



## Monday, December 18, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Dave Kehr | Chicago Tribune | Rated PG-13 | 105 Mins.

Director Tim Burton has designed his strange, funny and powerfully moving "Edward Scissorhands" as a myth or a fairy tale. The narrative is framed as a grandmother's extended response to a child who asks, "Why does it snow?"-and yet the film has the emotional core of something very real, very personal and very painful.

Burton, who achieved a cult following with "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" and "Beetlejuice" and vast commercial success with "Batman," again puts forward a sulky, isolated central character, who lives in self-protective withdrawal until circumstances force him out into the world.

Edward is Johnny Depp, in a complicated black leather getup and great black circles around his eyes that turn him into a silent-movie figure-part Chaplin, part Cesar the Somnambulist from "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." He is a mechanical man, pieced together from rusty gears and wheezing bellows by a kindly gentleman he knows only as the Inventor (Vincent Price, incredibly ancient, fragile and, as Burton photographs him, beautiful).

The film opens much as "Beetlejuice" does, with the camera flying over a model village, a ravishing, lyrical sequence that also gives us the visual and metaphorical layout of the film. We see a model suburban community, each house painted a different Crayola color, an image of a too-perfect order and conformity that is suddenly broken by the unlikely appearance, at the end of a courtyard, by a craggy mountain topped by an immense, crumbling gothic castle. This is Edward's home, where he is found, frightened and huddled in a corner, by an inquisitive and compassionate Avon Lady, Peg Boggs (Dianne Wiest). The boy stirs her pity, the more so when she sees his hands-a tangle of knife- and scissor-blades. The Inventor has died, leaving Edward uncompleted and alone.

Peg brings Edward down to her tidy ranch house below (the extraordinary production design, by Bo Welch, manages to parody a '50s, populuxe decor without itself succumbing to kitsch), where she tries to make him part of her model family-Dad Alan Arkin, decent and monumentally distracted, young son Kevin (Robert Oliveri), who proudly displays Edward at his school's show-and-tell, and well-scrubbed teenage daughter Kim (Winona Ryder, almost unrecognizable as a strawberry blond), who of course finds Edward infinitely weird and wholly repellent.

As the shy, uncertain Edward struggles tragically to find a place in this painfully, even hysterically normal world, the film becomes a fable of growing up different. It could be any difference, though the film, through association and suggestion, makes of Edward's hands an image of homosexuality.

Unable to touch without wounding or inspiring horror, Edward channels his frustrated feelings into creativity; he discovers in stages that those scissorhands work wonders in trimming hedges, poodles and women's hair. He becomes the only kind of artist that a shopping mall culture can accommodate-a hairdresser.

Edward's difference at first makes him a success (there isn't a tree, dog or matron within the film's visual range that Edward hasn't startlingly reshaped) but eventually calls down suspicion and resentment. He spurns the sexual advances of one of the local ladies (Kathy Baker, in a grotesque performance that leaves the film open to some legitimate charges of misogyny), and his crush on the beautiful, unattainable Kim calls down the anger of her boyfriend (Anthony Michael Hall, reborn as a perfect teen thug), who frames Edward for a burglary.

Now suddenly the personification of evil, Edward must be driven from the town, back to his castle. But as he loses the sympathy of the townspeople, he gains the affections of Kim, who has discovered his helplessness and sensitivity.

Burton uses the extreme stylization of "Edward Scissorhands"-a stylization both of imagery and character-to turn what might have been hopelessly maudlin, self-pitying material into something stirring and timeless. Edward's plight has just enough of the grain of the real-in his agony and awkwardness-to be emotionally involving, and just enough abstraction to expand the issue of tolerance and compassion beyond a single, melodramatic case. The direction has a delicate, walking-on-eggs feeling; through poise and balance it avoids the obvious dangers.

Like David Lynch in "Wild at Heart," though to very different ends, Burton has found a way to move through camp to emotional authenticity, to communicate-through a concentration of style and an innocence of regard-a depth and sincerity of feeling that his deliberately (and often, comically) flat characters could not summon on their own.

"Edward Scissorhands" suggests a way out of the impasse of insincerity and cynical manipulation in which American film now finds itself. Burton may not believe in the story he tells, but he believes in the values that lie behind it and the feelings they can stir. (This review was published on December 14, 1990.)

## Pre-Show Organ Concerts Return to After Hours Film Society!



Organist David Rhodes and the Mighty Wurlitzer Organ Concerts returned to the Tivoli stage, thanks to a generous grant from the JCS Arts, Health & Education Fund of DuPage Foundation. David, a beloved member of the After Hours experience, fell victim to post-COVID cutbacks. Attendees voiced their dismay, and After Hours responded with an application to the Visual Arts & Mini-Grant. The message resonated with the JCS Fund decision-makers who agreed to provide funding to reinstate the concerts for one year. The organ lights up 30 minutes before the screening, so come early and enjoy the music!

# RADICAL

Monday, January 8, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Nell Minow | RogerEbert.com | Rated PG-13 | 127 Mins.

