

David Walsh selects his favorite films of 2007

David Walsh
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American films, which largely continue to dominate the globe, remain quite poor in general. The trivial and the anti-social predominate. The reality of an immensely complex society receives very little serious attention. Honorably (or, in a few cases, less so), a number of filmmakers have attempted to confront the endless brutal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, even here, there is very, very far to go.

Even in regard to the better films, one has to 'mark on the curve,' so to speak. One excuses certain blemishes and lapses, a cliché here, a simplification there.

A sharp attitude toward current work has nothing to do with 'pessimism' about cinema in general. The cinema based on an acceptance of the present culture and political status quo has reached its limits; in fact, it reached them some time ago. A revitalized filmmaking will have to find resources and strength in something else, above all, opposition to a polarized and crisis-ridden social order. Only such opposition will liberate the artist to bring to bear his or her real talents.

European and Japanese cinema is not in much better shape. There are hints here and there of interesting things, sometimes from veterans, occasionally from the very young. Chinese filmmakers are doing some of the most serious work, but one should not idealize it, for reasons that we have attempted to explain [See: "The 'new seriousness' in cinema..." and "And the new problems"].

There is no end to the potential for drama in everyday life. Thousands of stories cry out to be told. Again, social preconceptions, more than anything else, hold the artists back. Mainstream cinema too often values wealth and success and power, while "independent" films focus uninspiringly on the personal experience of various petty bourgeois layers. The life of the vast majority of the globe's population is excluded, both as participants in and subjects of today's film works. This

will have to be addressed. The emergence once again of masses of people as an active force in political life will have an impact on the film world.

As usual, I include two lists of films. The first contains what were, in my opinion, the best films shown in movie theaters in the US this year (although, in some cases, this might only have amounted to a brief run in one or more of the major cities). The second is comprised of the best films I saw at film festivals, none of which has yet been released in the US (several, however, are scheduled to be shown in 2008).

Best films released in the US in 2007 (in no particular order)

1. *Offside* — Jafar Panahi
2. *Vanaja* — Rajnesh Domalpalli
3. *The Prisoner or: How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair* — Petra Epperlein and Michael Tucker
4. *The Comedy of Power (L'Ivresse du pouvoir)* — Claude Chabrol
5. *Love for Sale (O Céu de Suely)* — Karim Ainouz
6. *The Last Hangman* — Adrian Shergold
7. *Michael Clayton* — Tony Gilroy
8. *Rendition* — Gavin Hood
9. *Strange Culture* — Lynn Hershman-Leeson
10. *The Situation* — Philip Haas

Best films that have not yet been released in the US (in no particular order)

1. *Two Ladies (Dans la vie)* — Philippe Faucon
2. *Battle for Haditha* — Nick Broomfield
3. *Bing Ai* — Feng Yan
4. *Chop Shop* — Ramin Bahrani
5. *It's a Free World...* — Ken Loach
6. *Little Moth* — Peng Tao
7. *Rome Rather Than You* — Tariq Teguia
8. *The Old Garden* — Im Sang-Soo
9. *The Other Half* — Ying Liang
10. *Fish Dreams* — Kirill Mikhankovsky



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