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FILMMAKER BLOG

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

A TRIP DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE



As I didn't get into Park City until Sunday night, I've been playing catch-up for the most part, trying to get the pulse of this year's fest (which for the most part hasn't been the feeding frenzy in terms of deals as last year), and trying to see as many films as possible (and hitting some parties). So far **Daniel Barnz's** debut feature *Phoebe In Wonderland* has stuck in my mind the most. Barnz was named one of our "25 New Faces" this past summer so I knew a little about him and his work before going in, but it's one thing to read someones work on paper and gratifyingly another when it translates even better on screen.

With amazing performances by **Elle Fanning**, **Patricia Clarkson** and **Felicity Huffman**, this fantastical look at a young girl's medical illness, how her parents and teachers deal with it and how *Alice In Wonderland* relates to it all is entertaining, gripping and beautifully crafted.

Fanning (sister of **Dakota**) plays Phoebe, an imaginative girl who wins the part of Alice in the school rendition of *Alice In Wonderland*, and in her stress to play the part begins to show OCD-like tendencies, but her parents and teachers are either too naive or too scared to recognize it.

In a tour-de-force performance by Fanning (do the Fanning siblings do any less?) we see her deteriorate before our eyes but Barnz creates a *Heavenly Creatures*-like world in which she travels into as Phoebe finds solace in the *Alice in Wonderland* characters. As the film moves on fantasy overtakes reality leaving to a conclusion that many may feel is a little too campy but it's the journey you take to get there that's the thing that kept me into it.



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Barnz's screenplay and the production design brings out the feel of watching a stage play, so having stage vets like Clarkson, Huffman, **Bill Pullman** and **Campbell Scott** raises the bar.

posted by Jason Guerrasio @ 1/23/2008 08:45:00 AM

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