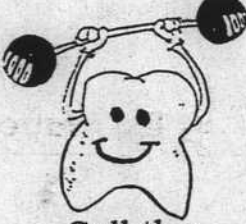




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'Immortal' a feast for the heart

The Facts
Movie: "Immortal Beloved"
Rating: R
Stars: Gary Oldman, Jeroen Krabbé, Isabella Rossellini, Johanna Ter Steege, Valeria Golino
Director: Bernard Rose
Grade: A
Five words: Should get consideration from Academy.

By Matt Woody
Film Critic

One reason is enough to see the movie "Immortal Beloved," and Gary Oldman, who plays Ludwig van Beethoven, is that reason.

Oldman surpasses his top billing as the musical genius, turning in an Oscar-caliber performance. However, the film is much more than its star.

Skillfully directed by Bernard Rose, "Immortal Beloved" tells the story of Beethoven's life, but at the center of it all is the star-crossed romance of the composer and his true love.

The story begins with Beethoven's death. In the settling of affairs, Anton Schindler (Jeroen Krabbé), a friend of Beethoven's and one of the few people who truly understood him, comes across a letter in which the composer bequeaths his music and his estate to his "immortal beloved."

Schindler's quest to find this immortal beloved leads him to two countesses, played by Isabella Rossellini and Valeria Golino.

Numerous flashbacks detail many events in both the composer's personal and professional lives. In one such scene, Beethoven tells Schindler that the power of the music is to bring listeners into the composer's mind, where they are able to understand its meaning.

The film climaxes when the identity of Beethoven's immortal beloved is revealed and explained, and the audience learns what is at the heart of Beethoven's music.

This incredible sequence, which is set at the premiere of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D minor (his "Ode to Joy" Symphony), raises the movie to another level with its superb editing and strong imagery.



Photo courtesy of Columbia Pictures

Gary Oldman stars as Ludwig van Beethoven in "Immortal Beloved."

Director Rose, whose previous features include "Paperhouse" and "Candyman," has made a film that is the realization of a vision. It is stylistically and thematically consistent from beginning to end.

Shot on location in the Czech Republic, "Immortal Beloved" is a feast for the eyes, displaying all the exquisiteness and grandeur of high-society Europe 200 years ago.

Only the music — all Beethoven with one excerpt of Puccini — surpasses the visual artistry of the film.

All the actors fit into their roles well. Rossellini again displays a presence larger than her character. Krabbé is genuine as Beethoven's secretary,

conveying his loyalty with deep earnestness.

But Oldman is the movie's star, and rightly so. He is mesmerizing as the musical genius, showing Beethoven's passion for everything, be it his music, his women or his nephew. He effortlessly relates the frustration the composer felt because of his deafness and the elation he felt from his music.

"Immortal Beloved" is not just a film about Ludwig van Beethoven. It is an elegant, emotionally rich story about the forces at work in the man who revolutionized music.

And it is a must-see.

MUSIC REVIEW

Various Artists
"Clerks"
Miramax Records
Grade: A

The soundtrack to "Clerks" combines dialogue from the movie with alternative music. The combination of the two gives relevance to the songs and greater depth to statements made by the movie's characters.

The soundtrack begins with "Dante's Lament." The main character, Dante, sets the tone with the existential statement "I wasn't even supposed to be here today."

This sentiment evolves in the movie's title track by Love Among Freaks. The song is a funk anthem that expresses Dante's day-to-day attitude and nihilistic outlook.

Dante's co-worker, Randal, tells off a customer right before Alice in Chains' "Got Me Wrong." This song seems to reflect the freedom Randal seeks from the service generation that has become the fate of slacker twentysomethings. Randal seeks his emancipation through defiance, expressed eloquently in Alice in Chains' swan song.

"Randal and Dante on Sex" is a conversation between Randal and Dante about Dante's cheating ex.

That type of relationship is the subject of Bash and Pop's "Making Me Sick," a romping jam that looks back on a self-destructive fling that mirrors Dante's experience.

Dante learns about the death of a former girlfriend in "Social Event of the Season," which segues into "Can't Even Tell" by Soul Asylum. This track expresses the lazy desire for a low-maintenance girlfriend and sums up the introspection with "I may never get what I want."


"Can't Even Tell" is the standout track on this album; it emphasizes many of the movie's themes. Soul Asylum seems to write from Dante's viewpoint and gives him additional depth that the movie did not have time to explore.

That is the beauty of this soundtrack: The characters are given new perspectives through the mixture of the dialogue and the song lyrics. "Clerks" is a step above the recent glut of alternative soundtracks because it focuses on characterization. The songs speak from the viewpoint of the characters and expand their believability. Future soundtracks would do well to emulate the attention to detail that "Clerks" provides.

—Jason Gildow

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