guy when his powerful New York law firm wants a mess swept under the rug. But now he's handed a crisis even he may not be able to fix. The firm's top litigator in a \$3-billion case has gone from advocate to whistle blower. The more Michael tries to undo the damage, the more he's up against forces that put corporate survival over human life – including Michael's. Written and Directed by Tony Gilroy, writer of the *Bourne* trilogy. "A deftly written, tautly suspenseful, and intellectually demanding morality tale."—Claudia Puig, *USA Today*. "This uncommonly intelligent thriller evokes the great films of the 1970s that managed to elicit gritty urban realism while maintaining a suave sense of style and moral complexity."—Ann Hornaday, *Washington Post*. Winner 2008 Oscar, Best Supporting Actress. Winner 2008 BAFTA Award. Winner 2007 NBR Award for Best Actor.

SEPTEMBER 20

*4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days* [Romania, 2007, 113']

In a country where abortion is outlawed, a young college student turns to her college roommate for help in finalizing arrangements with a black-market abortion. What follows is their harrowing descent into a world in where danger, darkness and tragedy lurk around every corner. "It's a pitiless, violent story that in its telling becomes a haunting and haunted intellectual and aesthetic achievement."—Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*. "A remarkably engrossing and thoughtful picture, beautifully rendered in an artful mode of realism."—Glenn Kenny, *Premiere*. Winner 2007 Golden Palm and FIPRESCI Prize, Cannes Film Festival. Winner 2007 European Film Award. In Romanian with English subtitles.

SEPTEMBER 27

*Eastern Promises* [U.K., 2007, 100']

Midwife Anna Khitrova (Naomi Watts), deeply affected by the desperate situation of a young teenager who dies in childbirth, resolves to trace the baby's lineage and relatives through the girl's personal diary. However, she inadvertently finds a harrowing chain of murder, deceit, and retribution as her journey unleashes the wrath of a Russian mobster (Viggo Mortensen) and the Vory V Zakone criminal brotherhood. Award-winning director David Cronenberg (*A History of Violence*, *The Fly*) creates "a movie whose images and implications are likely to stay in your head for a long time."—A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*. Nominated for an Academy Award. Winner 2007 British Independent Film Award.

OCTOBER 4

*Persepolis* [France, 2007, 95']

Set during Iran's Islamic revolution, *Persepolis* is an enthralling, animated feature about the coming of age of Marji, an outspoken young Iranian girl. Based on the autobiographical graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi, the story follows Marji as her natural fire and precociousness are slowly dampened by the rise of religious extremists. Directors Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud offer a unique window onto a crucial chapter of 20th century history that is "full of warmth and surprise, alive with humor and a fierce independence of spirit."—A.O. Scott, *The New York Times*. Winner 2007 Jury Prize, Cannes. In French with English subtitles.

OCTOBER 18

*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* [France, 2007, 112']

Julian Schnabel's (*Before Night Falls*) adaptation of the true story of Jean-Dominique Bauby, the *Elle France* editor who suffered a stroke that paralyzed his entire body—except his left eye. Using that eye to blink out his memoir, Bauby eloquently describes the aspects of his interior world, from the psychological torment of being trapped inside his body to his imagined stories from lands he'd only visited in his mind. "You won't have a more viscerally emotional experience at the movies this year."—Lou Lumenick, *The New York Post*. Nominated for four Academy Awards. In French with English subtitles.

OCTOBER 25

*No End in Sight* [U.S.A., 2007, 102']

A staggering portrait of the war in Iraq, *No End in Sight* examines the chain of American decisions that led Iraq into a grotesque state of lawlessness and civil war. Director Charles Ferguson's documentary combines interviews with top American generals, administration officials, journalists, and soldiers with terrifying footage of firefights and explosions. The gradual accumulation of simple facts—presented with weary resignation, earnest outrage, and restrained anger—results in a compelling condemnation of one of the worst blunders the U.S. has ever made. "*No End in Sight* is the most coolheaded of the Iraq war documentaries, the most methodical and the least polemical. Yet it's the one that will leave audiences the most shattered, angry and astounded."—Mick LaSalle, *San Francisco Chronicle*. Nominated for an Academy Award.

