



Two Chairs In Print

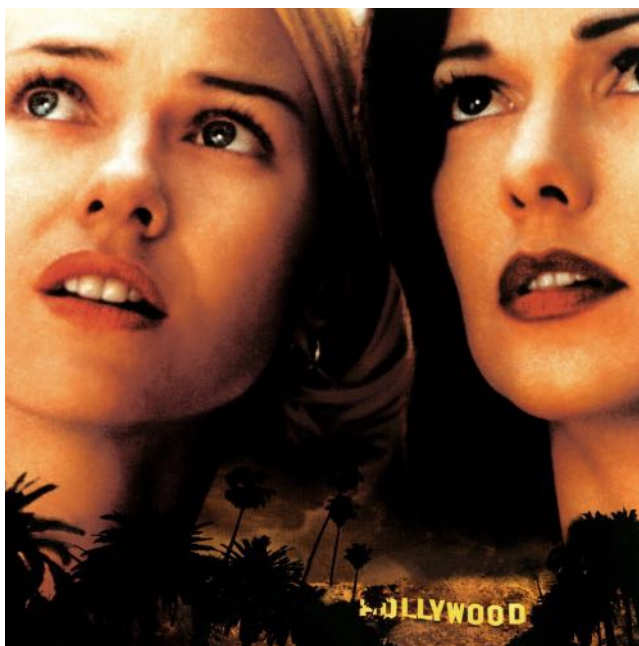


Issue 11
Going South in America



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Season 2 Episode 11, November 25, 2025



Colophon

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the members of the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this publication is produced in Mill Park and Hawthorn, Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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Transcript of Episode 11

Introduction

David:

Hello and welcome to Episode 11 of Season 2 of our podcast *Two Chairs Talking*.

My name is David Grigg and I want to welcome back my world-traveling co-host Perry Middlemiss. Or should I say *Bienvenido di Nuevo*? How long have you been back in Melbourne, Perry, and how long were you away and where have you been?

Perry:

Oh, okay. I was away five weeks, been back two weeks. Basically we went to South America, west and northwest. So bits of Chile, bits of Argentina, and then Peru and Ecuador.

David:

Wow, that sounds fantastic. So you're recovered from jet lag and so on by now?

Perry:

Yeah, it takes about a week to get over it. It was more a matter of being weary rather than sort of physically exhausted, because you can get over the physical exhaustion with a couple of days' sleep, but being weary and just sort of worn out takes you that little bit longer. And it was tiring. And we can get into that a bit later on, David. We can talk about that.

David:

Okay, fine. Well we wanted to talk to Perry and let him tell us about his magnificent trip, but later on after he's done that we're going to talk together about a film. We're going to discuss the movie *Mulholland Drive*, directed by David Lynch, which is a puzzling movie, I think, by anyone's standards. So we'll see what we can make of it later on.

Perry's Trip to South America

David:

Alright, so Perry, so tell us where you went in detail, and were you exhausted because you'd been doing so much mountain climbing?

Perry:

Well, yeah, the whole point about it is that Peru, where we spent the bulk of our time is mainly *up*. There doesn't seem to be any down in the country at all. It just seems to be up.

So we started in Chile because most of the flights from Australia, the direct ones at least, go straight into Santiago, which is the capital of Chile. And that's an interesting place on its own. Very big, much bigger than I thought it was going to be; fairly crowded. We had a really good trip down to the city of Valparaiso, which is the port city, which is about an hour outside of Santiago. That was fantastic.

But really Santiago was just a sort of a stopping point before we went on to doing little bits of extras before we joined up with the tour that we were going on.

And the first piece we did was to take a bus over the Andes from Santiago to Mendoza. Mendoza is on the far western side of Argentina, right up on the Argentinian side of the Andes. The bus takes about eight hours. The crossing at the top is around about 3,500 meters, but you do actually go a little bit higher than that. And it's very, very interesting on the Chilean side because, as you know, the Andes is being formed by the Pacific plate pushing in underneath the South American plate and pushing the Andes up. So it's all coming in from the west and pushing towards the east. So the Chilean side's very steep. The Argentinian side is long and slow. That was much less dramatic going into Mendoza. But we wanted to have a look at Mendoza, which is the second city of well, one of the big, big cities of Argentina. and specifically one of the wine capitals of Argentina. And you know I'm a bit of a fan of the old red wine. We had some very good wine tastings here and some good steak. which was excellent, excellent stuff. But basically our whole plan for this was to do a little bit of traveling that we wanted to have a look at a couple of places first, and then join a tour which was looking at the whole of Peru. And then going into Ecuador to go to the Galapagos Islands.

So we got to Peru, got into Lima. Now, Lima is something else, David. Well, Peru's really a very interesting place. It's split into three major regions, really long strips. The first one's the coastal one, which is all the way down the coast of the Pacific. It just doesn't rain. It just doesn't rain at all. There's nothing. And then you've got the mountainous areas where all the major sites are, and then a little bit further beyond that you have the Amazonian area. That's a little bit warmer, a little bit more tropical, and it's where the Amazon River starts and flows all the way right through to the Atlantic over on the east coast of South America. So we were looking at all three different parts of Peru, but the coastal area is, as I said, just completely and utterly dry.

Lima has the third worst traffic in the world behind Cairo and Delhi. Well, I've been to both Cairo and Delhi, and I can tell you their traffic is pretty bad. Delhi in particular. But Lima, it takes a long time to get from one place to another in Lima by a car. Anyway, interesting stuff. Fantastic food in Lima. It's got an absolutely stunning food scene. A lot of Japanese chefs have moved down there because some things are a lot cheaper. And there's a very large Japanese community in Peru. And so combining the Japanese cuisine in with the South American stuff has really sort of kicked it off. And it's wonderful, wonderful stuff down there.

Went and had a look at the Nazca Lines. That was rather interesting. We had to take a flight because you fly over the top of it to have a bit of a look. And you go from the nearest airport, which is at Paracas, which is about a three, four-hour drive south of Lima. So you fly from Paracas over to the Nazca Lines for about an hour and then you fly for about three quarters of an hour over the lines and then fly back again. The problem you've got with this, David, is that it's a smallish plane, ten or twelve people.

It is very, very loud, of course, because there's not much sound insulation between you and the single engine at the front of the plane.

And I was sitting right up behind the co-pilot, so it was very, very noisy. And in order for the pilot to make sure that everybody gets a good view of the Lines he was rather acrobatic in the way that he would go around over the top of them and then do a tight turn to put it at not quite 90 degrees, but about 75. And he was sort of throwing it around a little bit. I think, of the 10 people on the plane, at least



four of them were vomiting for quite a period of time. Luckily enough, I'm one of those people that don't seem to have that problem. So I was okay.

