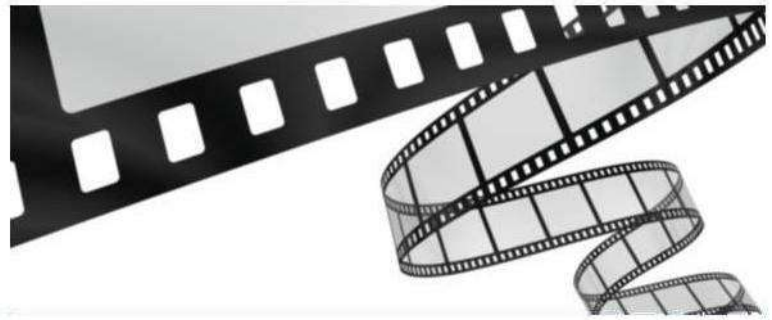


CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

Visit our website at:
www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk

Follow us on:
twitter.com/ChelmsfordFilmC
www.facebook.com/ChelmsfordFilmC



Loveless (2018)

Russia 127 mins

Director: Andrey Zvyagintsev

Screenplay: Oleg Negin and Andrey Zvyagintsev

Cast: Maryana Spivak, Aleksey Rosin, Matvey Novikov

Review: In 'Loveless,' a Broken Family and a Lost Nation

By Jeannette Catsoulis, NYT, Nov. 30, 2017

Unfolding beneath skies the colour and density of damp concrete, *Loveless*, the fifth feature from the Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev (after his notable 2014 drama, *Leviathan*), uses a toxic marriage to paint a larger portrait of decay, dereliction and moral detachment.

And, oh, his gaze is pitiless. Set in Moscow in the autumn of 2012, the picture sits on the screen with an almost physical weight, its heaviness as much to do with the bleakly beautiful visuals and painstaking pacing as the bitter divorce at its centre. Boris and Zhenya (Alexey Rozin and Maryana Spivak) loathe each other, their vitriol pouring over their 12-year-old son (Matvey Novikov) like lava. Sobbing silently out of sight, the boy listens to his parents argue over who will be saddled with the child that neither wants. Then he disappears.

Initially, no one notices. Distracted by new lovers (and, in Boris's case, a religious boss who will probably fire him if he learns of the divorce) the couple is slow to contact the police. A lugubrious detective laments official ineptitude in missing-child cases, and a volunteer search group is contacted. The hunt transforms the movie into a wintry document of decline, as the orange-vested team tramps through echoing buildings, a frozen forest and a dank and dripping ruin - spaces at best inhospitable, and at worst deadly, to a distraught boy.

Scarcely more welcoming is the dimly lighted, coldly luxurious apartment where Zhenya and her boyfriend sedately fornicate, or the barricaded dwelling of her estranged, viperish mother. A tone of fraught pessimism accumulates, swelling into sociopolitical allegory as, in the background, the country's deteriorating relationship with Ukraine plays out on the evening news and journalists are vilified for inciting end-of-days hysteria. It's a grimly cynical view of modern Russia that's inarguably blunt (especially in an extended shot of Zhenya, running on a treadmill to nowhere, the word "Russia" emblazoned on her sweatsuit), but no less chilling for that.

With its fastidious framing and angry-tough temperament, *Loveless* (a title distilled in a single image of a child's violated, unclaimed corpse) earns its air of careful foreboding. Again and again, Mikhail Krichman's camera creeps forward as if about to reveal something frightful while we stare, hearts in mouths. The trick is shamelessly manipulative, but it lends the movie an ominousness that's powerfully magnetic. Boris and Zhenya may have behaved despicably, but their spiritual rot doesn't exist in a vacuum. When the state loses its humanity, Zvyagintsev seems to be asking how long can its citizens hold on to theirs?

Our previous presentation:

Based on the feedback slips returned on the night, you rated **The Beguiled**, screened on February 12, with an overall score of 65.2%. Please visit the current season page at <http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk> to read all the feedback comments. You can still provide feedback on this, or any other film, by visiting the Discussions page (<http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk/discussion/>).

Our next presentation:

The Breadwinner will be shown on Tuesday, 05 March, starting at 8:00pm.