NOVEMBER 1

*The Counterfeiters* [Germany, 2007, 98']

Director Stefan Ruzowitzky tells the true story of a band of concentration camp prisoners who are forced by the Nazis to use their counterfeiting skills to produce currency and undermine Allied economies. Faced with a moral dilemma, they must decide whether their actions, which could prolong the war and risk the lives of fellow prisoners, are ultimately the right ones. "Though swiftly paced, *The Counterfeiters* convincingly examines the complex nature of humanity under inhuman conditions"—Adam Bernstein, *The Washington Post*. Won Oscar for "Best Foreign Language Film." In German with English subtitles.

NOVEMBER 8

*The Black Book* [Netherlands, 2006, 145']

Director Paul Verhoeven's epic film reveals a harrowing untold story of the darkest days of World War II. Rachel Stein (Carice van Houten) is the lone survivor of a Nazie ambush. In an effort to avenge her family, she joins the Dutch Resistance, and faces the ultimate test: she must infiltrate German headquarters by tempting Captain Ludwig Muntze (Sebastian Hoch). In the heat of passion he uncovers her deception... but keeps her secret. But, as events unfold Rachel discovers a murderous traitor within the Resistance ranks and, eventually, unable to fully trust anyone, Rachel becomes an enemy to both sides. From the director of *Robocop* and *Showgirls*, this epic, passionate, breathtaking film relates an untold story of World War II where human nature blurs the fragile line between good and evil. "As epic as its two-hours-and-25-minute running time indicates, *Black Book* is as subversive as it is traditional, both enamored of conventional notions of heroism and frankly contemptuous of them."—Kenneth Turan, *Los Angeles Times*

NOVEMBER 15

*Away From Her* [Canada, 2006, 110']

A 50-year marriage is put to the test in Sarah Polley's poignant new film, when couple Grant and Fiona are faced with the harsh reality that Fiona's mind is slowly being consumed by Alzheimer's Disease. Theirs is a touching struggle of loyalty and love that explores the limits of love and the inevitable transition from lovers to friends that this heart-wrenching disease creates.

NOVEMBER 22

*Exiled* [Hong Kong, 2006, 110']

A fast-paced, suspenseful thrill of a film, "this tale of childhood buddies turned hit men is the kind where flames roar, waves crash and dropped bullets thus like bowling balls"—Mike Zoller Seitz, *New York Times*. Set in Macau during the end of the Portuguese's administrative powers, two hit men are hired to eliminate a renegade member, but are faced with more than they bargained for when two former associates arrive to thwart their plans. From director Johnny To, (*Breaking News, Election*), this film was nominated for the 2006 Golden Lion, Venice. In Cantonese with English subtitles.

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JANUARY 10

**Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford** [U.S.A., 2007, 160'] Andrew Dominik (*Chopper*) directs this stirring epic about America's most notorious criminal. 19-year-old Robert Ford will stop at nothing to gain fame, and what better way than joining the ranks of the nation's very own "Robin Hood"? Brad Pitt and Casey Affleck star in this tale of friendship turned rivalry.

JANUARY 17

**I'm Not There** [U.S.A., 2007, 135']

Todd Haynes (*Far From Heaven*) delivers a quirky new take on the standard Hollywood biopic. With six different actors/actresses cast to embody the different persona's of Bob Dylan, this film, nominated for a 2007 Academy Award, is hailed as "An absorbing, occasionally hallucinatory disquisition on how Dylan has brilliantly eluded his audience's projections."—Washington Post

JANUARY 24

**Control** [U.K., 2007, 122']

Director Anton Corbijn (*One Night in Paris*) delivers an alarmingly real story of a young British man's descent into despair. Ian Curits has dreams that stretch beyond his small-town life in 1970's England. He strikes out to make his musical dreams come true, but before long the musician's life begins to take a toll. Married young with a daughter, distracted by new love and the grind of the road, Ian's health begins to suffer his emotional stress. We watch in sadness and dismay as his life slowly collapses around him. "Control goes past the clichés of punk rock-god gloom to offer a snapshot of alienation that's shockingly humane."—Owen Gleiberman, Entertainment Weekly. Nominated two BAFTA awards, *Control* won three awards at the Cannes Film Festival.