It was interesting to look at, but it's incredibly, incredibly dry. You can understand why it was easy for the indigenous peoples there to scrape the top layer of soil off and expose the underneath. And then just nothing changes. A little bit of wind comes up and blows a bit of dust in there, but that's about it. There's no rain ever. It's just well, it is just astounding. It's just quite peculiar that it is as dry as it is.

But anyway, after that it was really a matter of getting back to Lima and then moving up to higher altitudes. We went to a place called Arequipa first off which is at about I think it's about twenty four hundred meters. And they did it very well because we were there for a couple of days, so it got you a little bit acclimatised to the altitude. But I hadn't realized exactly how much it impacts you when you're up that high. It's not so much a matter of feeling short of breath all the time, when you're walking on the flat, it seems to be okay, it's just that you have to slow down. You can really only do your walking at about half pace. But when you start going upstairs, and you might think, well, you know, by this stage I'm getting a bit fitter and can easily walk up two or three flights of stairs. You get up the top of the first flight and you go, "Oh, I think I better have a stop here". And then you get up the next one, I better have another stop for a little while, get my breath back. You're down to 70% of the amount of oxygen in the air at I think about 3,000 meters, and then it just goes down faster and faster, of course, as you get up higher than that. But I made a joke on one of my posts on Facebook that it is a bit tiring, and when you bend down to do your shoelaces up, you need to lie down for 10 minutes.

Well, it wasn't quite like that, but you really sort of bend over. If you bend over quickly, do your shoelaces up, then get back up quickly, you sit there and you think, oh, I feel a bit woozy here. I better just take it easy, stop and just sit here for



a few minutes and then off you go. But you wake up with headaches every morning. It's very dehydrating. You need to drink a huge amount of water. And of course, all the water in Peru and Ecuador, you can't drink the water out of the taps. Their filtration systems don't work all that well, and they get a lot of that from runoff off the mountains, which is basically, especially in the big cities like Lima, it's the only place they can get their water because there is no rain. And I know that sounds weird, but there just is no rain. You might get a little bit of heavy mist and a bit of fog every now and again, but that's only going to give you minuscule amounts on any one day. You just basically don't get any rain.

So after that, it was going up towards Cusco, which is at thirty four hundred meters, so they're gradually building you up higher and higher. And as you go across Peru, there are occasions when we actually got to 4,900 metres at one point, where you cross over the top of a set of mountains. Well, they're not really mountains there. They're sort of flattened hills, but the mountains are over there. And those mountains with the snow on top are the 7,500 or 7,000 metres. So you don't go into any of those, which is good. And then through to the Sacred Valley, going to have a look at Machu Picchu, which was stunning. One of those places I'm really glad I've seen, but I'm pretty certain I'll never go back because it's just too difficult to get up there and basically spend that amount of time at high altitude. Really wears you out. And you get to the point where, well, I'm 70 now, so I've really got to think that I can't do this anymore. This was one of the tough ones, so we had to get it out of the way, if you like, and go and have a look at it now. I reckon in three or four years' time I wouldn't have gone at all. I wouldn't advise going unless you're fit.

David:

It's probably out of my league at [an age of] 74.

Perry:

But even some of the fit people were struggling. We weren't the fittest, of course, but there were some very fit people there and they were struggling. But attitude sickness can clobber you at any time, and you've just got absolutely no idea. And you don't know whether it's going to impact you or not. So you can be fit, young, and you get to a certain attitude, bang, it just hits you. And when it does, it can be very, very dangerous. And you need to basically get down pretty quickly. So the guides are pretty good. They keep an eye on you. They keep asking you how you're feeling, how you're going. "If you have any symptoms at all that you don't like, if you're not feeling well, you have to tell me. I can give you some oxygen." So, what we were doing is we were taking paracetamol tablets every morning to get over the headaches. That we first got there that was enough. But then also drinking a lot of water and also electrolytes as well. The difficulty is because you're moving so much water through your body, you're flushing a lot of electrolytes out.

You need to replace those.

And I know my wife was having a bit of trouble for one. She was getting really bad headaches one day, and we got her on to the electrolytes, and within an hour she felt a lot better. And then we just kept on giving her that sort of stuff, which was good. And then after we finished with Peru, we continued on to the second part of the trip, and we went over to the Galapagos Islands.

David:

That would be interesting.

Perry:

Which is very, very interesting in fact. If you want to get a good idea about what the Galapagos Islands is like, because we looked at it before we left and we've just watched again since we got back, is a three-part David Attenborough documentary about the Galapagos, and that's on ABC TV here in Australia.

That's very worthwhile watching and gives you a good history of the islands, how they came to be, why there's so much animal and plant and insect diversity there. And also gives you details about how the animals actually got there in the first place, which is rather interesting. And the fact that the reason why there's such a lot of diversity around is that there aren't any predators. The only predator that's floating around is man, who just about wiped out the land tortoises. But luckily enough, the conservationists and the conservation movement got going. So it's basically rescuing them. There are not as many as there were when man first arrived back in the 1500s. But there's a lot of effort being done to ensure that all of the different tortoise species carry on. And so there's breeding programs going on. There's a lot of work being done, a lot of money being invested, and it's all good. From what we saw, all the tourists are pretty good in terms of the wildlife there. You see the sea lions. You're walking down the main streets of the two islands that we were on, and the sea lions are up on the footpaths and on the pavement areas, sunning themselves in the sun. And everybody just walks, everybody just walks around them. You know that they all start moving, so you have to stop and you have to wait for them and then you go around this way and go around that way, because you have to give them a two-metre distance. But everybody seems to do that. Nobody's going up and patting them. They're all sitting there looking at them, taking photos, of course. And you know, the lions are just lying wherever they feel like it. And they just go wherever they want. And people just let them. So it's great.

David:

Yeah, sounds good. Yeah, I mean the Galapagos is one place I certainly like to go. I've read, in fact, I've produced it for [Standard Ebooks](<https://standardebooks.org>). I did Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*. And so of course there's a good deal in that about his observations on the Galapagos, which partly led to his creation of the theory of evolution.

Perry:

Yes, well I did mention to a few people there that while everybody was looking at the tortoises and you can see the differences in the different tortoises from the different islands. They all have different vegetation on the islands, and therefore they need either a different shell or a longer neck to be able to get their neck up higher or lower in terms of what they want to eat. And I was talking to people that yeah, that was part of it. But the major thing that he did was he noticed that the finches that were on the islands had all evolved to have different sized beaks.

David:

Yeah.

Perry:

And that was his major point, that they all had to try and feed from different plants and on different islands. Different seeds and so on, and so therefore they evolved with different sized beaks in order to be able to eat the food. But look, it's a starting place. It's about a two or three flight from the mainland. So you have to fly from the mainland over. And then we flew back again and finished off in

Quito. And Quito is up at 2800 metres. So you go from sea level back up to 2,800 metres again.

