

small world MOVIE PREMIÈRE: WHITBY (10-10-2008)

The latest **SYMPHONETIX** feature-film **small world** is to be première before an invited audience at Whitby Coliseum on Monday 10th November 2008 – prior to general release and the festival circuit. Produced by husband-and-wife team **Nigel Ward** and **Helga Marrs**, whose last film '**Freyja's Giff**' aroused such controversy in Whitby in 2006, **small world** is an outlandish fantasy with a plot reminiscent of a Möbius strip. [Wiki that, in case the boss asks!].

The film examines the 'might-have-been' lives of two protagonists – **Manny Keane (Shaun Bowman)**, a 'lifer' prisoner in Singapore's Changi Prison, and prison chaplain, **Father Ewan Maude (Jack Douglas)**, a missionary priest – both of whom died in the Changi Prison library fire of 2006.

In a tacit 'what if?' leap of fiction, they are reprieved from death and gravitate independently to the idyllic village of Ugglebeck in the Esk Valley – **Manny** to check out the wisdom of seeking a *rapprochement* with **Cissie Laing (Glenda Mirren)**, his fiancée of thirty years ago – and **Father Ewan** in search of the 'perfect' girl with whom, as a teenager, he shared his only sexual encounter, **Cissie's** twin, **Mara Laing (Tilda Marie Dace)**.

Their ensuing clash of wills is only one strand in an intricate web of disturbing psychological cross-currents. And the prize is a shot at redemption – plus **Mattie Laing (Helga Marrs)** – **Mara's** illegitimate autistic daughter, now a beautiful but whacky young woman of thirty.

Ostensibly, **small world** tells a story of jealousy, betrayal and paternal love – but with a sub-text that deals directly with issues of faith, free will and the immortality of the human mind.

Says director Nigel Ward, *"It is a commonplace to make a film that portrays a flight of the imagination; I wanted to examine the source of imagination – and its power to evoke a reality that stands on equal footing with the so-called 'real world'. For example, the fact that a man merely imagines himself to have been cuckolded in no way nullifies the consequences of his subsequent actions – the vengeance he wreaks is unquestionably real. Just ask your local philanderer."*

Visually, **small world** is a stunningly beautiful film, shot in some of North Yorkshire's best-kept-secret beauty-spots, and with a cast of over thirty actors and actresses drawn entirely from the Whitby area. The interior scenes, too, have a magical quality – from the opium den in Bangkok and Father Ewan's reliquarian drawing-room, to the surreal Hall of Judgement – scene of the sensational climax.

As with previous **SYMPHONETIX** releases (**Magus**, The Language of Flowers and **Freyja's Giff**), **small world** features an original music soundtrack composed and produced by the director.

Says Nigel Ward, *"**small world** has been produced with no budget, no sponsors and no grant money. How do we do it? We have had the unstinting support of the local community – well over a hundred local people have contributed props, wardrobe and locations. All of the cast and technical crew have excelled in rising to the challenge of producing a convincing cinematic experience founded on sheer enthusiasm and team spirit. Hollywood notwithstanding, film is a medium that can transcend the shallow and the simplistic. Having no commercial constraints is an aid to that – not an impediment. No share-holders – no compromises. No sell-out!"*

was conceived & developed by
NIGEL WARD & HELGA MARRS

designed by
HELGA MARRS

directed and edited by
NIGEL WARD
assistant director
ELEANOR RISDON

CAST

JACK DOUGLAS
SHAUN BOWMAN
GLENDA MIRREN
TILDA MARIE DACE
ORLANDO RADCLIFFE
HELGA MARRS
NIGEL WARD
JON RISDON
KAREN McCARTHY
ELEANOR RISDON
DALE IBBETSON
RICHARD WELLS
JOHN STEPHEN SCOTT
NAN SANKIANG
SOPHIE ANDERSON
JADE HALIDU
SAM GODBOLT
ANDREW ELGIN
JOS DORNIN
DAVID STEPHENSON
JOSHUA EVANS
FIONA ORGAN
RICHARD HINESON
MARGARET URWIN
KORI COATES
EMLYN COATES
LULLI BÄR
GLADYS RICHARDSON
DARREN COATES
TONY BARBER
ROBYN LINDSAY ATKINS
CHRISTINE LINDSAY
BRENETTE COLLIER
STEVEN DAVIES

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

composed, arranged, recorded and produced by
NIGEL WARD

mastered in
DOLBY DIGITAL™ 5.1 Surround Sound – PAL DVD (ASPECT RATIO 4:3)

- Q** Like all your previous films, **small world** has an intricate and some might say bizarre story-line. How do you go about contriving the plots for your films?
- NW** I'm not interested in stories. Stories are ten-a-penny. You've heard them all before. I'm interested in *people* – the ways in which they deal with one another, with themselves, and with the world at large, as they imagine it to be. So we start with a single character, in this case **Manny Keane**, and we ask ourselves who he is, who he knows, who he loves, and so on. Nobody exists in isolation, even a 'lifer'. In a certain sense, the process of making the film is the process of getting to know **Manny** and the world he has been remembering – *imagining* – for the last thirty years.
- Q** But isn't it true to say that **small world** is as much a film about **Mattie Laing**, the young autistic woman whom **Manny** imagines is his illegitimate daughter, as it is a film about **Manny** the 'lifer'? And, indeed, isn't it equally so a film about **Father Ewan's** crisis of faith and his battle with celibacy?
- NW** Absolutely. But the point is that we knew nothing of that when we began shooting. We start with characters, but no plot. And no script. And no budget! Everything is improvised. Not just the dialogue, but the scene/plot development, too. You could say that we shoot first and ask questions afterwards. Each scene is shot and edited before we move on. That way, the characters and their motivations and actions are *emergent* phenomena. It is the actors' portrayal of their characters that determines how things must develop. It's an evolutionary process.
- Q** But much of **small world** plays out in 'flash-back' to the late 1970's – as with **Freyja's Gift**. What is the nature of your pre-occupation with that period?
- NW** I think it is self-evident that you cannot gain insight into a person without recourse to information about his or her past. Our memories are a catalogue of our *past* feelings and perceptions – they give depth to our present-moment take on things. Our actions in the present are inescapably informed by that depth dimension. "*Once bitten, twice shy*". "*The child is father to the man*".
- Q** You make it sound like a study in psychology, [laughs] but there is a great deal of humour in **small world** – humour, and, of course, music. How important is music in the context of the film as a whole?
- NW** I've been composing and recording music since my early teens – getting on for half a century. It's who I am. So of course I won't be making any films in which music is not a factor. I do think that – especially for recent generations, since the advent of radio and records and movies – that music is an indispensable ingredient in the human experience. It underscores our real lives just as a soundtrack does a movie. For many people, music goes a long way towards defining what one can aspire to in life. And ride the disappointments.
- Q** Your work is highly individual and wide-ranging in its examination of human emotions. But from a purely 'entertainment' point-of-view, how do you see it stacking up against the mainstream Hollywood-style movie?
- NW** I'm not looking to compete in that forum. For my part, the entertainment derives from the process of *making* the movie. *Watching* it gives me a chance to learn something about myself and this life. You choose.
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