



FILM: **THE HUNDRED YEAR OLD MAN**

FDG RATING: 3.3 

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Felix Herngren: *Director*

Robert Gustafsson: *Actor: Allan Karlsson*

Based on book (same title) by Swedish author Jonas Jonasson

DATE: April 17, 2016

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: THE HUNDRED YREAR OLD MAN WHO CLIMBED OUT THE WINDOW AND DISAPPEARED

As one of our astute reviewers pointed out, history is often crazy with polemic events happening sometimes by accident, a point comically enacted in this Swedish film, *The Hundred Year Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*. Except for a couple dissidents, our discussion group enjoyed this film and agreed with another resident critic's comment that it was a flawless comedy.

To really appreciate the humor and the *Forrest Gump* personality of the main character (actually more similar to Peter Sellers' character in *Being There*), it helps to know that Sweden was the home of Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite whose subsequent guilt about it led to the Nobel Peace Prize.

And so we meet Allan, a kooky centenarian, who to avoid the birthday party planned in his honor, is climbing out the one story window of his nursing home. (Allan was relocated there after he blew up a coyote with a Molotov cocktail after the creature killed his beloved cat). Through flashbacks of his past hundred years, we learn that Allan has no guilt about using explosives, but rather enjoys blowing things up, simply for the fun of it. It is this inclination for explosives that allows him to inadvertently fall into chance relationships with history's most formidable leaders (Stalin, Franco, Oppenheimer) who have a more malicious political attraction to explosives. Allan seems to meander on a synchronistic path that accidentally places him in the center of pivotal historic events from serving Franco in Spain during the Civil War, joining the Manhattan Project in World War II (solving whatever was stumping them on their atomic bomb tests) to befriending Einstein albeit, Herbert, the fictional brother of Albert.

Director Hamgren describes Allan as a political idiot, whose reminiscent narration with flashbacks guides us through the horrible events of the past century while Allan embarks on his current adventure that includes gaining possession of a briefcase of stolen money, being pursued by a tattooed, leather jacketed motorcycle gang intent on getting back the briefcase of money, and rescuing a circus elephant. Quite a lot of action for a hundred year old guy.

On another level, we see commentary slipping in, such as a stab at the 20th century Eugentics movement (to improve a country's genetic stock) when as a youth, Allan's tendency to use explosives draws the attention of a Doctor specialist who decides that Allan's facial features are similar to a Negro and therefore he would be prone to violence and so must undergo forced sterilization. (Note: In the decades following World War II, some Western countries, among them Sweden and the United States, continued to carry out forced sterilizations.) Eugenics was also one of the horrible movements associated with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. The name of the motorcycle gang criminal cartel is "Never Again", possibly a subliminal reference to the horrors of the last century.

With so much weirdness happening in parallel, some felt that the film was wandering and distracting. One critical reviewer thought the film was clunky with badly timed humor. Others appreciated the off beat, cleverness and unpredictable events. One reviewer commented on the sweet ending. Without a doubt the makeup was amazing transforming Allan from a youth, to an adult, to a wrinkled old man. No wonder the film was nominated for an Oscar in this category. Sheer fun on the one hand and on the other, a possibly more real than imagined look at how history is shaped by accidents and powerful idiots.

A single explosive 5 fizzled out by many more simmering scores resulted in a fired up rating of 3.3 on a scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best).



See you at the movies!

Adriane Dedic, adedic@pacbell.net

Film Discussion Group (FDG) organizer