

Film

Florid, Fractured Fairy Tales

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design by Assheton Gorton (whose previous credits included two Richard Lester films and Michelangelo Antonioni's "Blow-Up") is outstanding.

"The Pied Piper" also has echoes of "Ubu Roi" in its outlandish medieval costumes, while the crowd scenes have a Brueghelian density. Not exactly suitable for young children, the movie might be an ergot-fueled version of Ingmar Bergman's "The Seventh Seal" or, as I thought when I caught a rare revival 10 years ago, a Disney version of Albert Camus's wartime allegory, "The Plague."

Released on the bottom half of a double bill with the forgotten sci-fi film "Z.P.G.," "The Pied Piper" was largely ignored — Donovan was no draw — although the left-wing film journal Jump-Cut praised it as a "neo-Marxist fairy tale." France was even less hospitable. Not until late 1975 did "The Pied Piper" find a distributor there, hailed by auteurs as a masterpiece and condemned on the right as counterculture propaganda.

New and Notable

Also on the adult fairy-tale front, Arrow Academy has released a dual Blu-ray/DVD edition of the three films from Mr. Rivette's never-completed quartet, begun in the mid-1970s, that was to be collectively known as "Scenes From a Parallel Life."

In addition to much supplementary material, "The Jacques Rivette Collection" includes two interesting if failed experiments, "Merry-Go-Round," a bizarre buddy film with the Warhol superstar Joe Dallesandro (and Maria Schneider, years after "Last Tango in Paris"), and the female pirate saga "Noroit," starring Geraldine Chaplin, as well as the far more substantial "Duelle."

Exquisitely lit and predicated on cryptic rituals, "Duelle" — which features Bulle Ogier and Juliet Berto as rival goddesses, the sun and the moon, waging war in contemporary Paris — is of a piece with the preceding Rivette fantasies, "Out 1: Spectre" and "Celine and Julie Go Boating." It is a live-action comic-book movie with no special effects beyond its total conviction.

A Small-Screen Battle Over a Big Pig

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cognitive dissonance. "To eat the meat," he said, "you have to ignore the slaughterhouse."

Okja is technically a pig but also shares her lineage with hippos, elephants and manatees, the gentle sea cows that largely inspired her not-very-porcine face. While there are abattoir scenes, and no shortage of heartache, much of the film is madcap and light, and shot through with Mr. Bong's wry humor. The Animal Liberation Front, a Three Stooges-like crew led by Mr. Dano, includes an attenuated young man so anguished about humanity's carbon footprint that he refuses to eat. Ms. Swinton's chief executive spends a good chunk of the film speaking through a mouthful of braces. Mr. Gyllenhaal's bug-eyed zoologist is a certifiable nut.

The story line also hews to a socially conscientious thread that runs through Mr. Bong's previous work. In his 2007 film "The Host," a heavily polluted river yields up a monster. "Snowpiercer," which was based on a graphic novel, is about the last human survivors of a climate change experiment gone catastrophically wrong, living in Dickensian privation on a socially stratified, perpetual-motion train.

Yet Mr. Bong said his intention with "Okja" was not to make a polemic about animal rights: "The main purpose of this film is to be beautiful."

Still, he acknowledged being "very concerned and nervous all the time." He worries that the air he breathes is dirty, he said, and that the water he drinks is polluted, and says all that anxiety might be rooted in childhood kidney problems and chronic throat infections that left him afraid of water and air. "I'm quite fine now," he said.

"Okja" is indeed beautiful; it has been widely likened to the visually luscious work of Hayao Miyazaki, the Japanese anime great whose oeuvre includes "Princess Mononoke." But certain parts are, by design, hard to watch. As research for the film, Mr. Bong visited a slaughterhouse in Colorado, and the smell from the parking lot — hundreds of feet from the plant itself — of blood, death, excrement and animal fear, almost brought him to his knees. He watched the cows waiting their turn to enter the plant and then watched them being slaughtered inside, with every bit of their bodies, including feces — "everything but the squeal," Mr. Bong said — put to another use.



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"There are times where I wanted to inflict certain psychological pain," he said, about the film, "because in reality, that's what the animals go through."

Still, the film stopped short of making its cast and key players outright vegetarians. Mr. Ronson remains a pescatarian, or, as he put it, "a fish and chipocrit." An Seo Hyun, who plays Mija, said shooting the slaughterhouse scenes put her off meat, but she has since picked it back up, albeit with greater awareness about where it comes from. Mr. Dano, who first met Mr. Bong

Top, from left, Tilda Swinton and An Seo Hyun in "Okja," Bong Joon Ho's film about a steely girl and her imperiled giant pig; above, Ms. An in the movie.

years ago, when Mr. Dano was playing in a band and spotted "a large Korean man" dancing around in the audience, said he probably won't stop eating meat but will want to know more about its origins. Ms. Swinton said she's an infrequent carnivore, limiting her intake to wild game caught near her home in the Scottish Highlands. "A very luxury position to be in," she said.

Ms. Swinton, who previously worked with Mr. Bong on "Snowpiercer," said with "Okja," Mr. Bong succeeded at making a highly entertaining film about something that, along with climate change and the like, people would rather not think about.

"The sort of collective amnesia that we're all encouraged to sort of hold hands on, which is not being awake about what we're putting in our bodies, the way we're treating each other, the way we're treating the planet, that's the thing, really," Ms. Swinton said. "The whole idea of sleepwalking into sort of mindless consumerism."

As for Mr. Bong, the trip to the Colorado slaughterhouse made him a vegan for all of two months.

"You know," he said, "South Korea is barbecue paradise."

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