



FILM: **THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL**

FDG RATING: 3.93



Wes Anderson: *Director, Screen Play*

Ralph Fiennes: *Actor: M. Gustave (Concierge)*

Tony Revolori: *Actor: Zero Moustafa (young lobby boy)*

*Screenplay inspired by the writings of Stefan Zweig*

DATE: March 23, 2014

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **THE GAND BUDAPEST HOTEL**

A mash up of over-the-edge, stylized, somewhat slap stick humor; exaggerated gruesomeness; and theatrically vividly colored dreamesque settings, cinematography, and costumes; The Grand Budapest Hotel told the story of an imagined, extravagantly, upper crust, cultured microcosmic world that was oblivious to the ominous foreboding undercurrent just outside the walls of their fashionable hotel.

A couple of our resident film critics were bored with the theatrical silliness, thought the acting was artificial, the story too farcical, and the cameo roles, by easily recognizable actors, a distraction. (Tilda Swinton, on the other hand, was hardly recognizable and superb in her short role as Madame D.) The majority found the humor very entertaining, while a few didn't like the dark side and thought the dark parts just didn't work.

A strong contingent really appreciated the cleverness of the story telling and how it creatively captured the end of an era with powerful meaning that deeply resonated. Jumping back and forth between frivolity and glimpses of the exaggerated horror and atrocities that actually occurred in the impending war made the film's brutality palatable while, if done realistically, would have been too horrific. (Note the sound of distant bombs on the sound track) The dark parts were done pitch perfect, especially on the part of DeFoe's evil character. In contrast to the earlier view that the celebrity cameos were a distraction, their real-life celebrity status gave even more credence to their role as members of an elite global society of exceptionally capable concierges, who could successfully accomplish any seemingly impossible task including specifically helping the two main characters, M. Gustav and Zero, escape from prison. (Perhaps, an allusion to the underground in various European countries during WWII (local priests played a major part) helping Jews and other minorities escape before being taken by train to concentration camps.)

The film could be appreciated on two levels. First, as an amusing caper with terrific acting and a highly imaginative cinematic style. But more memorably, as an ambitious, creatively serious reflection on the sweeping destruction of war that obliterates not only luxurious life styles and all that those lifestyles create and build, but also destroys literary, artistic, and cultural endeavors along with the human spirit that thrives during those times. And the propensity for society to try and maintain their more than comfortable life style as long as possible while ignoring the impending doom.

*Just a note about the main inspiration for Wes Anderson's film, Austrian writer Stefan Zweig's biography, The World of Yesterday: Zweig (1881-1942) was one of the most acclaimed writers of his time. "The World of Yesterday" was written when he was in flight from the Nazi regime. The approach of the war, the ravaging of Europe by the Nazis, and the persecution of the Jews, deeply disturbed Zweig. Despondent about the fate of Western civilization, he and his wife took their lives while living in Brazil in 1942.*

Our film discussion group gave the film mostly high marks with one resounding 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the best) resulting in a 3.93 which is practically a 4.



*See you at the movies!*

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