

Movie lover at NÖFF: Discovering new favorites

The Rapla Women's Nights film festival came for the sixth time. On this occasion, it took with it the power and strength of women. Every year, the festival itself realizes its power even more.

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The biggest surprise of the sixth NÖFF was filmmaker Charlotte Schiøler, who came to NÖFF from France to present her latest film, but instead experienced the festival from beginning to end. Not to mention, despite my expectations being average, it was her movie that proved to be my new favorite. Quite possibly not just my favorite film of this festival, but overall the one I recommend to others.

However, NÖFF's films are all undeniably good. No matter what genre you prefer, all movie lovers agree that the quality of storytelling is simply so high that it is impossible to see anything bad on the screen. The opening film "Endless Summer Syndrome" was stunning in many ways, but yet hardly will it become anyone's favorite, just because of its horrid plot. However, the film will stay with you, the captivating story and the ending hanging in the air were the topic of conversation on all the days of the festival.

My conversations with Charlotte during the days of the festival and feeling her presence made it clear one can sense herself shining through her film "Maoussi." She does not deny that this is a story inspired by her personal life. A movie in which she also plays one of the main characters. In other words, she plays herself in her own story that she directs. One can not hide from oneself.

When I read the description of "Maoussi," I really couldn't understand at all what kind of movie it could be. A man, a woman and a mouse. Reading it, I assumed it might be well made, but I was unsure if I would like it. However, this movie was just insanely amazing! As always, there is a classic plot - a love story between a man and a woman. Special nuances are brought by cultural differences.

Charlotte herself explained in an interview after the film session that with her film she raised the questions: What is love after all? Does it make love and marriage any less real if one party desperately needs that union?

"Maoussi" does not offer insanely long and complex dialogues. Rather, the thoughts are simply presented and restrained, there is much that you have to read between the lines. At the same time, the story itself is energetic and what seems to contribute the most to the film - utterly positive and life-affirming. Maybe I'm too used to Estonian films with a gloomy approach to life, but "Maoussi" felt like a breath of fresh air.

This warm optimism immediately reminded me of another well-known French movie "1+1" (The Intouchables), which also held the title of my favorite film for a good few years. There, too, the joy of life prevailed. In "Maoussi" there was also similarly love and unforced fun and laughter.

Also, the title character of the movie, a small white laboratory mouse, naturally gave "Maoussi" a little weirdness. Although I was skeptical, the little mouse fit the narrative very well and felt fresh in the story, opening a new perspective.

The transition from a good film to an excellent one happens when a classic theme is portrayed in a way that would allow the viewer to identify with the characters, but at the same time offers an alternative view. It also doesn't hurt if there is an opportunity to laugh with a full heart. "Maoussi" succeeded without a doubt. Now we can only hope that maybe Charlotte will come again soon with a new movie.