

THE G.B. WEEKLY

[News](#) [Down to Earth](#) [In Good Taste](#) [At the Movies](#) [Discussion](#) [About Us](#) [Links](#) [Contact Us](#)

[Next Article »](#)

The Insatiable Moon

“Arthur is either the Second Son of God or he’s as mad as a chook – or maybe he’s a bit of both.”

This line, delivered by the stupendous Ian Mune, the alcoholic Norm in *The Insatiable Moon*, gets you where you need to be to engage with this truly excellent film. And you should.

Arthur (Rawiri Paratene) lives in Harbour Lodge, a boarding house in Ponsonby, with a group of men who, like him, have mental health “issues”. The house is run by Bob (Greg Johnson) but not everyone in the newly gentrified suburb approves. Arthur is on a mission to find the Queen of Heaven, and, when he meets Margaret (Sara Wiseman), he believes he’s found her. Because of her marital circumstances, Margaret is particularly susceptible to Arthur’s charisma and they begin a relationship.

These are the bare bones of some of the conflicts and polarities the film presents. Sanity and madness; right and wrong; temporal and spiritual; Māori and Pakeha, comedy and tragedy. *The Insatiable Moon* is too good a film to simply stack up a heap of opposites and tell us which ones to choose to support or invest in. Based on a novel of the same name by Mike Riddell, the film challenges us and offers no simple answers. Riddell’s wife Rosemary directs the film. She is described as being probably the only film director in the world with a daytime job as a district court judge.

The Insatiable Moon is the kind of film that you may find yourself discussing long after it has finished. I had to watch it alone but my solitary state didn’t prevent me from responding quite audibly at times and I will be making a point of watching it again in company. There’s certainly enough in this film to sustain multiple viewings.

There was a time when I approached New Zealand films with dogged loyalty and lowered expectations. *Sleeping Dogs* changed that for me and *The Insatiable Moon* is a kind of mokopuna of that 1977 classic – it tells a story that’s worth the effort, using complex characters who look and sound like people we might know, in a manner that is visually and aurally exciting. Paratene is superb as Arthur. I guess there are many ways to play madness, but the plausible, impassioned, bright-eyed way Paratene chose to render Arthur feels just right to me. It’s no wonder Arthur had the vicar nearly convinced. I was even convinced by the unlikely relationship between Arthur and the lovely Margaret. Wiseman is also wonderful in her role, evoking Margaret’s fear, uncertainty, breathless excitement and vulnerability. There’s not a single clunker in the whole cast. Mune is great - I think he’s getting better with age and that says something. I thought Greg Johnson as Bob really stood out, though. He plays the fabulously foul-mouthed hostel owner with great energy and empathy, never stooping to sentimentalising (or minimising) his tenants’ problems. His telephone conversation with the bureaucrat who is threatening to close him down is a piece of coarse genius. Look for a nice cameo by old muso Ray Woolf too.

The Insatiable Moon was apparently made on a private budget of \$360,000 because the New Zealand Film Commission chose not to fund it. That a work of such quality can be made for so little money is a credit to the ingenuity – and faith - of everyone involved in the project. Associate producer and acclaimed cinematographer Thomas Burstyn (*This Kind of Life*) has a philosophy called “frugal film-making” so he was a wise choice for this low-budget hit. It simply remains for *The Insatiable Moon* to make some serious money. When it does, all that faith will be rewarded. Sara at The Village Theatre says she will keep showing this film as long as the crowds keep coming. Let’s see.....

Neil Wilson

Thursday 14 October 2010

Search Articles

Have Your Say

The Joan Whiting home must be allowed to continue to operate until the integrated facility is ready. (Poll Closed)

[Comments \(0\)](#)

The Joan Whiting home must be allowed to continue to operate until the integrated facility is ready. (Poll Closed)

[Comments \(0\)](#)

[» View discussion or leave a comment](#)

Latest At the Movies Articles

[The Insatiable Moon](#)

“Arthur is either the Second Son of God or he’s...

[I Am Love](#)

If ever there was a film I was supposed to...

[At the Movies: The Concert](#)

“Ah, film reviewing,” you say. “I can do that.” Maybe you...

[At the Movies: Soul Kitchen](#)

Taste is a peculiar thing – especially my taste, I’m...

[At the Movies: The Necessities of Life](#)

Less is considerably more in this deft piece of film-making. It...

[At the Movies: The Necessities of Life](#)

Less is considerably more in this deft piece of film-making. It...

[The Secret in their Eyes](#)

If, like a few people I know, you have a...

[A Single Man](#)

Village Theatre manager Sarah Kay chose *A Single Man* as...

[At the Movies: Winter in Wartime](#)

If you want intelligent, classical film-making with a strong, satisfying...

[At the Movies: Leaving](#)

French director Catherine Corsini’s *Leaving* just didn’t do it for...

[At the Movies: Home By Christmas](#)

“I was born into a world where there were three...

[This Way of Life](#)

Celebrating the day-to-day joys of family and

in particular the...

Nine

This visually spectacular musical directed by Rob Marshall is based...

At the Movies: I'm Not Harry Jensen

Stanley Merse is a true crime writer with a problem....

Mid-August Lunch

After making Gomorrah, a dark, ferocious Italian drama about Mafia...

Previous At the Movies Articles

Month of [October 2010](#)

Month of [September 2010](#)

Month of [August 2010](#)

Month of [July 2010](#)

Month of [June 2010](#)

Month of [May 2010](#)

Month of [April 2010](#)

Month of [March 2010](#)

Month of [February 2010](#)

Month of [January 2010](#)

Month of [December 2009](#)

Month of [November 2009](#)

Month of [October 2009](#)

Month of [September 2009](#)

Month of [August 2009](#)

Month of [July 2009](#)

Month of [June 2009](#)

Month of [May 2009](#)

Month of [April 2009](#)

Month of [March 2009](#)

Month of [February 2009](#)

Month of [January 2009](#)

Month of [December 2008](#)

Month of [November 2008](#)

Month of [October 2008](#)
