

Marie Antoinette: Gorgeous Outside, Little Inside

by Charlotte Shanewise
Contributor

Marie Antoinette
Directed by Sophia Coppola
Columbia Pictures /2006



To play the *Marie Antoinette* drinking game, you can either a) take a drink when you see Kirsten Dunst's snaggle-toothed smile and one-sided dimple, b) take a drink when you see anyone with champagne, or c) take a drink when the screen fills with flourishing colors and decadent imagery. Whichever you choose, you will certainly have drink after drink in your belly when the closing credits roll (particularly if you chose option c).

The film's very first shot is of Dunst as Marie Antoinette, queen of France and frivolity during the late 18th century. We see her lounging on a couch, surrounded by servants and ornate layer cakes. She loosely reaches forward and drags icing off of the cake nearest to her, and pops her finger in her mouth while giving the camera a cocky stare. This single short glimpse is what I consider the film's most brilliant moment, for without it, we would have nothing to set the stage for the tasty bit of visual filmmaking to come, and the whole



movie would end up taking itself too seriously.

The movie then jumps back to the moment the 15-year old Archduchess of Austria's title and fertility is sold off to France. She is ordered to immediately remove the garbs of her homeland and replace them with fashions befitting the high French court. They even take away her dog.

To be quite franc (har har), beyond being a rich eyeful of cos-

tumes, desserts and landscapes from beginning to end, *Marie Antoinette* has no real substance, and the result is that even the most sentimental of filmgoers (me) will have a hard time responding emotionally. There is barely any plot beyond Marie's struggle to deliver an heir to the throne, which is more of a sidebar to her reckless cavorting and spendthrift habits for which history has made her notorious. There are no moral dilemmas or conflicts beyond what shoes the titular queen should

wear, which, as I can imagine, is somewhat of a realistic taste into the insular world of pre-revolutionary French royalty.

Director Sofia Coppola, known for her beautifully chaste and tragic heroines featured in *Lost in Translation* and *The Virgin Suicides*, sought to capture the story of France's most infamous matriarch from the point of view of Marie Antoinette herself. She has somewhat succeeded in portraying the

awkwardness the young queen must have felt having been thrust into a world of prestige and tight conventions—in which the royal court pays her so much heed that it makes the Pope look underappreciated. However, in lieu of true drama, the inner frustrations of the lead role are ineffectively manifested in short montages of Kirsten Dunst restlessly running down marble hallways with her lavish dress fluttering to anachronistic rock music.

Perhaps within this film's impotence and lack of a bottom line is a comment on how our modern day royalty, comprised of the most famous and photographed, spend much of their time and status loudly worshipping all that is tawdry, fleeting and superficial. Granted, this behavior isn't at the cost of the common people, who in Marie Antoinette's time paid the price of their queen's flighty spending. However, when I think of the way in which popular culture deifies figures such as Paris Hilton, and then imagine every young girl who models themselves after these figures purely for their looks, wealth, and the pissing away of each, I suddenly desire to see these "role models" carted to the guillotine just as Marie eventually was (which, by the way, this film never depicts).

A Delicate Balance opens tonight in Porter Center

By BJ Wanlund
Staff Writer

The definition of "psychological thriller," according to director Bob White, is "a play in which the audience cannot bear to leave the theatre for fear of missing something." Edward Albee's play *A Delicate Balance* is a psychological thriller that examines what friendship truly means.

A Friday night tradition for Agnes and Tobias quickly turns into a hard time for all; their daughter Julia comes home after the fail-

ure of her fourth marriage, Agnes's drunkard sister Claire continues to be a major thorn in Agnes's side—The players are as follows:

Agnes: Laura Griffith
Tobias: Ryan Burleson
Claire: Christine Caldemayer
Julia: Evelyn Pearson
Edna: Jessie Combest
Harry: Jay McDavid

A Delicate Balance will play on Friday night at 7:30 pm, Saturday night at 8 pm, and Sunday afternoon at 3 pm.



Griffith and Pearson rehearse *A Delicate Balance*