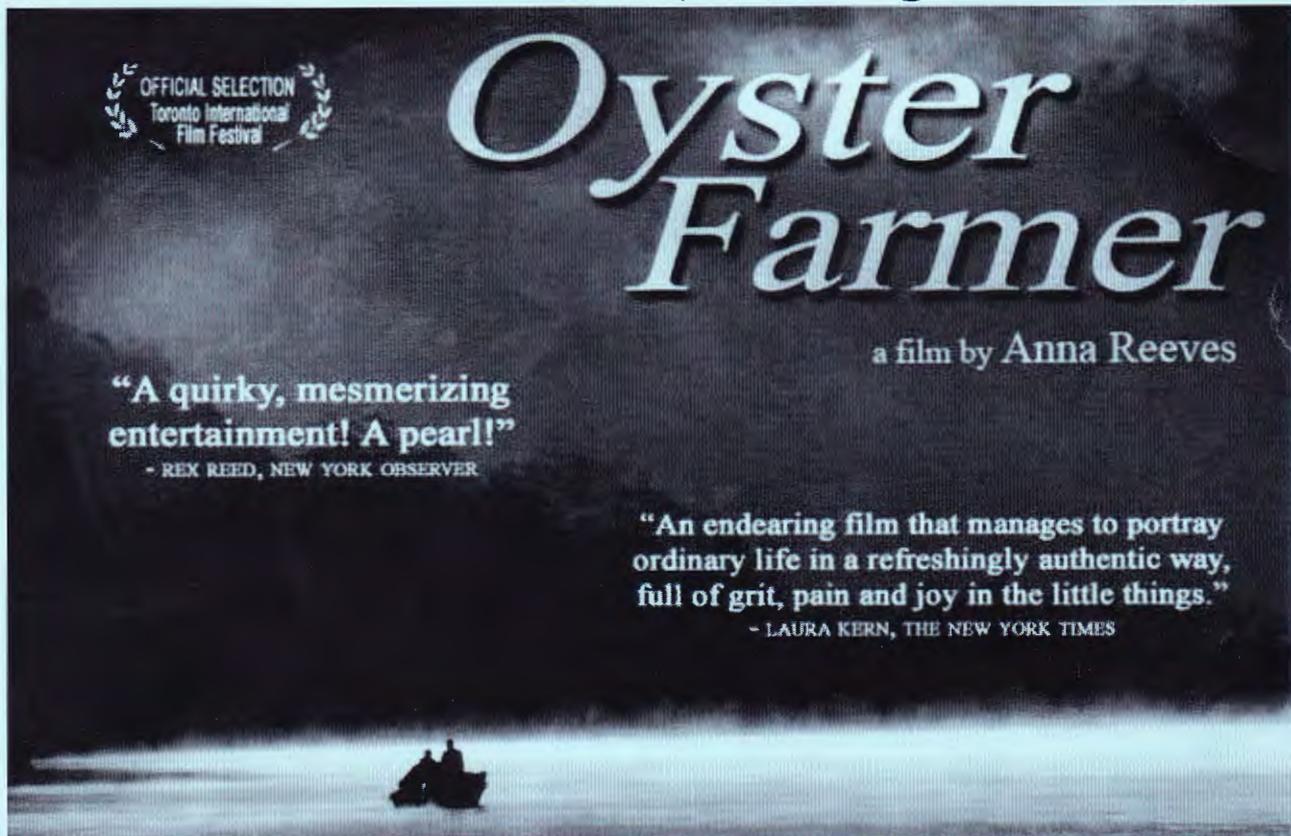




The Main Feature

Season 31 - Issue 12 (screening 10.3.11)



Australia

2004

87 minutes

Cert 15

(UK release 29.4.05)

Director and Writer: Anna Reeves

Cinematography: Alun Bollinger

Cast:

Alex O'Loughlin ... Jack Flange

Diana Glenn ... Pearl

Kerry Armstrong ... Trish

Alan Cinis ... Slug

Brady Kitchingham ... Heath

Bill Wisely ... Old Man Peterson

Music: Steven Warbeck

Editing: Peter Beston and Jamie Trevill

Jim Norton ... Mumbles

David Field ... Brownie

Claudia Harrison ... Nikki

Jack Thompson ... Skippy

Gary Henderson ... Oyster Farmer Barry

Brian Howarth ... Barney

"Oyster eaters make better lovers" proclaims the slogan of the Oyster Farmers Association of NSW banner in the film. If you enjoy these molluscs then indirectly tonight you may learn about the lengths the farmers have to go to make it a viable industry.

