

SIFF 2007 wrap-up: Grandhotel, The Boss of It All, Vacation

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Raymond Chen

Sorry, SIFF fans, but this article got stuck in the queue. But now it's unstuck.

Grandhotel: A sweet story about a shy, innocent, weather-obsessed hotel employee and the even stranger people who surround him. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but I was quite pleased with what I got. Part comedy, part drama, the movie creates touching moments while remaining true to the quirky nature of its characters. I give it a 3 out of 5.

The Boss of It All: A company's founder blames all unpopular decisions on his imaginary boss, but when he enters negotiations to sell the company, he must produce this elusive boss and hires an incompetent actor to play him. Experiencing the story from the point of view of the hapless actor heightens the comedy, since we don't know what the heck is going on either! Everybody in this goofball comedy is insane, save for Icelandic interpreter. I give it a 4½ out of 5; it loses a half point for the maddening framing and editing. (This movie also served a quasi-linguistic purpose, since I anticipated that my knowledge of German and Swedish might make the Danish semi-comprehensible, but all I learned was that I was right to remove Danish from my list of modern Germanic languages I want to learn. I did get a kick out of the American—or maybe he was British—employee whose Danish was atrociously bad. That's what I would sound like if I studied Danish.) The Seattle Film group is bringing the moving back for a summer run, so if you want to see it and missed it, you have a second chance.

Vacation: Laura takes her family on a summer vacation at her mother's country home. Things are tense for reasons we learn later, and they get even more uncomfortable when her grandmother and estranged sister drop in for a visit. Scenes were held much, much longer than typical in modern moviemaking, making peaceful moments even more peaceful and uncomfortable moments even more uncomfortable. Dialogue was extremely sparse and often nonexistent, with emotions conveyed through silence and long pauses; rather than being boring, these moments carried poignancy, even if it's just a simple scene of two kids picking wildflowers. Other people may hate the slow pacing of this movie, but I really enjoyed it, which totally messes up my rating system. I'd give it a 4 for me, but a 3 for everybody else. (And it worked great from a "learning German" standpoint: The dialogue was very sparse, giving me plenty of time to work out what was said.)

Legend:

- Would pay money to see again by myself.

- Would see again if it were free or if seeing it with others.

- Would recommend to others.

- Okay, but wouldn't recommend to someone not already interested.

- Would advise against.

- Waste of my time.

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