FEBRUARY 14

**Flight of the Red Balloon** [French, 2007, 113']

Hailed as "one of the most beautiful films ever... a work of art on the order of a poem by Yeats or a painting by Rothko."—John Anderson, Washington Post, *Flight of the Red Balloon* is certainly a testament to the skill and eye of director Hou Hsiao-hsien. Suzanne is a charming but over-worked mother who juggles puppet shows, the classes she teaches and the two children, Simon and Louise, that she has been raising alone since their father left. To help her, she takes in a young Taiwanese babysitter, Song Fang, who is a student at Paris University. On his way home from school, Simon, who is 7 years old, leads her through the streets and cafés of his neighborhood. Soon, Song Fang and Simon share an imaginary world: a strange red balloon follows them, even in the exhibition space of the Musée d'Orsay. While Suzanne is caught up in a court case involving her tenant downstairs, who refuses to leave, every day, Song Fang becomes more important in her life. In the end, it is Song Fang's Asian perspective that helps Suzanne get to grips with her life.

FEBRUARY 28

**Paranoid Park** [USA, 2007, 85']

After accidentally causing the death of a security guard, high school student Alex must come to terms with the guilty feelings that are threatening to overwhelm him. Director Gus Van Sant's (*Finding Forrester*, *Good Will Hunting*) film based on the novel by Blake Nelson is a gorgeous, unforgettable poem that captures the complexities of teenage life. Filled with "haunting sadness, ubiquitous danger, pulsing power and flickers of hope"—Joe Morgenstern, Wall Street Journal. Won 2007 60th Anniversary Prize at Cannes; Nominated for 2007 Golden Palm, Cannes.

MARCH 7

**The Orphanage** [Spain, 2007, 105']

In the supernatural thriller *The Orphanage*, a woman's son disappears without a trace. To determine who or what abducted her son, she revisits her childhood memories, discovering dark secrets and enduring mysteries. Directed by newcomer Juan Antonio Bayona under the guidance of producer Guillermo Del Toro [*Pan's Labyrinth*], the film is a superbly moody and emotionally powerful tale of love, loss, and guilt. "Eerie, atmospheric...an unexpectedly poignant ghost story."—Carina Chocano, Los Angeles Times. "Beautifully conceived and composed, it's eerie, sometimes frightening and surprisingly moving." Mike LaSalle, San Francisco Chronicle. Winner 2007 Best Film, Barcelona Film Awards. Winner 2008 Goya Award for Best New Director.

MARCH 14

**The Savages** [USA, 2007, 113']

After years of drifting apart, siblings Wendy and Jon Savage reunite to care for their cantankerous, dying father. Laura Linney (Wendy) and Philip Seymour Hoffman (Jon) vividly portray the sort of cluttered, precarious relationship that only brothers and sisters can have: thick with past grievances but also unspoken affections and connections that cannot be articulated. *The Savages* is a smart, genuine, sometimes-funny, sometimes-sad film for anyone who appreciates the messiness of humanity. "The Savages tiptoes along a particularly fraught emotional tightrope, balancing observant humor and deep sadness with uncommon grace."—Ann

Hornaday, Washington Post. "The Savages not only boasts Oscar-worthy performances from Philip Seymour Hoffman and Laura Linney as a self-absorbed brother and sister, its attention to detail makes it sweetly funny and genuine."—John Monaghan, Detroit Free Press. Winner 2008 Independent Spirit Award; Winner 2008 LA Film Critics Association Award for Best Screenplay.

