

Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 22nd February at 7:30 pm *There is, according to one its most heralded practitioners, no such thing as a good “European film”.*

Slack Bay (2016) France

Ma Loute (original title)

Unrated | 2h 2min

Director; Bruno Dumont

Stars; Fabrice Luchine, Juliette Binoche, Valeria Bruni Tedeschi

Summer 1910. Several tourists have vanished while relaxing on the beautiful beaches of the Channel Coast. Infamous inspectors Machin and Malfoy soon gather that the epicenter of these mysterious disappearances must be Slack Bay, a unique site where the Slack river and the sea join only at high tide.



Speaking at the [Cannes film festival](#), Bruno Dumont, the French director of *L'Humanité*, *Flandres* and *Hors Satan*, refuted the idea that one could or should set out to make films that could be termed “European”. “European films’ are really bad,” he told the press after the first screening of his new comedy *Ma Loute* (*Slack Bay*). “You make a local film, and that might become universal. You can’t make a ‘European film’”.

Dumont has twice won Cannes’ “second prize”, the Grand Prix. His films typically portray the darkest aspects of humanity, with little room for levity. But he said the experience of working on *Ma Loute* and his previous film, a knockabout comedy called *P’tit Quinquin*, had helped him come to appreciate the “noble” arts of comedy and caricature. *Ma Loute*, which is set in the early 20th, century near Calais, close to Dumont’s birthplace, is a black comedy about the meeting of two families: the Van Peteghems, a bevy of braying aristocrats, and the Bruforts, a working-class clan of mussel gatherers – with a sideline in murder and cannibalism.

The film stars Juliette Binoche as the eccentric Aude van Peteghem, whose transgender child, Billie (played by the French actor Raph), initiates a romance with the title character (Brandon Lavieville), drawing the two tribes together. The film features a number of outrageous set-pieces, including the Bruforts hunkering down to dine on a bucket of body parts and Binoche – cut, bruised and bandaged after a close call with the cannibals – burbling incomprehensibly about the writings of Victor Hugo.

“I made these characters larger than life so you could really see them well,” he said. “I used to work with a telescope, now I work with a microscope. We’re horrible people, but saints at the same time. We’re idiots and geniuses. This combination, these diametric qualities, enthrall me”.

Fabrice Luchini plays André van Peteghem, the ineffectual, hunch-backed patriarch of the aristocrat family. In one scene the father makes a great show of offering the family aperitifs. Luchini, in referring to the scene, hijacked the press conference to complain about France’s newfound obsession: cocktails.

“I hate the way people in [France](#) are fascinated by cocktails,” he said. “I hate waiting for dinner. French people are obsessed with this idea of drinking before they eat. I hate it.”

After Luchini’s rant the moderator remarked that Luchini was an actor in every situation. “Oh my darling,” said Luchini. “What did you expect?”

