



Monday, September 25, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Roger Moore | Movie Nation | Not Rated | 105 Mins.

It was raining and she was on her motorcycle. So she stopped and ducked into a Parisian boîte for a drink to wait it out. "L'étoile d'Or," it was called. She noticed the birthday party, the candles-covered cake at the table across the way. The guy the cake was for checked her out, something else she noticed.

Beautiful young women perfected their makeup in the bathroom, their off-the-shoulders dresses drawing the eye. A couple of Chinese coeds sharing her booth took selfies. Then — gunshots, screams, pleas, bodies and blood. "From the moment I saw people die, it's gone," Mia tells anyone who asks. The details of the trauma of that night are lost, unless others who were there can help her reconstruct them.



Alice Winocour's "Revoir Paris" (Paris Memory) is a moving, understated journey into survivor's guilt, a film whose characters keep their big emotions to themselves. Built on a quietly compelling performance by Virginie Efira ("Benedetta," "Elle"), it may be the best depiction of how trauma changes your psyche and your life since the Peter Weir Jeff Bridges/Rosie Perez drama "Fearless."

Months after the mass shooting, Mia is recovering from her physical wound and even asking about plastic surgery on her abdominal scar "to make it go away." It's not just the scar she's talking about.

A Russian translator for French radio, she's been unable to go back to work. A siren, candles, off-the-shoulder dresses, all sorts of things trigger her.

Her longtime love Vincent (Grégoire Colin), an always-on-call doctor, is no comfort. When we learn she moved out of their flat for months after the assault, we're not surprised. They were having dinner earlier and he dashed out for yet another "emergency." He wasn't there.

Vincent doesn't know what to say. Friends and family treat her guardedly, "like I'm some kind of 'attraction.'" Mia is adrift, lost.

But when something draws her back to the re-opened L'étoile d'Or (The Gold Star), she finds some sense of direction. The manager doesn't recognize her, just the haunted look in her eyes. There's a support group "for people like you." It meets there. The restaurant closes for them when they do.

Mia will meet Sara (Maya Sansa), the fellow survivor who organized the group. She will learn about online message boards and group chats for people trying to reconstruct that night in their minds, or to learn about how loved ones spent their last hour.

Teenaged Felicia (Nastya Golubeva Carax), who lost her parents that night, will reach out. So will the now-badly-injured Thomas (Benoît Magimel), the birthday boy who checked Mia out for blowing out his candles.

Not everyone will be glad to see her. But at least, with their help, she'll start to figure out what happened and how she responded to a mass shooting and siege that forever changed her life and the lives of all who survived, and the survivors of those who didn't.

Winocour — "Proxima" and "Augustine" were hers — gently leads us on a sometimes predictable journey into the after-effects of trauma and the "purpose" that turns into a near obsession for Mia.

It's a film without extremes of emotion, a sanguine story told with a French reserve that Hollywood would have to adorn with more flash. It's a mystery. She's tracking down people she remembers from that night and hunches she had going into it.

But there are no explosive moments, just tenderly moving ones — a child in the Orangerie, the last museum her parents visited to see Monet's water lilies, a wife's recognition that something awful that she did not experience with her husband will end her marriage, guilt growing or receding, depending on what one finds out about others and oneself and how each responded to this crisis.

Winocour doesn't waste screen time on the machine-gunning murderer, his motives, the media coverage or therapy sessions that some must have subjected themselves to.

We hear and see testimonials from people Mia meets, and those she never meets, about what they remember about what they did and how they've responded to that nightmare.

And it's all handled with care and great craftsmanship by Winocour and her team — never a slack moment, never feeling rushed, either.

Big scenes are typically what burn themselves into our memories of movies. I remember Jeff Bridges grabbing a tool box, slapping it into Rosie Perez's seatbelted-lap, and driving them into a wall to convince her that no, she couldn't have saved her baby in that airplane crash in 1993's "Fearless."

What I think I'll remember from "Revoir Paris" is the empty feeling that only "knowing" what your memory has lost can fill, and how well-acted and sensitively directed this immersion in coming out of the other side of grief can be.

In French with English subtitles.

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BLUE JEAN

Monday, October 9, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Christopher Machell | Cinevue | Not Rated | 97 Mins.

