

The Main Feature



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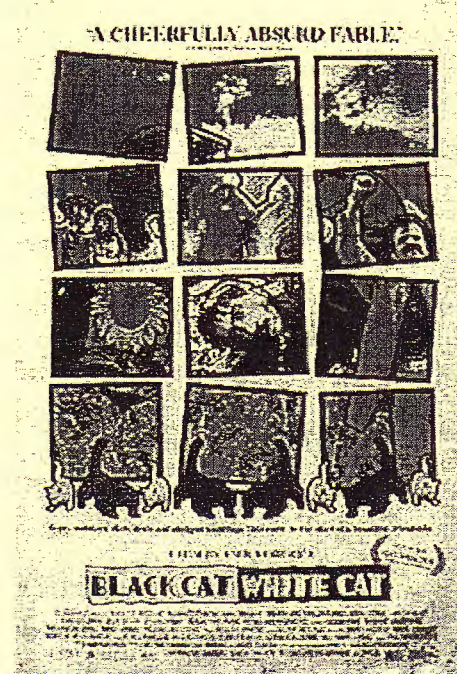
Black Cat, White Cat (Crna macka, beli macor)

Yugoslavia/1998/127 mins

Director Emir Kusturica
Writers Emir Kusturica
Gordan Mihic

Cast

<u>Bajram Severdzan</u>	<u>Matko Destanov</u>
<u>Srdjan Todorovic</u>	<u>Dadan Karambolo</u>
<u>Branka Katic</u>	Ida
<u>Florijan Ajdini</u>	<u>Zare Destanov</u>
<u>Ljubica Adzovic</u>	Sujka
<u>Zabit Memedov</u>	Zarije Destanov
<u>Sabri Sulejmani</u>	Grga Pitic
<u>Jasar Destani</u>	<u>Grga Veliki</u>



One of the most often heard complaints of critics and frequent movie-goers is that too many movies look alike. There's no newness, no sense of discovery, no originality. Films follow safe, comfortable patterns because that's what the studios' research shows that audiences want. Why else would something as idiotic as *Armageddon* be the top-grossing movie of 1998? Perhaps it's true that Americans only want to see a film if they've seen it already. Regardless, there are those who enjoy experiencing something fresh and vibrant, and, for anyone who appreciates that kind of fare, Emir Kusturica's *Black Cat, White Cat* offers a sample.

With all of the horrible things happening in the corner of the world once known as Yugoslavia, it's a pleasant change-of-pace to discover a comedy that transpires there. Set in the heart of a gypsy community, *Black Cat, White Cat* (so named for two animals that make frequent appearances) is a delightfully madcap romp featuring colorful characters, no holds barred humor, and a lively soundtrack. There's almost no political agenda, unless you count the occasional comment about the local discrimination against gypsies.

Matko Destanov (Severdzan Bajram) is a middle-aged con artist who makes his living by scamming people. In the words of one character, Matko is "a swindler, a hoodlum, and a vagabond." There's no doubt that he's an odd sort of person - one of his favorite pastimes is playing poker with himself - and he's not very good at his chosen "profession." More often than not, he ends up losing money, like when he pays for diesel fuel and comes away with drums of colored water. Matko has a 17-year old son, Zare (Florijan), who is in love with a blond waitress, Ida (Branka Katic). After letting Zare pursue her for a while, Ida finally gives in to his advances, just as Matko announces that he has arranged a marriage for his son as a way to pay off a debt to a lunatic business associate. Dadan (Srdjan Todorovic) wants to find a suitable husband for his sister, Afrodita (Salija Ibrahimova), but her short

stature has proven to be a stumbling block. Further complications arise when the son of a local gangster decides that Afrodita is his soul-mate. The ensuing wedding, complete with two deaths, multiple vows, and an outhouse incident that makes the grossest scene in *Lost & Found* look clean by comparison, is an example of choreographed chaos that only an accomplished director could orchestrate. It is easily one of the most bizarre celebrations ever committed to celluloid.

