

A Useful Life

Cert U Uruguay/Spain 2011 70 mins

Crew

Director Federico Veiroj
Screenplay Federico Veiroj & Gonzalo Delgado
Cinematography/Film Editing Arauco Hernández Holz
Original music composed by Eduardo Fabini

Cast

Jorge Jellinek Jorge
Manuel Martínez Carril Martínez
Paola Venditto Paola

Synopsis

Montevideo, the present. Jorge is a 45 year old film programmer at a city centre cinémathèque.

We follow him as he dutifully goes about his job, and, together with his colleagues, does his best to reverse the decline of the enterprise.

Then the inevitable happens, and Jorge clears his desk.

Down, but not out, he seizes a last opportunity to pursue a long-held desire, and summons the courage to ask Paola, a cinémathèque regular, out on a date.



Today's screening will include two special features from the DVD:

- Deleted scene - Radio Martínez sequence
- Short Film: Primeras Pruebas en la Linterna Mágica

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Reviews

This short, sweet, slow-tempo Uruguayan film invites us into the life of Jorge, a film programmer in downtown Montevideo played by Jorge Jellinek, a critic and cinephile in 'real life' – the question here being: where does cinema end and real life begin? It's a gentle contemporary tale that will appeal to those who frequent our city's more esoteric screening rooms, but the sparse cinemas and creaking equipment are a far cry from the BFI Southbank.

Director Federico Veiroj shoots this paper-thin but tender drama in a grainy black-and-white style with endless nods to the movies that have made up Jorge's life for so many years. When we meet him, times are changing; his job and the very existence of the cinema in which he works are under threat – prescient stuff in the month that Kodak faces possible bankruptcy and New York's Village Voice lays off Jim Hoberman, one of America's most vital film critics.

Dave Calhoun, Time Out, January 2012

The last year has seen nostalgia for cinema's golden age return to the big screen in a big way. JJ Abrams attempted to recreate the joys of bespoke moviemaking with *Super 8*; Martin Scorsese delivered a heartfelt diatribe on film preservation and the joys of cinephilia in *Hugo*; while Michel Hazanavicius has penned a love letter to the silent greats with *The Artist*.

"Yay for cinema!" said 2011. Well, 2012 says its time to wake up and smell the burning nitrate. This heartbreaking monochrome miniature from Uruguayan director Federico Veiroj presents a cinémathèque in Montevideo which, alongside its devoted staff, is being swept away with the dust of time.....

Forged in an ultra-dry, Jarmuschian mould, Veiroj's film is gorgeously bittersweet; on one hand documenting a seismic shift in the culture of cinema, while on the other declaring that the romantic idealism of the movies might just have important, life-saving, real-world applications.

Though *A Useful Life* may hit home hardest with those currently working in the world of film programming, production and presentation, it's not exclusive or elitist about its subject. Celluloid, projectors and taking an obsessive interest in the artistry of framing light on a screen are not long of this world, perhaps, but this film drolly weighs up both the pleasures and frustrations of this antiquated age.

David Jenkins, Little White Lies, January 2012