

Tony Comley 'Abigail'

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

Meaning

If I could describe the film in a sentence I would say that it's about accepting that the things we value most are the things we can control the least.

The burning plane represents a reaction to mortality. All the characters in the film know they have a time limit, and they all attach themselves to something that makes them feel immortal. For the passengers it's religion. For the protagonist it's love. Except that the object of his love is torn from him. The film is therefore about his attempt to resolve this.

The film was written as a stream of conscious rant around a clear theme. As a result I only understand much of it myself in retrospect. I know that the man that the protagonist sits with in First class represents his fears about what he may become if he doesn't resolve his relationship with the girl in the photo. The stewardesses represent temptation, and the bouncing ball at the end is an expression of the irreverence and freedom that the protagonist has learnt. It can also be read as a reaction against the kind of 'gravely emotional' film-making that Abigail tries not to be. Essentially it turns the audience into the passengers at the beginning of the film and says 'It's just a film, lets have some Gospel music and sing along'.

Challenges

This is essentially the first film I have made, and the most challenging element was directing other people. There was a sound designer, a Composer, a string quartet, a pianist, a flautist, a Gospel Choir, a Soprano Opera singer, four actors and a hippy guitarist.

Fortunately we were encouraged at the RCA to work with a Composer. I listened to a lot of work from students at the Royal College of Music before asking a guy called Andrew Lomatschinsky. It took a few meetings before we started to work on the same wavelength, but once we did I was happy for Andrew to have a large amount of creative input over the score. Music was always very important to this film, and once the score took shape it influenced the pace and rhythm of the editing a great deal.

Technique

Actors were filmed against a plain background and the resulting footage was imported into Flash for rotoscoping. The subsequent vector-based images were then exported as PNG sequences and brought into After Effects where the lighting and texture was tweaked. The backgrounds were then created using all three programs and composited in at the very last stage of production.

The film took just under three months to animate.