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'Truman' examines death with delicateness and elegance

By *Sophie Braccini*

Yes, "Truman" talks about death in the western world in the 21st century, and about emotional responses when confronted with the end of life. The topic is heavy, but director Cesc Gay has created a human and uplifting story out of tragedy, bittersweet, tender and touching. The film talks about our relationship to death, how it strips us of all pretenses, but not of our humanity and of what lies at its core: love.

Tomás is Argentinian and lives in Canada. One early morning we see him kiss his family goodbye and fly to Spain where he pays an unexpected visit to his friend Julián. Both men are middle aged, they have a deep bond from their early years in Buenos Aires, and it is clear that they have not seen each other for a long time. Little by little the spectator understands that Julián is very sick and that Tomás has come for a last visit.

The movie follows the two friends during the few days they are spending together in Madrid where Julián now lives and works as an actor.

Julián also has a big good old dog, Truman. What will become of him? The two men meet different people whose reactions to Julián spell a whole gamut of behaviors. There are those, like his cousin, who refuse to

see him abandon the fight and would want him to give one more chance to an ultimate round of chemo. The young woman is all anger and denial, she does not want to accept what is going on, she feels betrayed and can't deal with the loss.

There are the friends who avoid Julián, those who pretend to care and cast him away without a second thought, and the unexpected former foe who offers compassion with grace.

The movie says a lot about how males deal with such overwhelming emotions. Julián's son for example is surprisingly touching and restrained.

The movie first and foremost contrasts the two men. Tomás, who cannot and does not want to cry and let his emotions out, and Julián who has already been through the different phases of denial and anger and is now accepting, if not anticipating, the inevitable. He is naked and pure in front of his demise, like Vivian Bearing is at the end of the play "WIT" by Margaret Edson. All has been taken away from him, his health, his job, his future, he is even giving away Truman, and all is left is an acceptance, a love, a pure flame. That flame burns those who are afraid of it, it ingratiate those who can face it and simply recognize the dying man for who he is.

The movie features two remarkable actors Ricardo Darán (Julián) and Javier Cámara (Tomás).

"Truman" won five Goyas (Spanish Oscars) when it came out.

"Truman" is part of the international film showcase and will play for a week at the Orinda theater starting on May 19. More information at lamorindatheatres.com.



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