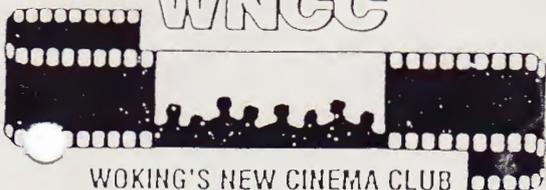


WNCC



WOKING'S NEW CINEMA CLUB



twelve monkeys

USA 1995; Certificate 15
129 minutes.

CREDITS:

Director Terry Gilliam
Photography Roger Pratt
Screenplay David Peoples &
Janet Peoples.
Based upon 'La Jetee' by
Chris Marker.

CAST:

James Cole Bruce Willis
Kathryn Raily Madeline Stowe
Jeffrey Goines Brad Pitt
Dr. Goines Christopher Plummer
Young Cole Joseph Melito
Jose Jon Seda

"The idea was to make a European art movie in Hollywood . . ."

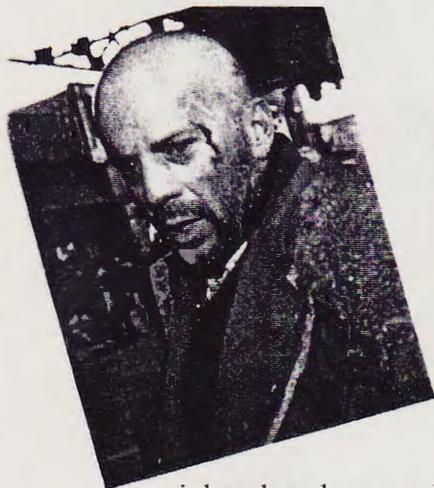
- Terry Gilliam, *Empire Magazine* May 1996

12 Monkeys is a complex time-travel thriller about a convict, James Cole (Bruce Willis), from a desolate 2035, when a killer virus has wiped out most of mankind. He is coerced into travelling back in time to 1996 - just before the epidemic broke out - to discover the source of the virus, not to prevent the cataclysm but for the future's research. Arriving by mistake in 1990, he is diagnosed as a dangerous lunatic and sent to an institution where he befriends another patient, Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt) and is put in the care of Dr Kathryn Raily (Madeline Stowe). Yanked back and forth through time again, he once more meets up with Raily and Goines, who both prove to be crucial players in the events unleashing the virus.

The script is based on Chris Marker's 29 minute 1962 short film/*photo roman*, *La Jetee* (as *The Terminator* had been). Once hailed by former New York film critic Pauline Kael as the best science fiction film ever made, *La Jetee* is set in a gloomy post-holocaust Paris, where scientists with jewels in their foreheads try to reverse the catastrophe by sending the hero back in time. He travels to the 1960s present, capitalising on a strong suppressed childhood memory which can anchor him in the past. This same childhood memory is shared by Willis in *12 Monkeys* and works with sublime effect. The difference between the two films, (apart from the obvious), is the way the two directors attack their source material. Chris Marker took a twisted little science fiction story and came up with an innovative style that gave the film a unique weirdness - although the soundtrack is normal, the visuals do not consist of regular 24 frames-per-second film but of hundreds of beautifully snatched black-and-white still photographs which force the viewer to reassess the way the passage of time is perceived. After 20 minutes of snapshots, the few seconds of regular motion are quite literally shattering.

The script for *12 Monkeys* was written by David and Janet Peoples, who had already given us the unsurpassable *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Unforgiven* (1992). As a science fiction, time-travelling yarn *12 Monkeys* is at once visually stunning and thought provoking. Although dark, there are shards of humour and touches that any film fan can connect with. Willis and Stowe go to the cinema in one scene to change identity and watch *Vertigo* (1958) - itself a film full of ambiguity; Louis Armstrong sings *What a Wonderful World* and Tex Avery cartoons plays on the mental institution's TV.

