

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

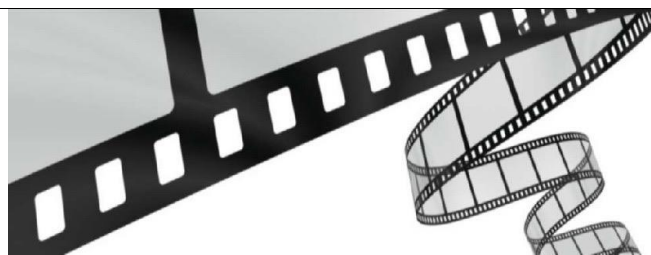
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TALE OF TALES

Dir: Matteo Garrone - Italy/France/UK - 2015. - 125 mins

Cast: Salma Hayek; Vincent Cassel; Toby Jones; John C. Reilly; Shirley Henderson.

Film Fantasy? Think of exotic and deadly serious myths for adults, a 'Middle Zealand', Tolkeinesque world, or hyperactive, super-smart animation for children from the Disney-Pixel castle, albeit with continuous flicks of discreet sophistication for older consumers? *TALE OF TALES* is film fantasy for adults, definitely, with a peripheral undercurrent of child-like reverence for the bizarre events unfolding on screen. It's 'fabulous' in every sense.

This is certainly a freaky, portmanteau film, based on the folk myths collected by the 16th century Neapolitan poet Giambattista Basile. It is fantastically mad, rigorously imagined and visually tremendous: erotic, hilarious, internally consistent. It immerses you in its own created world. In the words of the Guardian's Peter Bradshaw, "pretty much like the film version of some forgotten quadruple gatefold prog-rock album... like diving head first into a Roger Dean record sleeve." Now I'm not really up to speed with Roger Dean's work, but I dug out my original LP of Emerson, Lake and Palmer's 'Brain Salad Surgery' and instantly saw what Bradshaw may have had in mind!

Bradshaw again: "In its jaunty and eccentric way [*TALE OF TALES*] also has something of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*. It grips you, while at the same time allowing its deadpan cast to give rein to a liberating kind of of panto absurdity." And in the film there are all the elements of Ovid's tales of love, mixed up with Hansel and Gretel, the Beauty, the Beast, the Prince and the Pauper and much else that excites the adult and can give the child quite a few nightmares. Consider that most so-called 'fairy tales' collected by the likes of Perrault and, later, Joseph Joseph provided the adults with the pleasure of telling, in that ancient oral tradition, while putting the fear of... the stranger, the dangers of the unknown in the outside world, into the listening children? Just try reading 'Lady Mary' in Joseph's 19th century 'Collected Fairy Tales' or Perrault's gory 'Cinderella' from the 17th century.

Garrone seems to have taken further inspiration from Michelangelo Antonioni's own fable, *THE MYSTERY OF OBERWALD*, while there is the faint whiff of the strange and (some might say) unwholesome odour emanating from Waleryan Borowczyk's *IMMORAL TALES*. Ah yes, Borowczyk! A must for any self-respecting 'Film Society' in the 1970s and early 80s, guaranteed to have a few viewers walking out! But then some scenes in *TALE OF TALES* may trigger familiar associations with John Boorman's *EXCALIBUR*, *MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL*, possibly *BLACKADDER*, *THE COMPANY OF WOLVES* and even the Tenniel illustrations for *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*.

I hope you will find much to enjoy in what is Garrone's (*GOMORRAH*) first English language film, one which I found full of outrageous and twisted beauty, a riot of gothic fantasy, with a triumphantly unique vision of cinema at its macabre heart.

PB

The penultimate screening of this season is **A WAR** on Thursday 25 May.