



The Lovely Bones

Director: Peter Jackson
Starring: Rachel Weisz, Saoirse Rona

Peter Jackson's adaptation of Alice Sebold's bestselling novel, *The Lovely Bones*, tells the story of Susie Salmon, a 14-year-old girl who is murdered by the local paedophile and is now watching her family disintegrate from the afterlife.

The question that surrounds *The Lovely Bones* is whether you can make a decent family film about a child serial killer? Well, no. Yes, the killer is creepy, but Susie's rape, which was by far the most effective part of Sebold's book, is glossed over, presumably to retain the film's PG certificate.

As a result, the film is more syrupy than shocking. Jackson's vision of the afterlife consists of pounding CGI waterfalls and vast computerised beaches. It's as if he's crossed Madonna's 'Love Profusion' video with a Muller yoghurt ad. At times it's so sickly it makes *Care Bear The Movie* look like a snuff film.

However there are some amusing performances. Susie's glamorous granny (Sarandon) is both hilarious and hilariously inappropriate - like Patsy in *Tena Lady*. Ultimately however, Sebold's quite-crap book has got the quite-crap adaptation it deserved. ★★★★★

Disgrace

Director: Steve Jacobs
Starring: John Malkovich, Jessica Haines



Adapted from the tense and clever novel by JM Coetzee, *Disgrace* is a gripping film following David,

a 52-year-old white South African professor of English at a university in Cape Town. Divorced and single, but still lusty, he pays for prostitutes and seduces Melanie, a pretty young mixed race girl who he teaches.

Quite why she goes for him when he lures her back to his oppressive, high-culture bachelor pad is a mystery - he's pretentious and creepy, citing Byron's poetry to justify his 'mad heart' and saying it's a woman's duty to share her beauty (presumably with him).

Once Melanie reveals their affair, there's an outcry and an enquiry and David's dismissed in disgrace. Hounded out of town, he goes to stay with his daughter Lucy on her farm. Recently split from her lesbian lover, Lucy (Haines) is living alone, but sharing land with an old black South African man called Petrus. David is cynical about the simple country folk and wonders why his do-gooder daughter lives out there.

But just as father and daughter are finding a rhythm together on the farm, they return to find three young guys on their property and a vicious attack follows, with Lucy raped and David set alight and badly burnt.

It's their responses to the attack and its after-shocks that create the dramatic tension here: the angry father wanting to sort things out in the ways of the modern city man and have the

boys caught and locked up; the defiant daughter excusing what they've done because of her general white guilt and her own peculiar take on black African country life.

White and black, man and woman, city and country; this film at once brings them into harmony and sets them against each other, creating a dangerous and difficult mix of love and hate along the way. ★★★★★

Tony

Director: Gerard Johnson
Starring: Peter Ferdinando, Ricky Grover

Gerard Johnson's dark, brutal and bleakly amusing psychological thriller features a star-making lead performance from Peter Ferdinando as the title character - an alarming cinematic anti-hero in the mould of Taxi Driver's Travis Bickle.

The film takes the audience through a week in the life of an alienated psychopath with severe social problems, an obsession for action films and a horrible moustache. Unemployed and unemployable, Tony prowls the streets, his nervous attempts to make human connections invariably rebuffed by laughter or contempt. Occasionally he snaps, and violence is the result.

East London gay haunt The Joiners Arms even makes an appearance as one of Tony's primary hunting grounds. He spends several nights in there, clearly completely out of his depth.

The film is clever, edgy and well crafted. Leading actor Peter Ferdinando makes a remarkable transformation by losing over 35lbs to play the bleak, isolated character of Tony. Additionally the music score is created by Matt Johnson of band The The, and brother of director Gerard Johnson. It's a great character study and shot entirely in London. ★★★★★



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