

On DVD/Blu-Ray: The Congress (Ari Folman, 2014)



In the transition from the steel grey dystopian future to the lurid animated society, *The Congress* makes a stark visual change but little in terms of its overpowering tone. Ari Folman is a director intent on delivering a provocative message. In his previous works, he's delivered scathing attacks against the military of his country. In *The Congress*, he tackles the idea of power in a new light; one of a fictional world overrun by the exploitation of identity.

For her final acting role, a woman signs her likeness away to a film production company to be artificially reproduced for years to come. Hiding from the public eye for 20 years, she arrives at Abrahama City to renew her contract; only to uncover the implications that her actions came with.

It's undoubtedly innovative; futuristic, colourful and down right bizarre at times. His animated debut, the autobiographical *Waltz With Bashir* looked more like a abstract painting than the colourful vista that will define *The Congress*. If the former is the astute, experienced uncle at the dinner table; *The Congress* is the eccentric cousin that suffers from mental instability deep within. The animated world of Abrahama City transports the characters into a seemingly limitless world that, as a result, entangles them. The diverse landscape Folman has created is an effective playground for his ideas, but sometimes the story gets lost within its vast, endless nature.

Needless to say, Robin Wright delivers a strong performance as the woman at the centre of this complex story. She manages to convey emotion both in live action and animated form, as a

female protagonist and as a mother to Aaron, played by the talented young Kodi Smitt-McPhee. Both deliver emphatic work in a story that

Waltz with Bashir remains Folman's masterpiece – but **The Congress** is a worthy follow up. Complex and creative, this is a science fiction gem that warrants more than one watch.



Extras:

The 'Making of' featurette included in the DVD's release is a short one minute look into the similarities between Folman's live action and animated versions of dystopia. An insightful look into the film's production, considering its interesting use of two medias, would have been a great addition here – or even several short length looks into the same subject. What is interesting to watch is the transition between reference live action tape to the finished product; with stages of storyboarding and animation techniques in between. It conveys Folman's intricacy in his work in a way that isn't unnecessarily overlong nor pointless in its addition. The typical trailers round out an underwhelming collection of special features that could've been something a little more meaty – but this artistic piece of work has Criterion written all over it.

The Congress is released by Studio Canal on DVD/Blu-Ray on Monday December 8th