Comparisons with *There's Something About Mary* (perhaps crossed with *Latcho Drom*) are not as unreasonable as they might at first seem. "Normal" characters are at a premium (the only two fitting that bill are Zare and Ida, and they're borderline), misfits are everywhere, and the tone is often frantic. No issue is too somber or sacred for Kusturica to poke fun at, and he is gleefully uncaring about who he offends, as long as the joke gets a laugh. The outhouse incident is a prime example, as is the unique way in which Matko and Dadan join forces to preserve two dead bodies so the wedding can go on. And, on top of everything else, the love story between Zare and Ida is genuinely sweet and touching.

Black Cat, White Cat has an earthy feel to it. Although expertly filmed, it lacks the polished glaze of most big budget features, but that's part of its charm. It's an entirely original comedy - some of the elements are familiar, but, taking things as a whole, I can't recall seeing anything exactly like *Black Cat, White Cat*. That's not to say it's a perfect movie. It suffers from, among other things, one of the most common diseases of '90s motion pictures: a tendency to run too long. A little judicious pruning would have improved the film's pace and avoided the one or two lulls that are present.

The actors, none of whom I'm familiar with, all fill their parts nicely. Special mention goes to Severdzan Bajram, whose Matko is a likable rogue, and Branka Katic, who has a luminous screen presence. And, as is almost always the case with films set in gypsy communities, the music is lively and infectious. *Black Cat, White Cat* features three standout numbers that almost made me want to get up and dance with the characters on screen. So, while not a masterpiece, Kusturica's latest film is a real treat for those in search of a healthy dose of laughter set in a culture whose intricacies are rarely captured on film.

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(Apologies that these notes are taken from the web, I did not have time to write any)

BBC NEWS

Bafta Film Awards 2008: The winners

Here are the winners of this year's Bafta Film Awards, held at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, London.

Best film Winner: Atonement **Also nominated:** American Gangster The Lives of Others No Country For Old Men There Will Be Blood

Best British film Winner: This is England **Also nominated:** Atonement The Bourne Ultimatum Control Eastern Promises

Leading actor Winner: Daniel Day-Lewis - There Will Be Blood **Also nominated:** George Clooney - Michael Clayton ; James McAvoy - Atonement ; Viggo Mortensen - Eastern Promises ; Ulrich Muehe - The Lives of Others

Leading actress Winner: Marion Cotillard - La Vie En Rose **Also nominated:** Cate Blanchett - Elizabeth: The Golden Age ; Julie Christie - Away From Her ; Keira Knightley - Atonement ; Ellen Page - Juno

Supporting actor Winner: Javier Bardem - No Country For Old Men **Also nominated:** Paul Dano - There Will Be Blood ; Tommy Lee Jones - No Country For Old Men ; Philip Seymour Hoffman - Charlie Wilson's War Tom Wilkinson - Michael Clayton

Supporting actress Winner: Tilda Swinton - Michael Clayton **Also nominated:** Cate Blanchett - I'm Not There ; Kelly Macdonald - No Country For Old Men ; Samantha Morton - Control ; Saoirse Ronan - Atonement

Director Winner: No Country For Old Men - Joel Coen, Ethan Coen **Also nominated:** Atonement - Joe Wright ; The Bourne Ultimatum - Paul Greengrass ; The Lives of Others - Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck ; There Will Be Blood - Paul Thomas Anderson

Original screenplay Winner: Juno - Diablo Cody **Also nominated:** American Gangster - Steven Zaillian ; The Lives of Others - Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck ; Michael Clayton - Tony Gilroy ; This is England - Shane Meadows

Adapted screenplay Winner: The Diving Bell and the Butterfly - Ronald Harwood **Also nominated:** Atonement - Christopher Hampton ; The Kite Runner - David Benioff ; No Country For Old Men - Joel Coen/Ethan Coen ; There Will Be Blood - Paul Thomas Anderson