Oh, I've got to remember to slow down now. I've got to remember to slow down. Can't walk as fast as I was doing down at sea level. It was interesting that somebody said on the trip, "You have to remember, this is not a holiday, this is a tour". You're here touring around the country to have a look at everything you possibly can. There isn't much time for downtime. You've just got to keep on going. And that's what most of these smallish twenty-four day, three to four week trips are like. You get in, you get going, you go flat out, and at the end of it, you just go bang and collapse. So you collapse onto the plane, come home, sleep for a couple of days, try and basically get yourself back into the swing of things, and then think about where you're going next, David. That's basically it. Yeah, well it was good.

David:

Well, that sounds fantastic. I do envy you.

Perry:

It was one of those... people say it's the "trip of a lifetime". Well, it is because I won't be going back to that part of South America. We're hoping to go over to at some point down the track over to the other side, over to Brazil and so go and see Rio and go and have a look at the falls over there, maybe even get down to Antarctica. But it's not going to be high, it's all going to be down on fairly low levels. I can't see myself going back up to high altitude again, David. I know what to expect now, but it was just, it was pretty high. And we were lucky nobody got really sick there. A few people had, like I said, headaches and so on, but we all sort of made it through and that and that was pretty good. So it worked out. Hmm. Yeah, it was good.

David:

Excellent, excellent.

Discussion

Mulholland Drive, directed by David Lynch

David:

All right, well we're not going to talk about a book this time around because we've been listening to an audiobook in the form of *The Travels of Perry Middlemiss and Wife*. But we're going to talk about a film and we decided we were going to talk about *Mulholland Drive*, which I'd never seen before. And so my first time seeing it was just a couple of weeks ago. So, this is a very strange film, but I understand that David Lynch is well known for making strange films.

So, I need to start by saying that I'd heard of *Mulholland Drive*, but I knew almost nothing about it before I saw it for the first time, other than that it was a David Lynch film and that it starred the Australian actress Naomi Watts. And since I've watched it, I haven't gone looking online for reviews or critical analyses of the movie. So, what I'll say today here will be entirely my own thoughts about it, and of course, whatever Perry has to say about it. The other thing I should say is that I re-watched the film. I often like to watch a film twice when we're going to talk about it on the podcast, and this was certainly helpful. In fact, really, the first time I saw the movie, I really didn't like it at all. I'm sort of sitting there thinking, "what the heck am I watching?" But on a second viewing, it kind of started to make some sort of sense. And now looking back on it, I actually I appreciate it a good deal, I think, now. Anyway, I'll talk about that later.

So, I thought what we'd do is I'd start by trying to give as brief a plot summary of the movie as I can. It's not going to be all that brief, but I'll do my best to make it brief. And then ask Perry what he thinks of the film, and then I'll come in with my own take on it. We'll see. And then we can discuss that between us.

So, what's it about? Okay, so the movie opens with a kind of collage of young people jitterbugging around against a background of jazzy popular music. And over the collage, we start to see the face of Naomi Watts. So this jazzy, jitterbugging sort of thing happening. So I'm sort of feeling that the era that meant to be set in is sometime in the 1950s or early 1960s, maybe.

Perry:

Yeah.

David:

And I think that's confirmed, I think, by the rest of the movie. Yeah.

Perry:

Yep, I think that's about right.

David:

All right, then we switch to the actual action, and it's a view of a car driving through the night along Mulholland Drive, which I take to be a scenic route through the hills above Los Angeles, where I've never been.

Inside the car in the back seat is an elegant young woman with bright red lipstick. And this is a character played by Laura Harring. though I don't know that I've seen her in anything else, to be honest. Anyway, the car pulls to a halt, which obviously surprises this woman, and one of the people in the front seat then points a gun at her and orders her to get out of the car. Before she can do that,

however, there's a car accident. Two cars driven by teenagers hairing along Mulholland Drive in parallel, trying to race each other and one of these cars smashes into the car which has the elegant young woman in it and everybody but her dies in this crash. She finally staggers out of the car with a head injury. She's probably suffering concussion. She looks very bewildered. And she walks away down the slope towards the lights of Los Angeles, where she eventually takes refuge in an apartment on Sunset Boulevard. She sees the occupant who's about to leave on a trip and she manages to sneak into the apartment before the lady locks up.

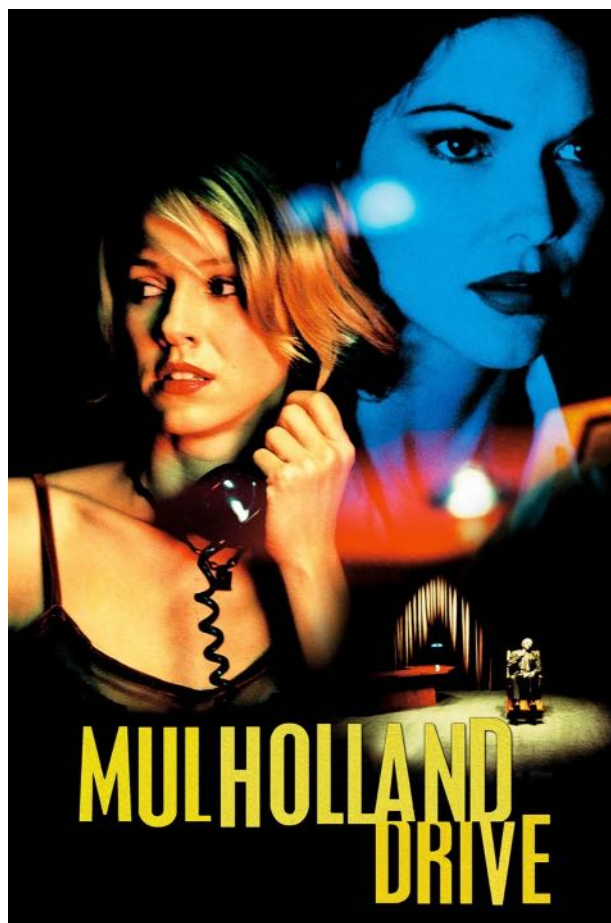
Alright, now we cue the Naomi Watts character, who's called Betty, arriving in Los Angeles where she's hoping to become a movie star, of course. And she comes to the apartment, this same apartment on Sunset Boulevard, which apparently belongs to her aunt and who's given her permission to stay for a while. So she's very startled to find

that this woman in the shower when she gets there. This woman tells Betty that her name is Rita after Rita Hayworth. She sees a poster on the wall of Rita Hayworth. But then she admits to Betty that she's completely lost her memory. She doesn't actually know what her real name is. And basically Betty determines to help Rita recover her memory and find her way home.

Eventually, Rita is able to recall the name of someone that she knows, Diane Selwyn. Could even be her own name. And so Betty helps her look up the address in a phone book and they agree to go and try to talk to this woman. And they do and they find this particular unit or apartment or whatever it is. They knock on the door, there's no answer. So Betty decides to break in. And when they enter this unit, there's a terrible smell, and they soon discover a dead body in the bedroom, and they just run away.

