

Watershed, 1 Canon's Road, Harbourside, Bristol BS1 5TX

Box Office: 0117 927 6444

Watershed January 2011 Podcast

A belated Happy New Year to all our listeners! I've been having such a relaxing time that all thoughts of the Podcast were put on ice along with the gin and tonic. Enough of that revelry! Lets look at what 2011 has in store...

Last year we had a preview of Tom Hooper's new film **The King's Speech** in the company of the two producers Iain Canning and Gareth Unwin. Then I predicted it would be a safe bet to put a wager on The King's Speech to win something at the forthcoming BAFTAs and Oscars – most probably acting for Colin Firth as the stammering King George or indeed Geoffrey Rush as the unorthodox Antipodean vocal therapist or even maybe Helena Bonham Carter who I think does a brilliant job as the supportive Queen. Since that time in the hazy distant days of December 2010 the profile of The King's Speech seems to have gone stratospheric and deservedly so. What I thought might have been a rather standard retreat costume drama fuelling our obsession with the royals – more suited to TV than cinema – is in fact a great character study, enjoyable and a really quite moving, entertaining film. Also in the very close background World War 2 is looming and the need for conviction in rallying the nation. The film captures the fragility of these moments. But above all it is an extraordinary true story of a quite remarkable friendship.

The interview with the film's producers can be viewed at

<http://www.dshed.net/bafta-preview-kings-speech-iain-canning-and-gareth-unwin>

The King's Speech opens at Watershed on **Fri 7 Jan**.

Later this month we are screening Alejandro González Iñárritu's **Biutiful** a film I saw in Cannes last year and thought was excellent. Everyone thought Iñárritu's debut film Amores Perros was an extraordinary film and rightly so - however critics have been circling ever since sniffing the scent of pomposity. Not a particular pleasant aroma and at its most ripe in Babel – a film which tried to achieve a theory of everything. The problem being: who really cared? However there is no doubting Iñárritu has a unique cinematic eye and for me Biutiful brings that to the

fore. The story is of a man in emotional freefall who feels connected to the afterlife. What anchors the film is a truly outstanding performance from Javier Bardem reminiscent of Brando when he could set the screen on fire - indeed Sean Penn described Bardem's performance in *Biutiful* as the best since Brando in *Last Tango in Paris*. And who am I to disagree.

Biutiful opens at Watershed on **Fri 28 Jan**.

What else have we got to look forward to at Watershed in the early months of 2011? A few titles I would point to are as follows. First up has to be the Coen Brothers' reworking of **True Grit**, the iconic John Wayne film of a washed up sheriff who shows he still has true grit. The eye-patched marshall is played in the Coen Brothers film by Jeff Bridges – what genius casting. If that doesn't get your cinematic juices going nothing will!

At **Afrika Eye Film Festival** last year we managed to get a preview of **Benda Billili**, an exhilarating documentary on the Congolese band of the same name as they make their way from life on the streets of Kinshasa to international music festivals – most recently headlining Womad last year. This should do for these musicians what Buena Vista Social Club did for that older generation of Cuban musicians.

Japanese writer **Haruki Murakami** has long been recognised as a major author and literary figure whose work resonates way beyond its Japanese subject matter. His 1987 novel **Norwegian Wood**, a study of discovering sexuality and lost love, made him an international success and has been adapted for the screen by Tran Anh Hung. The Vietnamese born French director is probably best known for *Scent of Green Papaya* and *Cyclo*.

Following a detour in to humour with *Looking For Eric* Ken Loach turns his attention to politics and Iraq in **Route Irish** which follows a private security contractor who rejects the official explanation of his friend's death and sets out to discover the truth.

There was one film in Cannes that felt like a real discovery, one of those films that take you on a wonderfully unpredictable journey and is completely spellbinding.

The film was **Le Quattro Volte** that simply follows a goat herder in a medieval town in Calabria and it is quite magical.

True Grit opens in February.

Benda Billili, **Route Irish** and **Norwegian Wood** open in March.

Le Quattro Volte opens in April.

Finally it was very sad to hear of the death of actor **Pete Postlethwaite** at the beginning of January. He was a great friend of Watershed and I had the privilege of meeting him on a few occasions. The first was when we did a film retrospective to coincide with his *Macbeth* at the Bristol Old Vic. It was great to see his growing range of cinema work and realise how much of a major screen actor he was. It was also a revelation to screen some of his early TV work. He was always brilliant on the screen and was a pleasure to host and hear discussing his work. He was always a warm, generous, invigorating, passionate presence and will be much missed.