"Radical," a Spanish-language movie from Mexico, is based on the true story of an innovative and inspiring teacher in a poor community. Chucho (Daniel Haddad) runs an elementary school in a very poor community with corrupt officials and constant violence from gangs of drug dealers. Sergio (Eugenio Derbez) is the new teacher, brought on at the last minute when a faculty member quit just a day before school started. One of the other teachers scoffs that the only requirement for the faculty is a pulse.

Chucho has all but given up on giving the children a meaningful education because the students walk past yellow crime scene tape and murdered bodies on the way to school, the library's encyclopedia is 30 years old, and the computer lab has been out of service for four years. Most students drop out after sixth grade to help their families or to join gangs. The bored students suffer through lectures, memorization, and busy work.

The school is often derisively referred to as "a place of punishment." As the students line up in their uniforms for the first day of school, Chucho barks at them, "Silence is the foundation of obedience; obedience is the foundation of discipline, and discipline is the foundation of learning." He has no interest in challenging established procedures or authorities. If the funding for the computer lab somehow disappeared and the teachers get early copies of the standardized tests so they can be sure to get bonuses when the students memorize the answers, all he can say to Sergio is, "No one gives a damn what happens here ... don't kick the hornets' nest."

Sergio Juárez Correa's work at the José Urbina López Primary School in Matamoros, Mexico, was the subject of a 2013 Wired Magazine article titled, A Radical Way of Unleashing a Generation of Geniuses. One of the students was on the cover with the headline, "The Next Steve Jobs?" Correa was inspired by the ideas of Sugata Mitra, a British professor of educational technology, who proposed student-led learning, an updated, computer-enabled version of the ideas popularized in the 1960s by Summerhill founder A.S. Neill. "What do you want to learn?" Sergio (as he insists the students refer to him) asks. He encourages them not to worry about grades and not to be afraid of mistakes. "Who wants to be wrong first?"

When they first come to his classroom, the students pause at the door because he has turned the desks upside down and piled them in groups. He calls out to them that they are underwater, the desks

are boats, and the students will drown if they cannot climb on board. But if there are too many people in a boat, it will sink. How can they determine the right number in each boat to save the most people? This makes the students want to learn about flotation, which means math and physics. It leads one student to ponder how we decide who to save when there is not enough room. Sergio tells her she is a philosopher, like John Stuart Mill. Another student, Paloma (Jennifer Trejo), becomes interested in math and astronomy. Sergio tells her she could be an aerospace engineer. Soon, Sergio has the students out on the playground, each a planet orbiting and spinning.



Derbez, always a charismatic screen presence, is at his best interacting with young people, as he did playing the music teacher in "Coda" and the quirky doctor in "Miracles from Heaven." The young actors are exceptionally expressive, particularly Jennifer Trejo as Paloma, the WIRED cover model, a gifted young mathematician who lives with her father next to the garbage dump they glean to support themselves; Mia Fernanda Solis as Lupe, who goes to the college library to check out philosophy books but is forced to drop out of school to care for her baby brother; and Danilo Guardiola as Nico, whose brother has involved him in drug smuggling but who has begun to wish for a life of learning—and a closer relationship with Paloma.

Sergio wants to challenge the school's systems, but most of all, he wants to challenge his sixth graders. He knows that what matters more than memorizing facts is to make them want to learn, to teach them how to learn, and to show them how capable and curious they can be. He does that for Chucho as well.

One of the movie's most meaningful moments is when the two men sit down for a quiet talk. As Sergio and Chucho share the names of the teachers who inspired them, we see Chucho begin to reconnect with what led him to become an educator. If we are lucky, we have at least one teacher in our past who showed us what we are capable of. If not, Sergio can help remind us that it is never too late. In Spanish with English subtitles.

## TIVOLI THEATRE

5021 Highland Avenue | Downers Grove, IL  
630-968-0219 | [www.classiccinemas.com](http://www.classiccinemas.com)  
\$7 After Hours Members | \$11 Non-Members

Please enroll me as a member of **THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY**. This annual membership entitles me to mailings, discounted admissions, and special group benefits.

\$25 Individual     \$45 Family     \$75 Sponsor     \$200 Corporate     \$500 Founder

Make check payable to **THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY** and send to P.O. Box 5266, Wheaton, Illinois 60189.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  New Member     Renewal  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: Preferred: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_  E-Mail Newsletter as a PDF

THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY is a not-for-profit organization. Thank you for your support!

# FREMONT

Monday, January 22, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Tom Laffly | Variety | Not Rated | 91 Mins.

*Babak Jalali's assured black-and-white indie drama strikes a beautiful tone with a deadpan sense of humor, aided by Anaita Wali Zada's quietly poignant performance.*

"The fortune you're looking for is in another cookie," reads one of the many custom fortune cookie messages featured in "Fremont," a lovely, low-budget mood piece with a hypnotically deadpan temperament, which flew largely below the radar at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. While Iranian filmmaker Babak Jalali's easygoing fable-like movie serves up such oracular tidbits in abundance, this one defines his central character best. She is Donya (real-life Afghan refugee Anaita Wali Zada), a lonesome and restless Afghan immigrant working at a family-owned fortune cookie factory in San Francisco by day, and enduring severe insomnia by night, in a Fremont apartment complex that also houses other immigrants from her motherland.