After that, Betty and Rita begin an intense lesbian relationship. One night, Rita recalls some words in Spanish and she leads Betty in the middle of the night to a nightclub which has got a magician and a singer whose song makes the two women break down in tears, kind of inexplicably. As they're about to leave, Betty discovers a strange blue box in her handbag. They return to her aunt's apartment, where Rita has left a blue key which happened to be in her handbag. And it looks like it might open the box. So Rita is about to turn the key when she discovers that Betty has vanished. She turns the key, nevertheless, and then appears to fall into kind of like a black void within this box.

And that's when everything gets turned upside down. Totally turned upside down. We switch to the Naomi Watts character. She's in bed and it looks like she's almost in a drugged sleep. She's really, you know, out of it. And she finally gets





*David Lynch in 1990
Photo by Alan Light*

woken by hammering on the door. She finally staggers out of bed. And we realize that she's in the unit which was owned by this Diane Selwyn, which the two women had visited earlier. The person at the door is a neighbour who wants some stuff back. And she addresses Naomi as "Diane". So then this develops a little bit and the characters now are Diane Selwyn as the Naomi Watts character. And the Rita character is now known as Camilla, and she's a well-known and successful movie actress. But she manages, apparently, she's managing to get little bit parts for her friend Diane. The two still have this lesbian relationship, but Camilla breaks it off with Diane bitterly accusing her of being in love with a film director, a guy called Adam Keshner.

I've skipped a whole lot of details in the front part of the part of the film. I'm nearly done. Anyway, so later there's a scene in where Diane, who's now very much the worse for wear, she looks like she's definitely on drugs or having some sort of mental breakdown, she appears to be paying a hitman to kill Camilla. And after that, Diane just simply goes totally crazy,

and the whole film becomes totally crazy. And that's pretty much where it all ends.

I think I've tried to cover most of the plot points. So there's a whole bunch of other little threads in the first part of the film which I'm not even going to touch for the time being. But that's my plot summary of it. Now, what did you think of the movie, Perry? I'll tell you what I think.

Perry:

Well, to be frank, David, I'd never seen this film before either.

David:

Ah, okay.

Perry:

It's been one of the ones that I desperately wanted to go and see at some point or other, and so that's why I recommended it. I think we can say unequivocally up front, that you should never go into a David Lynch film thinking that you're going to have a standard plot narrative. It is going to be all over the shop. You're going to get sidetracks where he is going to concentrate on a few characters that turn up and they will have whole scenes. Like there's two scenes of two blokes in a diner. One guy's talking about a dream that he had, and he walks out the back and sees the person that he saw in his dream and collapses. But that might be a hint. A lot of the stuff in here, I think, if you can look at it from one particular way, can be taken as being a hint. But if you've ever watched *Twin Peaks* by David Lynch, you'll know pretty much what sort of territory you're getting into here. And I think there are some characters, or some of the actors, from *Twin Peaks* that

might have turned up here because this film dates from 2001. I think the *Twin Peaks* first season was about 10 years earlier.

I did a bit of reading about this after I'd watched it. And the script that Lynch had written was originally intended to be another TV series. But once he had written the script for the pilot, he couldn't get funding for it, but some French people turned up that he knew, looked at it and said, well, if you write it out as a movie, we'll fund it. This is quite a long film, it's two and a half hours. And you have to keep paying attention because there's stuff going on all the time in this that could very well be giving you hints about what is going on.

Now, I reckon there are two ways that you can read this. You've got to forget about the fact that Naomi Watts is playing two particular characters in this. Now, as I said, this is not a standard narrative sequence that you're looking at here. If you look at it as being in two parts, as you said, the first part, which deals with Naomi Watt's character Betty, and Rita, for want of a better name, because you never learn her name. But she's dark haired, she's a brunette. So there are those two in the first half and then you cut to Diane Selwyn, I think that's her name, who is lying in bed, and then it carries on for that piece. I think you could almost say that the second part could be moved to the front of the film. And therefore, you would have a strong narrative if that's the way you want to run it.

David:

Yeah, I agree.

Perry:

That's one option. The other option is that the Diane character lying in bed when we first see her, with somebody banging on the door trying to wake her up, because it's the woman that she swapped apartments with trying to come in and pick up some of the some of the stuff that she's left behind, that the first half of the film is a dream that Diane has had and she's woken up from. You can have take either one of those two, and frankly, you can run an argument for either of them being the correct way. It doesn't matter really, I don't think. I think that the fact that you can take it two completely separate ways shows me that there's been David Lynch has hit something here, in my view. Something actually works in this.

But the first time, as you said, if you just watch it and you go, this isn't all that good. The first 20 minutes of this film, I thought I kept on seeing things wrong with it. You know, Betty's coming in and she's got luggage out there. Then she's walking in and doesn't have it. And then she has it again. And then she closes the door and leaves it outside. What the hell's going on? And then later on, the two of them, Betty and Rita, take a cab to go down to this Diane's place and they turn up with no handbags, nothing. And of course, they're wearing sort of fairly tight fitting clothes, so there's no pockets. And I'm thinking, how did they pay for the cab?

This is the type of thing that actually drags you out of it at some stage. But then Lynch's stuff gets so complicated and so intricate, you forget about a lot of the stuff that's going on and you just carry on with it. But for a little while, I felt some of the acting was really, really forced early on. I thought that it was just overacting.

David:

But you see, I think that's deliberate.

Perry:

Yeah, well, that pushes you towards more of that dream sequence idea, that you know Diane's dreaming this. And yeah, I mean, in the last two-thirds of the film



the acting's fine, absolutely fantastic. So why was I seeing it at the front? It had to be deliberate for that to have happened. But I have to do what you've done and go back and rewatch it again to be able to work out what's going on.

David:

Yeah, I'm really, really glad I saw it twice.

Perry:

Yeah, there are lots of little clues all the way right along in terms of where things fit together and when I was talking about those two guys in the diner and the the guy out the back that scares the hell out of one of them, *he's* actually got the blue box at one point. How did he get that?

How did Betty get the blue box? How did it appear in her handbag, how did that get there?

So there's a real sort of feeling that this is a very much a dream sequence. It's referred to, if you look at the Wikipedia page, as a surrealistic neo-noir.

Now, the "surrealist" always goes with the David Lynch stuff. I mean, as I said, he does not do linear narratives at all, and you shouldn't be expecting that that's going to be the case. Nor should you be expecting that it's going to be easy to understand, as I've pointed out. And I've only got two interpretations. There could be three, four, or five of them, because there's lots of little different threads running through this.

There's a film director played by Justin Theroux, who's in this all the way right through, is in the first part and is in the second part. And you're not sure exactly what sort of part that he's playing, but then you find out that he's intricately involved in it because he's the son of the woman who's running the block of apartments that Betty moves into. And you go "Okay, how'd that work?"