Terry Gilliam started work on *12 Monkeys* in November 1994, working as a director for hire for Universal, the company that had publically fought (and lost) the 'Battle of *Brazil*'. They had wanted to recut *Brazil* (1985) and reduce its running time. Gilliam had held illegal screenings for the LA Film Critics' Association of his version (seven minutes over the agreed running time), where it won best film and best screenplay. Thus his version was the one released. A butchered version has since been seen on American TV. It begins twenty minutes in and is gutted of its crucial dream sequences. There is also a happy ending and the film is only two thirds its original length. His next effort *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1989), was a multi-million-dollar (\$46 million) débâcle that left its director flat on his face. However, with the benefit of hindsight, the film is a triumph of visuals over substance. *The Fisher King* (1991) was the first film Gilliam made without his own script, and was subsequently a huge hit. It was the film that proved to Hollywood that Gilliam could firstly bring a film in under budget and secondly direct people rather than letting them be



**Bruce Willis and Brad Pitt mix
method and madness in
Terry Gilliam's startling vision
of the future**



peripheral to the overall cinematic experience. Robin Williams received an Academy Award nomination for his pains. Brad Pitt would do the same for *12 Monkeys*, winning a Golden Globe for best supporting actor as well. Both he and Bruce Willis fought for their respective roles. *Interview with a Vampire*, *Legends of the Fall* and *Pulp Fiction* had yet to be released when the contracts were signed, and so the full acting potential of Messrs Pitt and Willis had not been seen by the cinema-going public. Pitt's long hair and all Willis' trademark signs - smirks, wise cracks and dirty T-shirts - disappeared, garnering him with the best reviews of his acting career.

The Hamster Factor and other Tales of Twelve Monkeys, was a documentary commissioned by Gilliam to chart the making of *12 Monkeys*. The title refers to "the Terry Gilliam element" within the film. Everything is in order, and everything is in place and then there is a detail that Gilliam feels he needs to get right before the scene is rapped.

"The hamster factor comes from a scene where we built a little laboratory set and a gas turbine where Willis is drawing his own blood. In that scene there is a hamster in a wheel . . ."

This scene should have taken a couple of minutes to shoot, but the hamster never got in his wheel. Gilliam became obsessed with this until eventually it did (after a whole day's shooting), and thus the hamster factor was born. If the hamster had never performed in the wheel I doubt whether anyone except Mr Gilliam would have noticed.

The two scenes that bought Gilliam to the director's chair of *12 Monkeys* were the same shot. He wanted to open and close the film on the young Cole's eyes. However, the American producer (Charles Roven), felt that the plot lines were not all tied up after the first cut was produced. He wanted an explanation scene within the 747 between the virus carrier and astro-physicist from the future. This would vindicate the death of Cole and hopefully make it clear to the cinema going public that there was no way that the virus would destroy the whole of mankind. The success of this scene is very debatable. However, an extra scene - the airport car-park scene was born out of this same idea and so the film does end on Cole's eyes as Gilliam had originally wanted.

The first test screenings were held in Washington DC. Whilst the film was playing they seemed to love it. It was only when the reaction papers were handed in that the full truth was revealed. The consensus seemed to point to a film that was too confusing and unsatisfactory. After minor cuts the film was released and grossed \$14.2 million - setting a box office record for the first weekend of the year. In the next eight months it would open as the number one film in every country it was released, and by late 1996 would have earned upwards of \$160 million.

Terry Gilliam has since gone on to direct Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas* - a project originally undertaken by Alex Cox before creative differences forced him off the set - starring Johnny Depp. His next project may well be *The Defective Detective*, (but don't hold your breath!), which he wrote with Richard LaGravenese, the scriptwriter of *The Fisher King* a year after that film was completed. Until then, sit back, keep your brain in gear and watch one of the most complex time travelling sagas ever made. It is well worth it . . .

Jonathan Beare

We still urgently require notewriters for many of this season's films, particularly 'Grosse Pointe Blank' and 'Ridicule'. If you fancy having a go, please speak to me and I'll supply you with more background material than you will ever need !

IAN SOWERBY

If you are an insomniac radio listener, I can recommend the new(ish) Radio 4 programme "Talking Pictures", fronted by Russell Davies, which is broadcast on Tuesday evenings from 11:30 pm until midnight.

25 Minutes Of Frame

The inspiration for *12 Monkeys* is *La Jetée*, a 25-minute short which also provided a template for James Cameron's *The Terminator* . . .