Film not in the English language Winner: The Lives of Others **Also nominated:** The Diving Bell and the Butterfly ; The Kite Runner ; Lust, Caution ; La Vie En Rose

Animated film Winner: Ratatouille **Also nominated:** Shrek the Third ; The Simpsons Movie

Carl Foreman award for special achievement by a British director, writer or producer in their first feature film Winner: Matt Greenhalgh (writer) - Control **Also nominated:** Chris Atkins (director/writer) - Taking Liberties ; Mia Bays (producer) - Scott Walker: 30 Century Man ; Sarah Gavron (director) - Brick Lane ; Andrew Piddington (director/writer) - The Killing of John Lennon

Music Winner: La Vie En Rose - Christopher YOUNG **Also nominated:** American Gangster - Marc Streitenfeld ; Atonement - Dario Marianelli ; The Kite Runner - Alberto Iglesias ; There Will Be Blood - Jonny Greenwood

Cinematography Winner: No Country For Old Men - Roger Deakins **Also nominated:** American Gangster - Harris Savides ; Atonement - Seamus McGarvey ; The Bourne Ultimatum - Oliver Wood ; There Will Be Blood - Robert Elswit

Editing Winner: The Bourne Ultimatum - Christopher Rouse **Also nominated:** American Gangster - Pietro Scalia ; Atonement - Paul Tothill ; Michael Clayton - John Gilroy ; No Country For Old Men - Roderick Jaynes

Short animation Winner: The Pearce Sisters - Jo Allen, Luis Cook **Also nominated:** Head Over Heels - Osbert Parker, Fiona Pitkin, Ian Gouldstone ; The Crumblegiant - Pearse Moore, John McCloskey

Short film Winner: Dog Altogether - Diarmid Scrimshaw, Paddy Considine **Also nominated:** Hesitation - Julien Berlan, Michelle Eastwood, Virginia Gilbert ; The One And Only Herb McGwyer Plays Wallis Island - Charlie Henderson, James Griffiths, Tim Key, Tom Basden ; Soft - Jane Hooks, Simon Ellis ; The Stronger - Dan McCulloch, Lia Williams, Frank McGuinness

The Orange Rising Star award (voted for by the public) Winner: Shia LaBeouf **Also nominated:** Sienna Miller ; Ellen Page ; Sam Riley ; Tang Wei

Academy Fellowship Sir Anthony Hopkins

Outstanding British contribution to cinema Barry Wilkinson

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/entertainment/7191143.stm>

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Reactions to

Last King of Scotland – 24th January 2008

Score 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Votes ~ ~ 1 1 ~ ~ ~ 10 15 11 ~

Total Votes - 38 Average Score - 7.73 Position in Season - 2nd

Film	Score	Position
The Lives of Others	8.23	1 st
Little Miss Sunshine	7.886	2 nd
Notes on a Scandal	7.73	3 rd
Last King of Scotland	7.73	Joint 3 rd
Pans Labyrinth	6.88	4 th
The Prestige	6.86	5 th
Offside	6.56	6 th
L'Enfant	6.37	7 th
Belle et la Bette	5.97	8 th
The Day I became a Woman	5.72	9 th

Your views

What a lesson for the young

Acting, direction etc good, but too much violence in the film for me

Too little documentary background, too much fantasy

Forest Whittaker, as always, is outstanding and very convincing

FW was excellent but perhaps James McAvoy didn't get the credit he deserved

FW deserved his Oscar though I don't think 'enjoyable' is quite the best description

Gripping. Excellent acting – totally convincing

A good film, James McAvoy was miscast

Next Time

28th February 2008 – Consequences of Love

Titta Di Girolamo thinks the only interesting thing in his life is his name, until after a long period of inactivity he takes the plunge and talks to Sofia the barmaid and life becomes interesting. Beautifully filmed with great acting.

Italy / 2005 / 100 mins

Repropoint

sponsors photocopying of the main feature