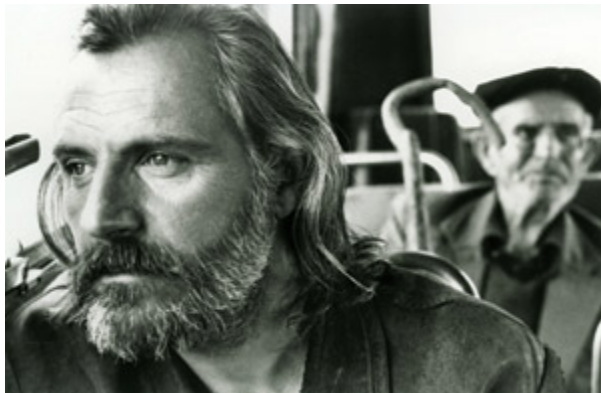




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DVD REVIEWS



DVD REVIEW

BEFORE THE RAIN

ANDREW DOWLER

Before The Rain (Criterion, 1994) D: Milcho Manchevski, w/ Rade Serbedzija, Katrin Cartlidge. Rating: **NNNNN**; DVD package: **NNNNN**

Milcho Manchevski's beautiful and disturbing anti-war movie has no onscreen war and no anti-war polemic. Manchevski is an accomplished visual storyteller. He doesn't make intellectual points, but creates a mood of inevitability through the sustained metaphor of the coming rain and the repetition of small details. A near-perfect but deliberately flawed circular structure suggests that the inevitability may be an illusion.

At first, the film's three stories appear unlinked. In Macedonia, an Albanian girl seeks refuge with a silent monk from pursuing killers. In London, a photo editor encounters senseless violence as she struggles to choose between her staid husband and her photojournalist lover. The lover, burnt out from a bad experience in the Bosnian war, returns to his idyllic Macedonian childhood village only to discover that here, too, war is brewing. This is when Manchevski's stories merge and the movie takes on its complex resonance.

Though Manchevski's view, expressed in a brief statement before the commentary track, is that an artist should make the work and then shut up, he's forthcoming and intelligent in his conversation with scholar Annette Insdorf, who seems slightly awestruck. They discuss the film's structure and reveal the impossibility that makes it more than a mere trick, so you may want to skip the commentary until you've found it yourself. Even if you don't, this is a movie that richly rewards close attention.

Star Rade Serbedzija, who gives a powerful, nuanced performance as the photojournalist, is also highly insightful in his interview.

EXTRAS Director and scholar commentary, Serbedzija interview, making-of doc, on-set footage, isolated soundtrack selections, Manchevski music video, Manchevski photos, critical essay. Widescreen. Macedonian, Albanian, English audio. English subtitles.