The director Anna Reeves had fallen in love with the landscape of the Hawkesbury River when a friend started to build a 'weekender' on the shores of the upper river. She spent weekends in the area and for four years researched a film based on the river, getting to know and gaining the trust of the small communities of oyster farmers and assorted eccentrics and loners who choose to live there in virtual isolation.

Oyster Farmer's setting, the Hawkesbury River, is a wild and glorious landscape just an hour north of Sydney, but so remote that most of the film's locations could only be accessed by boat.

As Anna came to know the people of the river, she became aware that their way of life was under threat from the pressure of encroaching real estate development. She wanted to capture the magic of the Hawkesbury before it was too late:



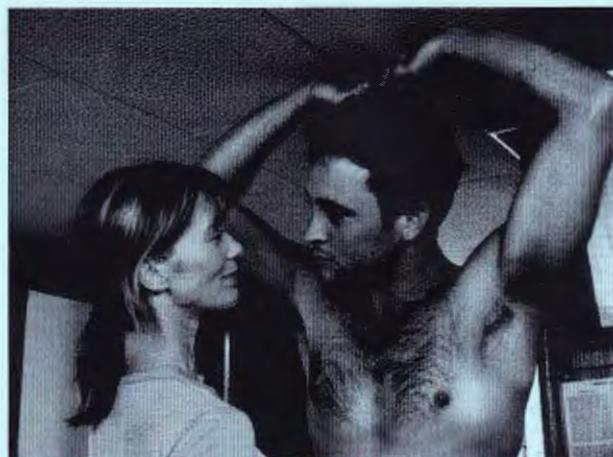
"The way I chose to bring the story to audiences was to write a fish-out-of-water story about someone from Sydney who comes into the community and as that person discovers the community, so does the audience.

"When the funding was finally in place, I rocked up to the pub on a Friday night - which is the best time to see everyone up there - and some of the people said I'd come too late, that 'such and such had sold his oyster leases and given up the business', so I think we made this film just in time."

The story, through the characters of Mumbles, Brownie, Jack and the boy Heath, represents the families who've lived on the river: "One of the things that really touched me about the oyster farmers is the tremendous history that's been passed down from generation to generation; such as being able to read the river so intimately. It is a special thing and when it is gone, it will be gone forever."

Real-life oyster farmers were cast in minor roles and the screenplay is dotted with rasping regional humour and adroitly selected passages of purple Aussie prose give an authentic feel. Palpable affection for traditional ways endangered by big business and property development is shown through the production design which is littered with rusty and dilapidated remnants of better times.

Finding someone to play the lead role of Jack Flange was more challenging. "You go down to the beach and there's all these gorgeous young men who could play Jack Flange but they probably couldn't act their way out of a paper bag," Anna says. "I had to find an actor who was convincing as a man oyster farmers would give a job to, he had to look like he'd done hard physical work. But I knew I would recognize the qualities when I found the right actor.....and Alex walked in. He was so keen and I knew he would have the courage to play the role and give it his all."



O'Loughlin recalled "I opened up the script and started reading it, and I couldn't put it down. It's fantastic, the writing is so powerful and the characters are so strong and full, and it's such a beautiful story and such an important story, I think, for us, because of the way things are in the world at the moment. It's about love; it's about hope; and it's about family. I just went back to [my agent's] office and said, 'I've got to do this; get me this job!'" — *FilmStew.com*, September 14, 2004

The film enjoyed some free publicity, when its star Alex O'Loughlin was screen-tested in 2005 for the role of James Bond. That may have helped result in the Australian box office gross for the film exceed \$2.3 million.

