

# Hidden beauties, fresh views make 'Night' shine

## Night On Earth

Winona Ryder, Gena Rowlands, Giancarlo Esposito and Rosie Perez

directed by Jim Jarmusch

Varsity Theatres  
967-8665  
●●●●

All people are beautiful," an artist friend of mine said once.

*Night on Earth* lays all doubts to rest that it could ever be otherwise.

Director Jim Jarmusch's latest work showcases five taxi rides in five cities happening simultaneously. The sun sets in Los Angeles and though the hour is really the same, the night gets later and later until the sun rises in Helsinki.

If you're thoroughly confused now, try making inter-continental phone calls some time.

The cities are captured in a billboard, an awning, a few taillights. I've never been to L.A., but his meeting of '50s kitsch, palm trees, traffic and neon seems to crackle with the lust and energy that the City of Angels exudes in our collective myths.

Winona Ryder is Corky, a gum chewin', chain smokin', spark-plug fixin', tattooed taxi driver in El Ay. She picks up Victoria Snelling (Gena Rowlands), a polished casting director with way too much stress. Winona has been made to look as skanky as possible — oily hair, dirty face and nails, oversized clothes and a baseball cap. They soon find a common cause: man bashing.

"Guys. Can't live with 'em, can't shoot 'em!" Corky laughs. She says she's looking for a man who "loves me right with his soul, takes me for what I am."

Victoria looks beyond the smudge of motor oil on Corky's cheek to her big brown eyes and her brassy attitude. As

## movie

MARA LEE

Corky slings her alligator luggage out onto the driveway, Victoria offers to make her a star. But Corky tells her that wouldn't be a real life for her, and leaves a bewildered Victoria protesting, "Everyone wants to be a movie star!"

New York is also captured perfectly. The scenes of New York filmed through the eyes of Helmut (Armin Meuller-Stahl) manage to escape the clichés, even when panning Times Square. Helmut, an East German emigre, taxi driver and ex-clown, picks up Yo-Yo (Giancarlo Esposito) for a fare to Brooklyn.

Yo-Yo's glad to finally get a cab in the cold winter night, but realizes he's not dealing with a normal cabbie when Helmut doesn't know how to get to "Brookland" or even drive. Yo-Yo takes over the driver's seat and reassures the agitated Helmut: "Yeah, it's allowed! This is New York. Chill out, man."

Yo-Yo tries to teach Helmut slang and he denies their similarities while highlighting them for us. He laughs easily and deeply, and the audience found his laughter contagious.

Yo-Yo sees his sister-in-law, Angela (Rosie Perez), apparently streetwalking, fights with her and forces her in the car. Angela gives as good as she takes, and sometimes her shrieking seems to speed up so much she sounds like she's in fast-forward.

Helmut's in love. He can't peel his eyes away from Angela as she curses Yo-Yo out. He only tears himself away to stare up at the lit-up Brooklyn Bridge, eerily beautiful from the moving car.

As they drop her off, she says sweetly, "Yo-Yo! Fwauk you!"

In Paris, it's the dead of night, and two drunk African ambassadors are harassing their African taxi driver. They badmouth him in French as if he wouldn't understand, and when they do address him, condescendingly call



Rosie Perez stars as a potty-mouthed freelance streetwalker in 'Night On Earth'

him "little brother." He finally tosses them out and picks up a blind woman, because he thinks she won't give him any trouble.

His awkward questions about life as a blind person piss her off, and in a delicious stroke of karma, he gets his for being condescending too.

Paris is painted even more deftly than the American cities, and the details shine even more. Beatrice Dalle's rolled up eyes, the Christmas lights on the cab and the pink band-aid on Isaac De Bankole's sharply planed face give a prenatal beauty to both occupants.

Roma has to be the funniest segment. As Roberto Benigni karooms through piazzas and the wrong way down one-way streets, his good-natured curses

and exclamations echo off the empty streets. He picks up a priest on the island in the middle of the Tiber and takes him clear across town, confessing his sexual sins all the way. Pumpkins, lambs, his sister-in-law — been there, done that. Unfortunately, these incidents have spoiled his appetite for vegetables and meat. "I eat little," he admits.

The comic rhythm accelerates as the tassista gestures and rocks, shouts and groans. Finally he says, "I know these are serious sins. But in my opinion, they are sins of love." He suggests the father try them out: "They're heaven on earth! Then you just confess."