It is 1988 and Section 28 – the notorious legislative clause that banned teachers from discussing homosexual relationships with students – has just come into effect. Lesbian Tyneside PE teacher Jean (Rosy McEwen) lives in fear of being discovered by her colleagues in Georgia Oakley’s astonishing feature debut, a film about the terror that so many lived – and continue to live – in hiding from the bigotry of the state and society.



Blue Jean opens with our eponymous teacher watches that most mundane staples of 1980s Saturday night culture: Cilla Black’s Blind Date. A symbol if ever there was one of heteronormativity, it’s also notable that Black was herself a champion of Thatcher’s government. It’s incredible how much insight this first, stark image gives into Jean’s inner life. That she is alone, that she has chosen (albeit from the admittedly limited selection of 80s telly) this icon of aspirational heteronormativity speaks already to a deeply unresolved yearning inside her. A life that she wants that isn’t hers, or indeed her. As she dyes her hair blonde – a motif that will be repeated later at a key turning point – Jean hides even when there is no one else to hide from. Later, discussing Blind Date, she will tell her girlfriend, Viv (Kerrie Hayes), that not everything is political. Are you sure about that, Jean?

As she drives to work, signs of the world’s hostility are all around: the radio news reports that Section 28 has recently come into effect. A Tory billboard looms at her from the street shrieking about

“moral values”. Jean impassively turns the radio off, stares straight ahead, but they remain there all the same. It is no exaggeration to say that Oakley has crafted a vision of dystopia: for gay and non-conforming people in Thatcherite Britain, reality exists on two planes: the first is the world of aspiration, family values, buy-your-council-house and City-Boy economics, the second – at least for Jean – is one of terror, suspicion, marginalization and the threat moral and financial ruin.

Victor Seguin’s wonderfully gritty cinematography speaks to a tradition of social realist British dramas that emerged during the 1970s and 80s, many of which focused on working class lives and stories of hardship, redemption and coming of age narratives. There is something of Kes, Gregory’s Girl, Rita, Sue and Bob Too, as well as 2006’s This is England in the mix here, but Blue Jean is its own story, too. All tragic heroes need a flaw and Jean’s is fear: her relationship with the gorgeous, caring Viv is strained to the limit because she is too scared to come out, and fear will ultimately lead someone to a profound betrayal of trust. Yet Blue Jean is fundamentally a hopeful film: knowing that that revolting clause was ultimately (belatedly) quashed, the film neither diminishes nor overplays minor acts of resistance – that horrid Tory poster can later be seen vandalized.

It’s a truism that period fiction is always really about the present. And so it is true about Blue Jean. As the forces of hate and bigotry now mobilized against another group of nonconforming people – transgender and non-binary people – the same ludicrous arguments, nonsense moralizing and pearl clutching are deployed as they were (and often still are) against gay people. The arc of history bends against hate, but not without profound struggle, loss and pain; fear numbs action, convinces us not to move or to protect our allies. It is very easy for straight, cisgender white male writers like this one to say these things: it is harder to act to protect those less able to protect themselves.

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THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

Monday, October 23, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Chase Hutchinson | Collider | Not Rated | 85 Mins.

Morrisa Maltz's road drama takes time for the beauty of the people we find along the way in yet another showcase for a remarkable Lily Gladstone.

What makes a film or, for that matter, a life? Is it the heavy moments of tragedy that we carry with us? The small joys that are sprinkled throughout that keep us going? In writer-director Morrisa Maltz's feature debut *The Unknown Country*, starring Lily Gladstone of the highly anticipated upcoming *Killers of the Flower Moon* from Martin Scorsese and Erica Tremblay's sublime drama *Fancy Dance*, these are the fundamental questions of legacy that are swirling around. An understated yet no less arresting road drama that is interwoven with some documentary elements, it is a work that is overflowing with a subtle authenticity that grows on you until laying you flat. Eschewing more conventional storytelling elements to instead embrace the feeling of roaming the world after everything you have known has been upended, it is a film about the modern American West and all the people that make it home.

