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'Bon Jour Switzerland': a spring comedy opens in Orinda

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

Bon Jour Switzerland is a funny, quirky, and gently ironic Swiss comedy that the International Film Showcase (IFS) is bringing to Lamorinda for a welcome moment of light entertainment.

Switzerland has four languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh (At this time about 60% of Swiss speak German, 22% French, 8% Italian and 1% Romansh). The starting fictional idea of 'Bon Jour Switzerland', is that a charismatic politician is sponsoring a referendum that will make Switzerland a one language country. Each citizen decides to either accept or reject the idea, and votes for which language will be the one. The results are unexpected and send the country in a state of panic: the Swiss have accepted the principle of a one language country and the language chosen is French. The German speaking Swiss are in crisis - some want to rebel while others try to immigrate to Germany, but reluctantly most

start to learn French. The real resistance will come from the Italian speaking part of Switzerland, the Ticino, that threatens to secede from the Federation.

Walter Egli, 56 years old, works for the Federal police force that has to make sure that the language transition goes smoothly. Even if he does not speak much French himself, he is sent to Ticino undercover with a French speaking colleague to neutralize the Italian rebellion. Of course, nothing will go as anticipated.

Director Peter Luisi's unique idea is the opportunity to paint gently ironic portraits of each of the Swiss communities. The French are arrogant, the German are disciplined and fastidious, the Italians are ready to become revolutionaries. The caricatures are funny and never mean -the film looks at the country quirkiness with an amused and affectionate gaze.

'Bon Schurr Ticino' (the original title) nicely presents the unique plurality of Swiss language - where it is not always easy to communicate, but where people manage to understand each other anyway.

Beat Schlatter as Egli is an endearing actor who creates a slightly clumsy and bear-like character that still manages to have a certain charm. His colleague Jonas is played by Vincent Kucholl, a good looking comedian who visibly had a blast playing this second rate James Bond character. And of course this is Switzerland, so the gorgeous scenery adds to the pleasure of watching the movie on the big screen.

As Efi Lubliner, the co-leader of the IFS notes it, it is difficult to find good comedies. This one is never vulgar and does not take itself seriously. It is definitely a light and family-friendly film to simply have a jolly good time at the movies. 'Bon Shurr Ticino' was released in Switzerland in 2023 and was a big success with all of its communities. It will open in Orinda on May 10 for at least a week. Tickets at www.Orindamovies.com

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