Anyway, as much as it is difficult to follow and difficult to understand, I still came out of it at the end of it, thinking it was very, very interesting. I'm not sure I completely understand it, but that's okay. You don't necessarily have to.

It's interesting that it appears on the list of "A Thousand and One Films You Must Watch Before You Die", that one that I've talked about from time to time. And it also appears on the list of the "Sight and Sound Best Films". *Sight and Sound's* a film magazine, and they did a big survey that they do about every 10 years or so. The last one is in 2022. They do a big survey of all of the major directors and critics and film reviewers around the world and ask them for their top 10, 15, 20 or whatever number of films. And they collate them all together and they work out where all the films fit. This came in number eight.

David:

Okay, that's interesting. Yeah, yeah.

Perry:

That's very high, number eight out of all of the films.

So it's considered to be very influential or very... No, actually, I can't really say it's very, very influential because I don't know anybody else that does anything like this.

David:

Well it's significant, put it that way. It's very significant.

Perry:

Yeah, fairly significant. Okay, let's say it's very, very significant. But it's neo-noirish in the sense that it's sort of like a modern interpretation of those noir-ish films that came through in the 40s and 50s.

David:

It's very reminiscent to me of Alfred Hitchcock.

Perry:

Yeah.

David:

Films like *Spellbound*, *Vertigo*. What's the other one? Or *Psycho*, I guess. There's certainly a feeling of that. Certainly *Spellbound*, if you remember the dream sequence in *Spellbound*.

Perry:

Yeah.

David:

Are you done? Do you want me to give my spin on it?

Perry:

No, go on, keep going.

David:

The other thing I thought when you were talking about the first part of it where the acting is kind of really kind of stilted. When I first saw it, the production quality of the first half seemed to be almost like just a cheap TV quality production.

Perry:

Yeah, yeah.

David:

It seemed really, really poor quality. And I think that's actually again a deliberate thing. So my take on it again after watching it twice, so the second time I really started to appreciate it.

What I think it is, is and you're right, the second half is really the first half, in a way, in that it's either a dream, the first part of it's either a dream or I think a drug-crazed fantasy, by Diane, and that's who is the real, that's her real personality.

I think actually the whole first half is actually like a wish-fulfillment dream. A wish fulfillment dream in that, if you remember towards the end of the whole movie she actually sits down in that diner, the one that features several times. She sits down in that diner and she actually pays a guy. It's pretty clear that she's paying him to kill Camilla. Because of a bitterness about their relationship breaking down, and she attends a party and she's humiliated by in various ways by being at that party. She's obviously the poor sidekick who doesn't really get to the level that this Camilla, glamorous Camilla, does, who's the successful actress.

So I think Diane arranges for Camilla to be killed. And that's actually the sequence at the beginning of the first part of the movie where Camilla's driving along Mullholland Drive, a gun's pointed at her and she's told to get out of the car. But the assassination doesn't work because of this car crash. And I think this is why it's a wish-fulfillment fantasy. Diane is wishing that she hadn't had Camilla killed. And the other part of it is this wish-fulfillment thing of her, as Betty, arriving in Los Angeles, and it's a wonderful place. She's met someone really nice on the plane who's like a mother to her, and she gets into the [apartment]. Everything's wonderful. The apartment's wonderful that she goes to, it's all glorious. And then she meets up with Rita, the Camilla character Rita, who's *lost her memory*. So Camilla no longer has any memory of Diane being you know the sidekick.

So that's my take on it anyway, that it's kind of a wish-fulfillment fantasy after she's actually taken out this hit on Camilla... Well, I don't know, maybe maybe she actually dies in the real world, but not in the fantasy. Remember too, there's that little sequence at the start, in the first part, where this guy turns up in an office and he's chatting to another guy at a desk.

And he eventually shoots this guy.

But the guy at the desk is talking, is joking about some sort of incident where, you know, who could have thought that the car accident would spoil it all? You know, like, so there's that.

Perry:

Okay, I forgot that bit.

David:

That's actually a very funny sequence, by the way, isn't it? That whole thing where he tries to assassinate the guy quietly. With a silencer on his gun and so on. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I won't go into details about it.

The other thing I want to, before I finish talking about it, is I want to talk about the blue key and the blue box. Because when Diane is arranging for this hit to be taken out, he says, I'll leave this blue key on the table to show you that I've done it. Remember that? It's just an ordinary Yale key, not this fancy triangular key that is in the dream, whatever, singles out at the start. So the blue key is actually a sign that he's killed Camilla. And so it's all tied up anyway.



I don't want to go into any more detail, but I sort of kind of appreciate it now after seeing it the second time, thinking through the movie quite a bit over the last few days. And I actually quite *like* it now. I appreciate it. I sort of see why it's considered to be an important movie. Yeah, that's about it. I'm just I'm done.

Perry:

I think that it very definitely is an important movie. Not an easy one to follow and a lot of people are not going to like it. But as I said, you shouldn't ever go into a David Lynch production or just see a David Lynch production assuming that you're going to get a linear narrative because you just are not. And we put up with non-linear narratives in novels. Why can't we have them in films?

David:

Absolutely.

Perry:

You just have to basically stick with it and go with the idea that a lot of people have appreciated this film, and there's got to be a reason why. People, you know, people know if a film's a dud, and they'll tell you it's a dud. But a lot of people are saying that this one's really fantastic. You know, as I said, *Sight and Sound* says it's the eighth best movie ever made. I mean, think about that for something. Now, I don't think it's that high. I mean, I gave it a 4.2 out of 5, I think. But I still think it's really intriguing. It's really really intriguing. Makes you think about it, and if you're still thinking about it a week or so after you watch it, and you said you had to go and watch it a second time, and I'm seriously thinking that if I find time sometime before the end of the year I'll go watch it again. But I want to give myself a little bit of a gap between the two watchings. And you know, I think that if you do that, then you must be thinking that there's something deep here that needs to be eked out.

I believe that Lynch never tried to explain, which is good the film. I'm glad he didn't. I'm glad he didn't come out. Because all the critics, of course, would have come out and sort of said, we don't understand this, what's going on. Well, work it out. Get out of it what you need to. You shouldn't have the person that produced the piece of art getting up there saying, well, this works like this, and this works like that, and this is how this fits together.

David:

No, no, no, that destroys it.

Perry:

Though he did come out, I think, late in his life and said, there are a few things you need to keep an eye on. And some of them I thought, oh I had never thought about that. So, you know, there's a red lampshade that appears on a number of reds. He really likes his red colours, does old David.

David:

The red pillows in *Mulholland Drive*.

Perry:

Yes, there's lots of red in this particular film, but also ashtrays and the key, of course, that sort of stuff that floats around. It's a very, very intriguing film.