APRIL 4

**The Band's Visit** [Israel, 2007, 87']

After arriving in Israel for a performance, the Alexandra Ceremonial Police Orchestra finds themselves stranded at the airport. Attempting to navigate their way to the event, they end up in the remote and forgotten desert town of Beit Hatikva. The Band's Visit, Israeli filmmaker Eran Kolirin's debut feature, is a subtle, heartfelt, and humane work that illustrates the complex cultural divides that continue to plague the Middle East. "A joyously bittersweet piece of visual music about isolation, melancholy and everyone's yearning for transcendence, through love, art or both."—Michael Sragow, The Baltimore Sun. "A small, profoundly satisfying movie that keeps echoing long after it's over." Ty Burr, Boston Globe. Winner 2008 Un Certain Regard—Jury Coup de Coeur, Cannes. Winner 2007 European Film Award. Winner 2007 Grand Prix at Warsaw International Film Festival. In English, Arabic, and Hebrew.

APRIL 11

**Zodiac** [US, 2007, 158']

As a serial killer taunts the San Francisco Bay Area with ciphers and letters, four men (Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo, Anthony Edwards, Robert Downey, Jr.) become hopelessly enwrapped in the endless trail of clues. Directed by David Fincher [*Se7en*; *Fight Club*], *Zodiac* is a thriller adaptation of Robert Graysmith's books about one of the nation's most intriguing and terrifying unsolved crimes. "Its most impressive accomplishment is to gather a bewildering labyrinth of facts and suspicions over a period of years, and make the journey through this maze frightening and suspenseful."—Roger Ebert, The Chicago Sun-Times. "Rarely has a film with so much blood on its hands seemed so insistently alive."—Manohla Dargis, The New York Times. Nominated 2007 Golden Palm, Cannes.

APRIL 18

**City of Men** [Brazil, 2007, 110']

In the middle of a war between Rio's drug gangs, best friends Acerola and Laranjinha, discover secrets about their missing fathers' pasts which shatter their solid friendship. Directed by Paul Morelli [*Viva Voz/Speaker Phone*; *Preço da Paz, O*], *City of Men* is an unshakable portrayal of Rio de Janeiro's violent slums. "So much emotional traffic streams through this City of Men that it's easy to miss a narrative turnoff. You won't get lost, but your sense of direction might be profoundly changed."—John Anderson, The Washington Post. "City of Men has a more humane, you might say bleeding-heart, perspective on this anarchic culture than *City of God*."—Stephen Holden, The New York Times. Nominated for 2008 Cinema Brazil Grand Prize. In Portuguese with English subtitles.

APRIL 25

**Syndromes and a Century** [Thailand, 2006, 105']

A charming meditation on memories recalled by the filmmaker's parents, *Syndromes and a Century* travels time and space with graceful levity, entrancing the viewer with its anti-narrative love stories. Ultimately a study of human behavior, *Syndromes and a Century* confirms director Apichatpong Weerasethakul's as one of the brightest and most innovative lights in contemporary cinema. "The latest daydreamy film from this Thai auteur of languor is fragrant with tender love and sly humor."—Bill Stamets, Chicago Sun-Times. "A challenging, invigorating whiff of the magical properties of sensual cinema." Gene Seymour, Newsday. 2007 Winner at the Asian Film Awards; Nominated 2006 Golden Lion, Venice Film Festival. In Thai with English subtitles.

APRIL 19

**Duchess of Langeais** [France, 2007, 137']

Jacques Rivette's (VA SAVOIR) masterful adaptation of Honoré de Balzac's novel follows the affair between a general and Antoinette, the Duchess of Langeais. Tension over whether Antoinette wants a lover or a lapdog allows the film to ask provocative questions about the true sources of desire. Taking place in parlors that echo with chatter and creaking floorboards, *The Duchess of Langeais* offers a restrained and realistic evocation of the 1820s. "Romantic devotion becomes a perverse kind of warfare, in which a lover who admits that he's in love loses the campaign."—David Denby, New Yorker. "Slowly but expertly depicts the jousting courtship of an ill-fated love affair between a Parisian socialite and a Napoleonic war hero." Russell Edwards, Variety. Nominated 2007 Golden Berlin Bear, Berlin International Film Festival.