



## IMAGINING PARADISE

**FW. MURNAU'S INDELIBLE** *Tabu* (1931), a last gasp of the silent era about young lovers cast out of their Polynesian paradise, gets a postcolonial gloss in Portuguese filmmaker (and former film critic) Miguel Gomes's similarly two-part meta-movie. After a mock-ethnographic prologue, Gomes (*Our Beloved Month of August*) flips Murnau's sequence, and his perspective. First, in 35mm, comes "Paradise Lost," in which quiet, religious Pilar (Teresa Madruga) goes to the movies in present-day Lisbon, offers to house Polish backpackers, and otherwise tries to figure out how best to spend her retirement. She takes an interest in elderly neighbor Aurora (Laura Soveral), who suspects her Cape Verdean maid (Isabel Cardoso) of stealing. On her deathbed, Aurora asks Pilar to find an old flame, Gian Luca Ventura (Henrique Espírito Santo), who then recalls their affair on a farm in Africa.

Thus commences the ironically titled "Paradiso," set

on a plantation in an unnamed Portuguese colony in the '60s, where young wife Aurora (Ana Moreira) hangs game while her Italian lover (Carlo Cott) played drums in a Phil Spector cover band. Ventura's memories are in 16mm, with home movies in the era's silent film, Super 8 (filmed with a camera leaking light). Gomes, who narrates as Ventura, borrows a tactic of the transitional era in which movie soundtracks had synchronized sound effects and music but not dialogue. Mouths move, forming words that cannot be recalled over the intervening years. All we are left with are those Brill Building lyrics, as banal and borrowed as a Polish tourist's phrasebook English. Cinema, Ventura recalls, bored Aurora to death, and if in the first half Gomes dares the audience to be bored, the second half is a cinephile's payoff: "People's lives are not like dreams," says the elderly Aurora. But movies are, when they are as haunting as this one.

—ANN LEWINSON @SNFLICER@GMAIL.COM

### +++1/2 TABU

Directed by Miguel Gomes • Written by Miguel Gomes and Mariana Ricardo • With Teresa Madruga, Laura Soveral, Ana Moreira, Carloto Cotta, Isabel Cardoso, and Henrique Espírito Santo

118 minutes  
Adopt Films

Coolidge Corner

+++1/2 BAD BOYS/FURYU SHONEN • One of the fathers of the Japanese New Wave, Susumu Hani followed up a series of documentary shorts with this, his improvisational first feature depicting life in a reform school. Using A. J. Minshew's novel *Wing That Can't Fly* for inspiration, Hani announces his intentions immediately with title cards that are translated to "This is documentary, but the characters and situations are fictitious." In other words, Hani started with no story at all, utilizing non-professional actors and many of them former "delinquents" (social outcasts were common new-wave protagonists, while focusing on one youth, Yukio Yamada, who plays Asai, a fatherless boy whose mother pushes him aside, leaving him to fend for himself). Realizing their old lives, the boys give thoughtful, full-inhabited performances, informed by personal history. Hani's hand-held, vérité approach gives way to biting social criticism at the end, as he thanks those who have defamed... err, reform schools... 88mm • January 19 • BRETT MICHEL

1/2 AHAUNTED HOUSE. This latest Marjorie Wayans vehicle is a send-up of the "found footage" genre, from *Paranormal Activity* to *The Blair Witch Project*. Directed by her brother, Michael Tiddes — makes you chuckle, then is this movie for you! Malcolm (Wayans) is thrilled to have his girlfriend Kisha (Essence Atkins) moving in, until she claims to have brought a ghost along, after making "a deal with the devil" for a pair of Louis Vuittons. "Suffering through a flatulent first night with Kisha, Malcolm proclaims 'A ghost? No, you have a ghost in your pants.' After she's violated by this unseen entity a few scenes later (she enjoys it, of course), you'll hard-pressed to disagree with his assessment. Naturally, he's soon on the receiving end of the same treatment himself — par for the course in a movie that thinks homophobia is the height of hilarity. That, and the image of Wayans taking a fitting metaphor for this film. > 86 • Boston Common + Fenway + Fresh Pond suburbs • Brett Michel

## NOW PLAYING

+++ AKELEAH AND THE BEE • 2007. How do you spell fertility? Ask writer-director Doug Atchison. The etymology of Nicoll Award-winning screenplay can be traced back some six years, in which time spelling bees have gone from abecedarian underground to hot cinematic property, surviving on the wings of Jeffrey Blitz's *Spellbound* and Scott McGehee & David Siegel's *Baraka*. >> NOW PLAYING on p 51

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