I would suggest that if you have time, as I said, it's two and a half hours, and it is a difficult watch in a lot of ways because you don't necessarily know what's going on. But a lot of times here, what you've got to do is you just got to let it flow over the top of you. Wait until you get to the end and then start thinking back over what you've seen over the whole lot. Because there's, as you said, like Hitchcock, there's a lot of clues early on that would lead you to think certain things are happening. Because later on Betty says, is it Betty that says or Diane? Somebody says, "I came here because I'd won a jitterbug contest". Somewhere or other. That's the very first scene. Right at the very beginning.

David:

Ah, yes of course, I hadn't made that connection.

Perry:

You see, now, because we've seen different things in it. So I'm mentioning something, and you go, oh, yeah, okay, that's right. And then that's the, you don't get that in a lot of films. A lot of films, it's like basically here, it goes, it's just all the way. Ticks along, and that's it. And you're presented with a full linear narrative that's completely enclosed. Sometimes I like that. This one, I'm glad I didn't get it.

David:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I think we can both recommend it. Definitely, strongly recommend it.

Perry:

Yep, and I can, um, well if we finish with that, I can actually talk about another film which is currently screening.

What Else We've Been Watching

David:

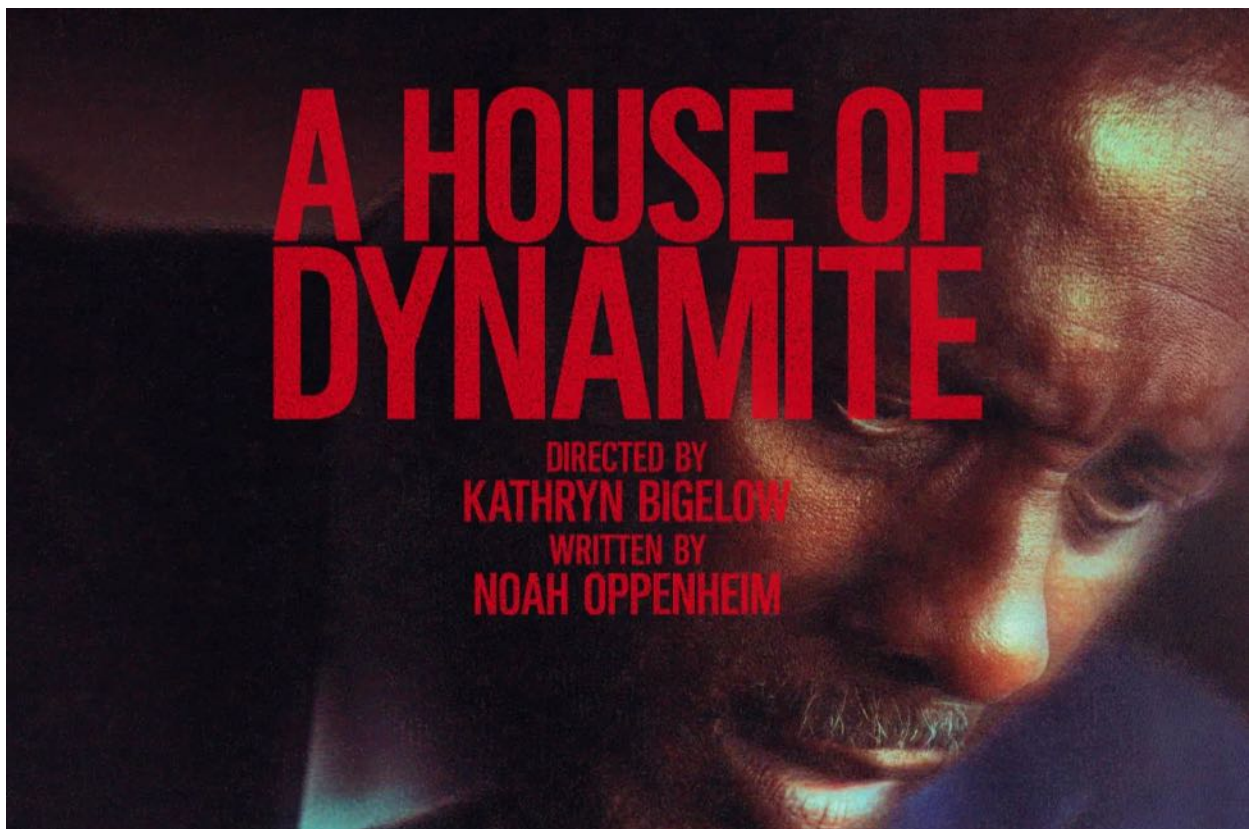
All right, go ahead. Yeah, of course we're going to talk about other things we've been watching.

***A House of Dynamite*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow.**

Perry:

Yeah, that's right. The other things we've seen. Another one which doesn't have a linear narrative, but it's told from a series of different perspectives, is *A House of Dynamite*, Kathryn Bigelow's latest film. Now, you might remember Kathryn Bigelow directed, I think she was the first woman director to win Best Director at the Oscars for *The Hurt Locker*. And she also directed *Zero Dark Thirty*, which was about the hunt for and assassination or capture and assassination of Osama bin Laden. Both excellent films, and both films that show that she has a level of sensitivity for narratives in which a lot of people are under a hell of a lot of stress.

Now, *A House of Dynamite*, which I think is showing on Netflix at the moment, I'd have to check that, but on one of the main screening services. It starts with somebody in an American US early-warning system, noticing that there has been a launch from somewhere. A rocket launch or a missile launch from somewhere in northern Asia, up around Japan, North Korea, northern China, somewhere around that. But they don't know exactly where because, for whatever reason, the satellites missed it. And so they're watching this, thinking that it's probably North Korea just firing something over the top of Japan, putting it into the North Pacific, and so on. But as the film goes along, the people that are tracking it suddenly realize it's going suborbital. Which basically means it's going



to be intercontinental. Okay, so where's it going to hit? Well, it's got a 90% chance it's going to hit somewhere in continental USA. Okay, where? And after a while they track it down that it's actually going to hit in Chicago. So as it's coming up over Alaska, they, the US Air Force, fires a couple of ground-based interceptor missiles, both of which fail. And that's it. They now have no way of being able to stop this thing.

You get to about thirty odd minutes into this particular film, and then the perspective changes, and you go back to the beginning of it again, and you follow another character. Their stories overlap. So the main character of the first one was the woman that's in charge of the response area. The second one, somebody else, the third one, somebody else, the last one is that the President of the United States, and he has to make a decision about what he's going to do. Now the President of the United States here is played by Idris Elba, so of course this is sort of arcing back to Obama in terms of a black African-American president of the United States having to make a decision. And he's sitting in his car and the guy that he's with, who's got the big football, which has got the nuclear launch codes opens it up and pulls out a folder and passes it to him and says, you have to make a decision. What are you talking about? You have to choose a spot that we are going to hit in response. But how do we know where it's from? You have to choose. And you don't ever get an ending to this. It stops before anything happens. So you don't know, you don't really know what's going on all the way right through. But it's quite an excellent little film.