ONCE HAILED BY FORMER NEW YORK FILM critic Pauline Kael as the best science-fiction film ever made, *La Jetée* is set in a gloomy post-holocaust Paris, where scientists with jewels in their foreheads try to reverse the catastrophe by sending the hero back in time. He travels to the 1960s present, capitalising on a strong suppressed childhood memory which can anchor him in the past. In a (now predictable) *Twilight Zone*-style ending, it turns out that the mysterious event which drags him back is the murder of his adult self.

Director Chris Marker takes a twisted little science fiction type story and comes up



La Jetée: "Shattering."

with an innovative style that gives the film a unique weirdness — although the soundtrack is normal, the visuals do not consist of regular 24 frames-per-second film but of hundreds of beautifully snatched black-and-white still photographs which force the viewer to reassess the way the passage of time is perceived. After 20 minutes of snapshots, the few seconds of regular motion (an odd expression flitting across a woman's face as the hero dies) are shattering.

KIM NEWMAN

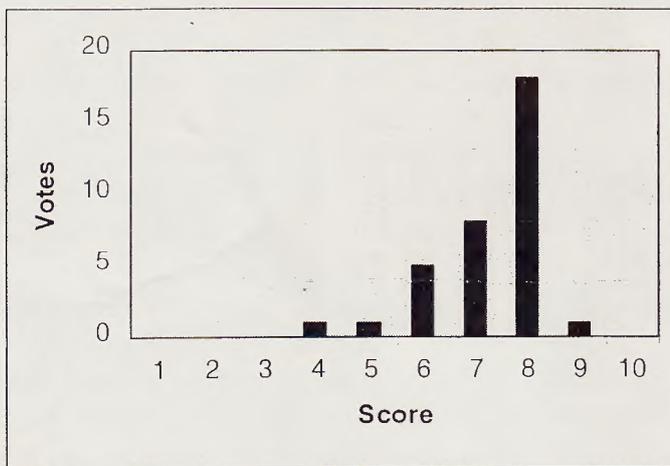
from *EMPIRE* magazine, May 1996

Road to Morocco (10/9/98)

33 reactions, average score 7.52

Comments

- I got the hump over this one!
- Is there anyone who saw it in 1942 who doubted that it would go on and on?
- End too abrupt!
- Great fun – even the camels thought so.
- Loved the viagra slippers!!
- Nostalgic and definately not P.C.
- Brilliant – such timing and tongue in cheek.

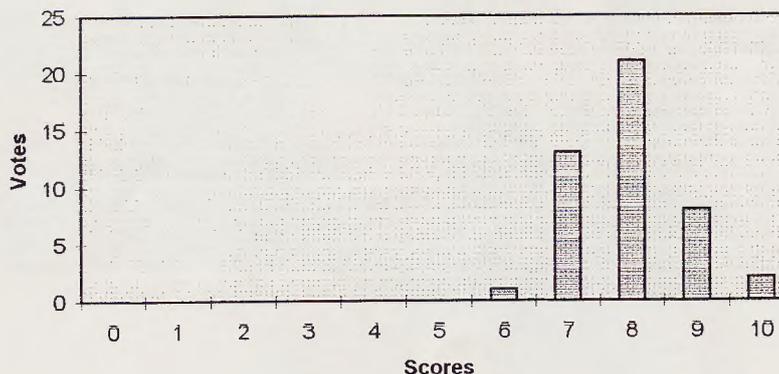


Mrs Brown (24/9/98)

45 reactions, average score 7.93

Comments

- Limited story line.
- A wonderful interplay of character.
- I always enjoy Billy's nude scenes!
- What a lot of travelling they did in those days!!
- Lovely Scottish scenery and wonderful acting.
- A tad cumbersome and probably better on a large screen.
- There's nothing like a Highland fling with Mr Brown to keep a Queen going!



Helen Sayers

22nd October - WNCC supports 'One World Week' with a rare screening of a feature film from Africa:

LETTER FROM MY VILLAGE [tbc], Senegal, 1976. Directed by Safi Faye.

Safi Faye's debut feature is an everyday story of the travails of a farming community attempting to introduce a new crop despite the rigours of the African climate. Set in her own village, using largely non-professional actors, Faye creates an effective and moving social drama with romantic overtones.

Programme ends at 10.10 pm (approx)

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