Alex O'Loughlin has recently taken on the role of Lieutenant Commander Steve McGarrett in the new version of Hawaii Five-O, which premiered on CBS in America on 20 September 2010, 42 years to the day that the original series made its debut.

The fluid widescreen shots by Alun Bollinger and an unusual though highly effective score dominated by jew's-harp and violin lend a slightly otherworldly atmosphere to the backwater locale.

Although a slight film, it does touch upon some aspects of Australian recent history without filling in the background, which I thought could have added some grit (*oyster pun intended!*) to the film (after seeing it I was prompted to do some research and was surprised to find that a total of 60,000 Aussies fought in Vietnam over a 10 year period from 1962). However debutant Anna Reeves has described *Oyster Farmer* as her love letter to Australia, so that may explain why these elements are not expanded upon. Using my final Oyster metaphor, it's a film that slides down easily enough and leaves a pleasant taste!

Iain McGlashan

83RD ACADEMY AWARDS®

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1. Best Picture: "The King's Speech."
2. Actor: Colin Firth, "The King's Speech."
3. Actress: Natalie Portman, "Black Swan."
4. Supporting Actor: Christian Bale, "The Fighter."
5. Supporting Actress: Melissa Leo, "The Fighter."
6. Directing: Tom Hooper, "The King's Speech."
7. Foreign Language Film: "In a Better World," Denmark.
8. Adapted Screenplay: Aaron Sorkin, "The Social Network."
9. Original Screenplay: David Seidler, "The King's Speech."
10. Animated Feature Film: "Toy Story 3."
11. Art Direction: "Alice in Wonderland."
12. Cinematography: "Inception."
13. Sound Mixing: "Inception."
14. Sound Editing: "Inception."
15. Original Score: "The Social Network," Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross.
16. Original Song: "We Belong Together" from "Toy Story 3," Randy Newman.
17. Costume Design: "Alice in Wonderland."
18. Documentary Feature: "Inside Job."
19. Documentary (short subject):
"Strangers No More."
20. Film Editing: "The Social Network."
21. Makeup: "The Wolfman."
22. Animated Short Film: "The Lost Thing."
23. Live Action Short Film: "God of Love."
24. Visual Effects: "Inception."



Reactions toAppaloosa – 25th February 2011

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Votes	~	~	~	~	3	2	11	10	12	2	~	
Total received	– 40						Average Score – 6.8					

Your Comments

I love Westerns – Ed Harris is always watchable but a few too many “Sergio Leone” long pauses
 Stunning scenery, very atmospheric and well acted: moral of the story = never trust a woman!
 A strange combination of old Western and modern psychology – excellent
 Subtitles would have helped – failing that I’ll have to read the book
 Good story – enjoyable evening
 A bit too slow in places
 Enjoyed a “cowboy” film for a change
 What a lot of bodies!
 A worthy addition to the Western cannon
 I enjoyed the film – excellent acting
 Good to see a Western
 HD = fantastic

Wimin and westerns don’t mix
 A good Western with a difference
 A good quality Western
 Entertaining but too slow
 Where were the subtitles?!
 More like that please
 A good story well told and acted

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Invictus	8.02
2 nd	An Education	7.83
3 rd	Le premier jour de reste de ta vie	7.54
4 th	Kongekabale (<i>King's Game</i>)	7.36
5 th	The Hurt Locker	7.09
6 th	A Touch of Class	6.97
7 th	Cherry Blossom	6.88
8 th	Appaloosa	6.8
9 th	Europa, Europa	6.59
10 th	Ushpizin	5.94
11 th	Paranormal Activity	2.75



Our next presentation
 at 8pm on Thursday
 24 March:

Fish Tank

Winner of 18 awards including the
 2010 BAFTA for Outstanding
 British Film and the joint winner of
 the Jury Prize at Cannes.

On a rundown Essex
 estate a messed-up
 15-year-old girl's life is
 thrown into confusion
 when her mum starts
 seeing a new man.

Repropoint

sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*