David:

That sounds good.

Perry:

Broken up into four three or four different sections that follows it along. So that's an overlapping narrative, similar sort of way that nothing's completely explained. And so you have to follow along and think about what that is, and then you jump back to the beginning again and you come through. And as you get further down, you're getting more and more information, filling out the whole of the The overall picture about what's happening. Very good. I enjoyed it a lot.

Smoke (Apple TV)

David:

Indeed. Well, I've mostly what I've been watching is TV series of various kinds. A couple of them I'm only halfway through, so I won't really talk much about those. The ones I'm halfway through are *Down Cemetery Road*, which is based on the Mick Herron book, which is actually his debut novel, and terrific series so far called *Pluribus*, which is on Apple TV, which is very good so far.

Perry:

Good, I'll have a look at it.

David:

It's excellent. So I would recommend that. But the one I've completed was a series, again on Apple TV, I think, yeah, Apple TV, called *Smoke*. And it was written by Dennis Lehane, who you might remember as a thriller, American thriller writer.

**Perry:**

Yeah. He wrote *Mystic River* that was made into a film by Clint Eastwood.

David:

And there's no what's the one with Leonardo DiCaprio and *Something Island*, *Skeleton Island* or something?¹ That's another Dennis Lehane book anyway.

Anyway, *Smoke*. It's about this arson investigation. There's two particular characters, one who is actually employed as an arson investigator by the fire department, and that's played by Taron Egerton. And he plays this character, Dave Gudsen, who's the arson investigator. And he's been teamed up with someone from the police, called Michelle Calderone, and she's played by Jurnee Smollett. I'm reading this off the Wikipedia page.

But as the series goes on—I'm going to give away spoilers—as the series goes on Michelle Calderon starts to have suspicions of the arson investigator himself as being possibly an arsonist, and the whole course of the series is about trying to pin these crimes on the Dave Gudsen character, who, as the series goes on, becomes a less and less attractive [person]. It was really excellently done, I thought. And the other thing I should say about it is that absolutely no one in it, absolutely none of the characters in it, is clean. They're all dirty in various ways. They're all either doing things which are illegal or highly unethical or something. None of them has got clean hands. But nevertheless, the real crunch is to try and pin the deal on on this Dave Gudsen character.

I just thought it was excellent And so I can definitely recommend it. And that's again on Apple TV Plus. Actually, Apple TV, they've dropped the plus, that's just Apple TV now. So you don't get it confused with the Apple TV box that you watch you get through or the Apple TV app on your phone.

¹David is thinking of *Shutter Island*

Perry:

Yeah, I wasn't confused about it, but I am now. Well, okay. Well, that was one that I had seen floating around. I think I watched half the first episode. I don't think my wife liked it very much. So I'll go back and have a look at that again.

Deliver Me from Nowhere*, directed by Scott Cooper*Perry:**

Another thing that I've seen in the cinemas recently is the Springsteen bio pic, *Deliver Me from Nowhere*.

David:

I know you're a big Springsteen fan.

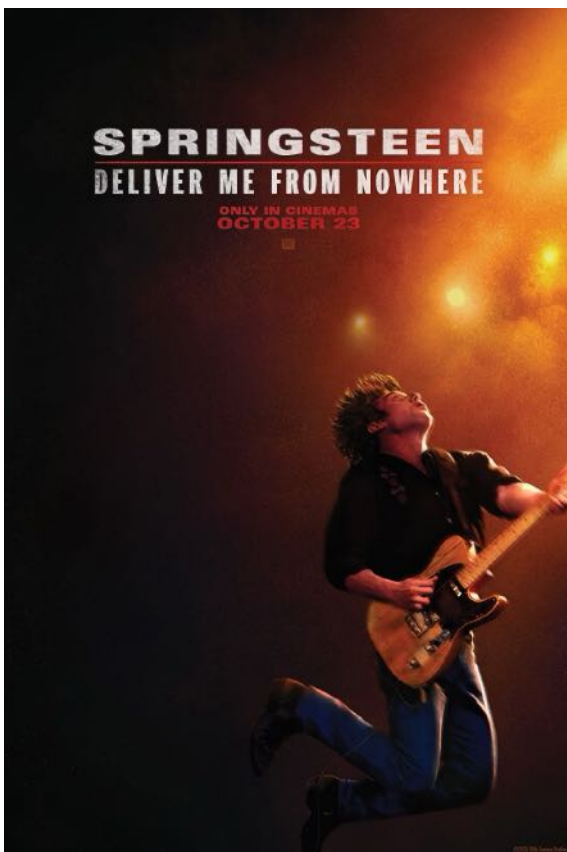
Perry:

Yeah, I am a big Springsteen fan, and I don't know whether that can colour my view about what the film is like. I really enjoyed it. It depicts the time when Springsteen had produced, let me see, five albums. So he's in about the early nineteen eighties. And he's just done a big tour, finished a big tour for *The River*, which is his big double album in the early 1980s. And he's feeling completely, utterly flat and he needs to basically go off and do something else. And he starts getting a little bit obsessed by noirish sort of characters, and he watches *Night of the Hunter*, which is a film starring Robert Mitchum directed by Charles Lawton, the only film that Charles Lawton ever ever directed, oddly enough, but it also is considered to be one of the best films ever made. And he's also been reading a lot of noir short stories by Flannery O'Connor and listening to some fairly deeply depressing music and you can tell that he's struggling at the moment, both with his memories of his parents and his father in particular, who we find out later on

had been undiagnosed schizophrenic, who self-medicated with alcohol. But while his father comes across as being probably violent, doesn't seem to be. There's no depictions of the kid... because there are shots of Springsteen as a young child of about seven or eight. There's no depictions of him being really belted. There's a couple of times when he gets hit by his father because they're doing some boxing training and his father sort of just gives him one. Not so badly that it knocks him out or does anything to him, but it's just that it's there to show that the father was trying the best he could, but he was just completely distant all the time. The father's played by Stephen Graham, the English actor who seems to be in just about everything that I see at the moment. Every now and again you get to this point where you watch stuff and you think, hang on, hang on...

David:

...Where did I see him before?



Perry:

The same guy keeps cropping up all the time.

David:

Yeah, yeah.

Perry:

And everything that I'm watching, and I go back and I'd forgotten he was in that. Oh, yes, he was. So, anyway, so he seems to be in everything at the moment. And so he does a very good job.

