

Great cinema... Twice monthly!

News ... September 2010

QFA plays with fire

The Millennium Trilogy book series may be an international phenomenon, but unlike the Harry Potter or Twilight franchises, these mystery-thrillers are definitely aimed at a more mature audience. The book and movie series began with *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (now available on DVD), continues with *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and ends with *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

The bestselling books, by the late Swedish author Stieg Larsson, have caught the world by storm. The New York Times bestsellers have sold over 20 million copies worldwide. This fall, Quinte Film Alternative (QFA) audience will get to see what all of the fuss is about when the local film group screens the second in the Millennium series – *The Girl Who Played with Fire* – on Nov. 24.

What's wonderful about the stories is that they stand on their own as taut, compelling thrill rides that don't let up once they have got your attention. The detective puzzles, which include plenty of suspense, well-realized characters and exotic and exciting locations, meld whodunits with action and drama. The result is an intoxicating mix that makes for the best in bestselling reading and stories that translate instantly to the screen. According to the author's posthumous official website, Swedish writer and journalist Stieg Larsson died of a sudden heart attack in 2004 while working on a planned ten books in the Millennium series. Before becoming an author, he was mostly known for his struggle against racism and right-wing extremism. Starting in the late 1970s, he combined his work as a graphic designer with holding lectures on right-wing extremism for the Scotland Yard. During the following years, he became an expert on the subject and has held many lectures as well as written many novels on this theme. During the last 15 years of his life, he and his life companion Eva Gabrielsson lived under constant threat from right-wing violence.

According to publicity material for the film version of *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, brilliant sleuth and social enigma Lisbeth Salander (Swedish actress Noomi Rapace) is a wanted woman. A researcher and a Millennium magazine journalist about to expose the truth about the sex trade in Sweden are brutally murdered, and Salander's prints are on the weapon. Her history of unpredictable and vengeful behaviour makes her an official danger to society – but no-one can find her anywhere. Meanwhile, Mikael Blomkvist, editor-in-chief of Millennium magazine, will not believe what he hears on the news. Knowing Salander to be fierce when fearful, he is desperate to get to her before she is cornered and alone. As he fits the pieces of the puzzle together, he comes up against some hardened criminals, including the chainsaw-wielding 'blond giant' – a fearsomely huge thug who can feel no pain. Digging deeper, Blomkvist also unearths some heart-wrenching facts about Salander's past life. Committed to psychiatric care at the age of 12, declared legally incompetent at 18, this is a messed-up young woman who is the product

of an unjust and corrupt system. Yet Lisbeth is more avenging angel than helpless victim, descending on those that have hurt her with a righteous anger, terrifying in its intensity and truly wonderful in its outcome.

While this stunning thriller might be a highlight of the QFA fall series for Stieg Larsson fans, there will also be many other bright moments throughout the fall and winter as the program offers a feast of independent, international and Canadian films to satisfy all tastes.

The fall season opens on Sept. 15 with *Mao's Last Dancer* (Australia, 2009); from internationally acclaimed Australian film director Bruce Beresford. This inspirational true story is about a small boy's extraordinary journey from poverty to international stardom, from a gruelling apprenticeship as a classical dancer in communist China, to the glory of creative freedom in America. But, there is a painful price to be paid for his quest for self expression. *Mao's Last Dancer* captures the intoxicating effects of first love and celebrity, the pain of exile, and ultimately the triumph of individual endeavour over ideology. Filmed in China, the U.S. and Australia, and with a brilliant performance from Chi Cao as Li Cunxin, *Mao's Last Dancer* is an exhilarating exploration of what it means to be free.

QFA subscribers and patrons can also look forward to:

-- Sept 29: *Max Manus* (Norway, 2008) The true story about one of the most brilliant saboteurs during World War II and his battle to overcome his inner demons. The film is meticulously researched and full of excitement and suspense. It takes the time to establish its hero as a flawed, uneducated, but extremely interesting human being, and shows us not only his heroism, but why his wartime experiences scarred his soul.

-- Oct 13: *The Secret in Their Eyes* (Argentina, 2009) The beauty of this film is in the balancing of its many genres. It's a mystery, a love story and moves between intense drama and edgy comedy with masterful and seamless agility. Filled with twist and turns, it's a deeply rewarding throwback to the unself-conscious days when cinema still strove to be magical. The film is indeed worthy of its Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film for 2010.

-- Oct 27: *I Killed My Mother* (Canada, 2009) The turbulent relationship between a mother and son is explored in this stunning, semi-autobiographical tour-de-force from 20-year-old Quebecois writer, director, producer and performer Xavier Dolan. The film won awards at Cannes, Cinefest Sudbury and the Genies and was Canada's entry for Best Foreign Language Film for the 2010 Academy Awards.

The Quinte Film Alternative relies on membership support to fulfill its mandate of bringing independent Canadian and foreign films to Belleville audiences. Membership includes a pass to all 18 screenings plus the year-end film and party. The cost is \$130 for evening screenings and \$110 for the matinee. This can be paid in full, or half now and half in February 2011. Single screening tickets are \$9 for the matinee and \$11 in the evening. More information is available at the Quinte Arts Council, the Empire Theatre and www.quintefilmalternative.ca.