

Seton Hall University

From the Selected Works of Thomas R. Rondinella

2010

Film Threat Review

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/thomas_rondinella/11/

BEATING HEARTS



A little girl enters her parent's bedroom and quietly waits for her mother to wake up. She is intense, focused and patient. In her hand is a knife.



Year Released: 2010
MPAA Rating: Unrated
Running Time: 11 minutes
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Matthew Garrett's short film "Beating Hearts" reminds me a little bit of Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" or Hemmingway's "Hills Like White Elephants." Both are stories that seem, on a superficial level, not to have much of a story at all, but it's in the omissions that lurk all their secrets. Hemmingway called it the iceberg theory. It's a writing technique where the principal story is almost completely submerged with only a little bit of plot peeking out above the literary waters, hinting at something larger and often more ominous looming underneath. I'm aware that I might be offending a few purists by comparing a low budget "flick" to the holiest of written words but it's good enough to justify a stylistic comparison, maybe even a thematic one, maybe even more than that.

The dialogue is sparse, almost non-existent. What little is said is nearly incidental to what remains unsaid. The music is a quiet and powerful wall of sound that works together with the cinematography to create a mood and atmosphere that stays with the viewer and let's them understand the subconscious themes and ideas on a deeper emotional level rather than a more simplistic connect-the-dots pseudo-intellectual one.

Much credit has to be given to the actors, Gianna Bruzese as the girl and Peter Coriarty as her grandfather. Gianna especially is good for a child actress. She doesn't mug for the camera or overact. She doesn't talk too loudly or gesture too wildly. Kids are little hams by nature and often try too hard to please directors. These traits can overwhelm the screen. She is restrained and real. Peter Coriarty, on his end, has a good rapport with the girl. He has to. Much of their interaction is done in complete silence with only body language being used to convey meaning

Despite the running time only being a bit over eleven minutes this has the weight of something ten times the length, and because it uses those minutes so wisely it's the best example of what can be done with a little bit of money, a little bit of insight into human nature, a little bit of time and a lot of soul.

I have often said that I prefer the short film in the realm of low budget cinema over full length fare. Because you can do so many things with a short that you could never do with a film. You can sustain mood and themes. You can end with a knowing wink and a smile. You can cheat and bend the rules. A ninety minute long film requires that you follow a template.

"Beating Hearts" offers a question without an answer, a mystery without a solution, a film without a story. At first this may seem like a cheat, yet once the credits roll you realize how absolutely wonderful such a thing can be. You're as much in the dark when it ends as when it begins, except that you're now gifted with the understanding of why this makes all the sense in the world.

Posted on September 5, 2010 in Reviews by Jeremy Knox

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IN MEMORIAM: GEORGE KUCHAR (1942-2011)

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