Jeremy Allen White is fantastic as Springsteen in the lead role. Now, I have absolutely no idea whether you're going to like this film if you don't like Springsteen's music. I think if you don't like Springsteen music, you might as well just forget it. You're just not going to like it at all. Even if you don't like Springsteen's work, you have to say that he has been around now for fifty years. His early stuff came out, *The Wild, the Innocent and the E Street Shuffle* and *Greetings from Ashbury Park* was nineteen seventy three, nineteen seventy four, fifty years ago, and he's been on the road a lot in that period. I mean, I've probably seen him in concert 10 or 12 times, I guess. And if he comes back next year, I'll go and see him again because I know I'm going to get three, three and a half hours worth of entertainment. And it's going to be absolutely fantastic. But I know that people just don't like his stuff. I can't quite understand that, but you know, a lot of people just don't.

David:

I haven't heard enough of his music to have an opinion one way or the other.

Perry:

But *Nebraska* is very, very sparse. This is the film about the album that he ended up producing in this. And it goes through the process that he went through and also the depressive incident that he had while he was traveling across with a mate over to Los Angeles. And his mate rings up John Landau, his manager, and says, "I can deal with a lot of things, but I can't deal with this. I don't know what to do, and I'm worried about him." And his manager says to Springsteen, "You need to get professional help and you need to get it now". And he arranges it for him, and then two days later, he's in talking to a guy, he walks in, sits down, and bursts into tears. And then it all comes. Ten months later, he's back on the road and is basically got it all figured out. The film's based on a book called *Deliver Me from Nowhere* that was written about this particular period. I really like it, I think it gives a good view of what an artist goes through to actually try and create something, in the face of his record company and everybody else telling him that he shouldn't be doing this because you've got a hit here. Because he'd already written "Born in the USA". Which of course everybody who listens to thinks it's a big, uproarious, fantastic evocation of America, but it's not.

David:

It's not about that, is it?

Perry:

It's not about that at all.

David:

No.

Perry:

It's completely critical. It's basically saying, I was born here, and look what's happened to the place.

David:

Yeah, look how you treated me.

Perry:

It's all just collapsed.

David:

Yeah.

Perry:

And you aren't looking after me, and you should be at least giving me an opportunity. And it's gone. That's what it's all about. But everybody, all I hear is "you're born in the USA".

So. That's certainly one that's very interesting. It's still doing the rounds. I don't think it'll be around very much longer in the cinemas. I think it's probably almost done its run. But if you can get to see it at some point, I'm fairly sure that Jeremy Allen White will get a nomination for best actor. Yes, I would think that probably is going to happen. Stephen Graham might get a nomination for best supporting actor, not sure. Maybe, maybe, maybe not, but there's somebody else I can talk about that probably will. But I thought it was great. I thought I really enjoyed it. Glad I went.

David:

Excellent, excellent. Alright, look, there's a couple other things I could talk about, but I think we've probably been talking for long enough. We've probably bored the listener.

Perry:

Oh, yeah, we have probably.

***The Correspondent*, directed by Kriv Stenders**

Perry:

One more that I want to talk about, which I actually watched, uh, Saturday night, was *The Correspondent*.

Now this is the true story about Peter Greste, who you might recall about ten years ago or so was detained by the Egyptian authorities. He'd been a reporter for Al Jazeera, and the authorities detained him and put him in jail. Well, he was put on trial. Didn't know why, because they wouldn't tell him what the charges were. They put him on trial, couldn't find a lawyer that would represent him. In fact, they had a lawyer, and the lawyer halfway through the trial resigned, basically because



obviously people were putting a lot of pressure on him to not defend this guy. The Egyptian authorities wanted to make an example of him and his other Al Jazeera workmates because they didn't like what Al Jazeera was saying, and that was that they were reporting, um, pretty much exactly what was going on.

And Peter Greste ended up being in jail for about 400 odd days. And frankly, the first time that somebody from the Australian Embassy turns up, it's pretty, it's pretty disgusting. You wouldn't want to be in Greste's position, and this person turns up. It's just awful. She says, "Oh, I've just seen how you are, so I can tell your parents and your friends." "Oh, well, can you help me?" "Well, I'm not allowed to recommend anybody and I can't get you any, um, services." "So what can you do?" And she just looks at him and hands him a boiled lolly and says bye and walks out. That's it. That's it. And you sort of look at it and go, really? Is that all that we did?

It's just oh, a damning indictment of what you can and can't do. I think the Australian government was too scared to sort of push back against the Egyptian Government. But there are times when you have to, when you have to basically just stand up and just say "this isn't right". They did in the end, but it took a hell of a long time to do it. But that's around as well. That's on one of the streaming services again, which one's that one? That's on Netflix as well. So Netflix has got that one and that's worthwhile seeing. Australian film with Richard Roxburgh in the lead role.

David:

Okay. So it sounds like there's a few things on Netflix, and I'm going to have to resubscribe to Netflix if we're going to talk about that film we thought we might talk about next time.

Perry:

Yes, uh, do that. And basically just watch it all a lot for a month and then get rid of it.

David:

Cancel again, yeah.

Perry:

Cancel again. Well, that's part of their model. They're giving you a month for free. Utilize it. And then if you don't like it, drop it, and just open up again sometime later on with a different email address.

David:

Sure.

Perry:

I mean, it's there. Why not?

Next Episode

David:

All right, so are we going to talk about what tell people what we're going to talk about next?

Perry:

Yes, okay. Do you do you do you want to do that? Because I remember the film. I can't quite remember the book now.

David:

I can't remember whether we decided on a book or not.

Perry:

Yeah, we did. We're going to go to the Ned Kelly Award winner for this year.

David:

Oh, that's right, yeah, the winner of the which was called.... I've forgotten... *The Creeper*, that's right, *The Creeper*.

Perry:

Do you remember who it was by remember who it was by?

David:

No, I've got no idea. I have to look it up on the Internet.²

Perry:

Anyway, we're going to be looking at this year's Ned Kelly Award winner. Put it in the show notes. And the film we're going to watch?

David:

Frankenstein, the new *Frankenstein*.

Perry:

Oh, the new *Frankenstein*, yes, I've read some mixed reports about it.

David:

So that should be interesting.

Perry:

I haven't read any major reviews because, again, I don't like reading lots of reviews about it Yeah, but it'd be interesting to have a look at that.

David:

No, I don't like to read reviews and things before I see something. Yeah, yeah.

Perry:

And that's also that is available on Netflix.

David:

Yeah, yeah, that's why that's what we're doing, yeah. Guillermo del Toro is the director, who's done a number of movies which are very interesting.

Perry:

Yeah. He directed *The Shape of Water*, which won the Best Film Oscar a few years back.

David:

Yes, yes, I liked that.

²*The Creeper* is by Margaret Hickey

Perry:

I didn't like it.

David:

You didn't like it.

I liked *The Favourite*. He also did that, I think, is that right? No, I'm wrong.

Perry:

No, that was the Greek director, whose name escapes me.

David:

Okay. Well, I think that's it.

Perry:

Talk to you later.

David:

So we'll we'll see everybody in a month's time.

Perry:

Yep, okay.

David:

It'll be nearly Christmas by then.

Perry:

Crikey!