Donya can't sleep for several reasons, though the aforementioned morsel recognizes at least one: What she's looking for in life seems to be elsewhere. It's certainly not in her dead-end job or uncomplicated social life. Still, most of Donya's sleeplessness seems to stem from something far more troubling: survivor's guilt. Once a translator for the American troops back in Kabul, Donya had been able to flee Afghanistan through her post, settling in a country where some don't even know the proper way of addressing her identity and heritage. ("Afghan," she corrects one of those well-meaning but uninformed people who erroneously call her "Afghanistani.")

While her new life isn't necessarily terrible, self-inflected feelings of shame haunt Donya. Does she deserve to find happiness abroad when people are still dying back home? Is she worthy of making connections with good people, much less daring to dream about finding love?

Donya is at least surrounded by nice acquaintances, including various delightful co-workers who make smalltalk about their daydreams to win a million dollars and then invest it all in a community pool. Elsewhere, her neighbors Suleyman and Salim can be trusted for philosophical pep talks at all hours. She's friendly with an amusing waiter at the unpopular restaurant Donya frequents, who tries to hide his affinity for Turkish soap operas. There is also the kindly Chinese couple, Donya's employers, who finally promote the young woman

from wrapping the cookies to writing the messages within. ("People with memories write beautifully," the patriarch wisely and rightly suggests.) And finally, Donya can lean a little on her newfound therapist (Gregg Turkington), a pro-bono dispenser of advice who (in a hilarious scene) relies on the Jack London novel "White Fang" a little too much, to help alleviate his patient's ongoing restlessness.

Shot in misty black-and-white and co-scripted by Jalali and Carolina Cavalli with a straight-faced sense of humor, "Fremont" is a quasi-comedy that strikes a vibe akin to the films of Jim Jarmusch. The biggest achievement of Jalali here is the precise tone that he strikes with his mild-mannered movie: never cutesy (an especially impressive feat considering the film's whimsically Sundance-y premise), and always several feet deeper in its themes and deliberations around human isolation than meets the eye. Communicating with expressively wide-set eyes and the resolute gaze of someone who always knows and observes more than they admit, Zada's performance helps achieve the film's tricky balance, which Jalali aids with smart framing choices and the use of negative space. As the film's wistful lead, Zada gives the minor-key impression of an intriguing personality worth getting to know better and, who knows, maybe even solve the mysteries of the universe together.

In the largely crescendo-free "Fremont," the story's flashiest spike happens when Donya finally decides to use her new power as a fortune cookie writer to send out messages to the world. Her pleas vary from flat-out optimistic and encouraging, to a little desperate, one of which finally gets her in a little trouble with her bosses. But despite the story's overall monotony, Jalali thankfully proves that he knows how to end a film on a note that feels inevitably right. In its final chapter, "Fremont" rewards the viewer with a splendid cameo: Jeremy Allen White (yes, everyone's favorite chef, thanks to "The Bear") appears as a handsome and inquisitive mechanic who's helpful to Donya — and who might turn out to be something more. In its final moments, the potency of "Fremont" sneaks up on you. You go in reluctant and even skeptical, and come out wondering how and why you're moved to tears. The movie is more skeptically understood now, but its stature has never waned. Even its stoutest opponents recognize its quality. "Critics called the movie the best and most sumptuous film ever made about a rock concert," Levon Helm wrote grumpily in his book, "and I suppose that's true."

In English, Dari, and Cantonese with subtitles.



**Watch Now!**  
**2023 Anim8 Virtual Student Film Festival**

Anim8, the After Hours Film Society's 20th Annual Student Film Festival, is available online for viewing! Culled from 64 entries from 14 countries around the world, this special program showcases the top-rated films from students of all ages. Watch from the comfort of your home and celebrate this new wave of cinema! Go to [afterhoursfilmsociety.com/student-film-fest](https://afterhoursfilmsociety.com/student-film-fest) and enjoy.

*Please join us for our thought-provoking post screening discussions!*



Post Office Box 5266  
Wheaton, IL 60189

Phone: 630.534.4528  
Info@afterhoursfilmsociety.com  
www.afterhoursfilmsociety.com

### AFTER HOURS GOES GREEN!

Now you can receive the latest information  
about AHFS events in your email!

If interested, just send an email  
with your name and email address to:

info@afterhoursfilmsociety.com

and say, "Sign me up!"



"A witty comedy of manners that arcs into poignance,  
this is a Christmas movie only a Grinch could hate. . ."  
—Richard Corliss, *Times*

Monday, December 18 at 7:30 pm

"A a crowd-pleaser about an unorthodox teacher  
and his students that actually earns its stand-up-  
and-cheer status."

— Randy Myers, *San Jose Mercury News*

Monday, January 8 at 7:30 pm



"A cross-cultural comedy that explores the freedom  
of being lost and the exhilaration of finding oneself."  
—Mark Olsen, *Los Angeles Times*

Monday, January 22 at 7:30 pm