But sometimes it's not that easy, he finds in a hysterical surprise ending. Helsinki is the darkest segment as

the drunk passengers of a morose taxi driver try to see who can tell the best tale of woe among the snow-filled streets. But as sad as the men's lives are, as they oscillate between aggression and maudlin sympathy, the sun rising at the end seems to send a message of hope.

This movie is wonderful, especially if you speak French, Italian or Finnish. The contrast of the Cote d'Ivoire and the Parisian accents further heightens the theme of colliding cultures, national or physical. Benigni's manic "madonna" "insomma" and "che casino" are funnier than the subtitles.

*Night on Earth* doesn't have a plot. It simply has a few strangers discovering each others' beauty.

Which is more than enough.

## ratings

- — wait for the video
- — go to the dollar theater
- — only pay matinee price
- — pay full price
- — take your sister, too

# Blood, guts and yawns haunt 'Pet Sematary II'

## Pet Sematary II

Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards

directed by Mary Lambert

Ram Triple  
967-8284

## movie

CHRISTOPHER SPECK

To begin, people go to horror films for one reason only: to have the bejeezus scared out of them. To be honest, the movie wasn't scary. It wasn't scary by horror movie standards. I mean it was ridiculous. PS2 couldn't scare a three-year-old simply because the plot offers few surprises to the average viewer and absolutely none to the seasoned veterans of horror movie fare.

The story begins when an actress named Renee meets a gruesome death while making a film in Hollywood. Her son Jeff then moves in with his estranged dad, Chase, who lives in the same town in which the original *Pet Sematary* took place. Jeff soon learns about the cemetery (deliberately spelled "Sematary") and befriends a portly boy named Drew whose sadistic father Gus kills Drew's beloved dog, Zowie.

Of course, the boys bury Zowie in the cemetery only to find a rather wired and particularly evil-looking Zowie

limping around the next day. Nights later, Zowie kills Gus near the cemetery and the boys (you guessed it) decide to bury Gus too. There's more, but I'll spare you the details by saying that everybody dies in the end except for Jeff and Chase who promptly drive out of town for good. The moral: Never bury people in a pets-only cemetery.

I know I said I wouldn't say anything bad about this movie, but what good things can you say about it? It doesn't even qualify as a "it's-so-bad-it's-funny" movie because PS2 is a straightforward tale that takes itself seriously from beginning to end — complete with silly posthumous visions of Renee, Gus and Drew that cloud the screen as Jeff and Chase drive off into the sunset.

And to think of the budget: Judging from the computer-animated graphics in the opening sequence and the plethora of helicopter shots and grisly special effects, I'll bet that director Mary Lambert truly thought that PS2 would be a scary movie. One doesn't spend millions of dollars on a film so an audience can laugh at it instead of with it.

Don't get me wrong, it was difficult not to laugh through some sequences

— but these laughs were few and far between because they were unanticipated by the filmmakers themselves.

But PS2 delivers the goods with a vengeance in the carnage department.

You witness a woman get electrocuted and a boy mutilated by a spinning motorcycle wheel. You get to see a litter of half-eaten kittens, rabbits being skinned alive and a skeleton doing the mamba in a house of flames ... everything that makes a psychopath drool.

In fact, for the last third of the film, blood, guts and hemoglobin splatter everywhere, and I am certain that avoiding PS2 is something both vegetarians and meat lovers would agree upon. So, I strongly recommend PS2 to anyone who delights in watching people and animals die horrific deaths for no reason ... because that is what the movie is all about.

There! I said something nice about PS2. It wasn't easy, but I did it. And as for those of you who do not delight in watching people and animals die horrific deaths for no reason, I recommend you stay home and work up a good appetite for dinner ... because after viewing *Pet Sematary II*, I lost mine.

**PLAZA THEATRES**  
3:15 **TWIN PEAKS** 7:30  
**FIRE WALK WITH ME**  
MARLON BRANDO • TOM SELLECK • GEORGE CLOONEY • RACHEL WARD  
**CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS**  
IN THE DISCOVERY 7:00 • 9:15  
**HONEYMOON** 7:05  
**IN VEGAS** 9:05  
**SNEAKERS**  
STARTS TOMORROW!