At the core of this is Gladstone's Tana. She has just lost her grandmother who she had been caring for up until the very end. Devastated by her death, she hits the road to travel from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Oglala Lakota County, South Dakota after getting an invitation to her cousin's wedding. The moment of celebration coming so close after a loss while Tana is still in mourning is further complicated by the fact that she hasn't been back home in some time. With that weighing on her as she drives her grandmother's Cadillac, we spend the film almost entirely with her from the moment she wakes up before the city has only just begun to come alive through her discovering a poetic personal purpose to her travels. That is, except when we hear small interviews with those she meets. Be it in a diner or a motel, the film slows down to reflect on the people that most other works would merely relegate to the background. Though every destination and person contains a beauty Maltz is delicately attuned to, it is Gladstone who emerges once more as a driving force like no other. She brings a grace to every frame, gently crafting an experience as eternal as it is magnificent. It often recalls the work of the great American filmmaker Kelly Reichardt, who Gladstone worked with on the wonderful 2016 film *Certain Women*, in how it observes without holding our hand. At the same time, it taps into a distinct frequency that becomes a truly unique work all its own.

This all makes for a film that serves as yet another showcase for Gladstone. It isn't that the vision around her is lacking in beauty, with everything from the neon-lit world at night and the vibrancy of a sunrise near the end taking on a rather striking quality, though she makes it into something so much more in every moment. Thousands of words could be written about Gladstone's presence and the way she explores her characters with this still not being enough to capture how she just effortlessly commands a scene. Whether it was in the aforementioned *Fancy Dance* or even a brief appearance in the outstanding series *Reservation Dogs*, she is one of the best working actors out there today for a reason. One conversation she shares with actor Richard Ray Whitman, also of *Reservation Dogs* as well as the 2016 drama *Neither Wolf Nor Dog*, midway through is this in action. For a moment, the emotion bursting through the silence when they first reconnect with each other makes you forget you're watching two actors. Instead, it just feels like two people who

have become overwhelmed with the resonance of the moment and communicate just as much through their eyes as they do their words. It is merely one potent scene of many that we make our way through that Maltz is right to let linger now and again before each is left behind as we continue onwards with Tana.

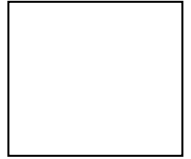
As she does so, we hear the overlapping chatter of the radio that serves as a recurring reminder of the grim reality of living in America today. It isn't heavy-handed even as it makes explicit that there is much to be wary of in the present just as it can often feel like little can be done to change it. This is then made concrete in the interactions Lana has with people who may wish her harm. It is often authentically haunting, like when she is followed from a gas station or by drunken men at an otherwise celebratory occasion, as it starkly captures how even a simple setting can become sinister. It ensures that we aren't given too rosy a picture of the country that could smooth over its ugliness in search of the immense beauty of its landscapes. What makes the film so effective is how Maltz molds it all together.

The rich textures of the land and the people become intertwined, telling a story that looks closely at what other filmmakers might overlook. It does so with a light touch, never falling into the darkness too much, while also remembering that it is always there. As Lana stumbles upon a photo that leads to her going in search of where it was taken, the film settles into a rhythm that proves to be quite arresting. She still meets some new people, including a brief role from a charming Raymond Lee, though it increasingly strips away all the excess noise for something unexpectedly flooring in its final scenes. When accompanied by a spectacular score by Neil Halstead and the group DYAN, it draws you in even more completely.



Building towards an ending that is both rather unexpected yet utterly fitting, the film looks out to the vast horizon just as it does the internal history that its roaming character carries with her. It is the type of conclusion that could fall into being trite in a less subtle work that telegraphed its arrival, but this one thrives because of the gentle way it went about teasing out significant revelations. Gladstone doesn't give some grand speech or proclamation to spell out what it all means, instead letting her resonant performance speak for itself. As the cutting grows more rapid, it is like we are breathing faster and faster in anticipation before one big exhale as we take it all in. Even in the moments where it can feel a little rough around the edges, the portrait being painted is a breathtaking and unrestrained one. It all comes together to ensure that, in the long cinematic history of American road movies, *The Unknown Country* carves out an indelible legacy of its own all the way to its final series of shattering shots.

Please join us for our thought provoking post screening discussions!



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A title card for the film 'Blue Jean' with the title in a large, bold, white, uppercase sans-serif font against a dark, blurred background.

BLUE JEAN

A title card for the film 'The Unknown Country' with the title in a white, uppercase sans-serif font against a dark, blurred background.

THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

"A truly stunning movie. Reveals the
extraordinary authentic humanity in this
country."

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