

Cannes 2015: The Lobster (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2015)



There is an unsettling sense of familiarity at the heart of *The Lobster*; a terrifying social stigma attached to singletons who either refuse, or struggle to connect romantically with people. While some people are happy living this quaint life of apparent freedom, some hold a serious amount of determination to find a lover. Regardless of what side of the fence you lie on, there is no denying that the world in which *The Lobster* lives would be intimidating for anyone.

In a parallel world, The Hotel lies by the sea side, hosting single men and women who tirelessly are made to search for a lover under the scrutinising eye of the strict hotel staff. They each have 45 days to find a match, and if failing to do so, are transformed into an animal and sent out into The Woods. When David arrives, accompanied by his now canine formed brother, he realises the injustice in the plan and sets out to escape the regime.

Yorgos Lanthimos' most recognisable feature *Dogtooth* caused quite a stir upon its release. A deft insight into a family of girls with overly protective parents, it shocked and amazed audiences through its stunning depiction of familial coercion. In a way, coercion is apparent in *The Lobster*, too. You witness it as you watch the Hoteliers in charge (the wife in particular, played terrifically by Olivia Colman); forcing the oblivious to applaud the stupidity that surrounds them. It refuses, however, to phase David – the protagonist played by Colin Farrell. He overlooks these banalities and sees his own opportunities. Not through his own words, but by a reflective narration that lifts the film from its purposefully downtrodden aura. That is something we'll discuss later.

Every line from the guests is delivered in a Yanthimos style manner of impassiveness; meticulously written by the man himself alongside co-writer Efthymis Filippou. Endlessly inventive, he writes dialogue that his characters read in a manner that carries little weight in terms of tone. In turn, this allows you to appreciate the peculiarity of the words even more. Take for example, the suicide of one of the Hotel's residents. As she lays screaming in a pool of her own blood, a heartless lady looks on, turning to Farrell's character and saying: "There's blood and biscuits everywhere.". It is a line that requires a little more context, but I'll keep it quiet here to let you relish in its deadpan attitudes.

As they leave the hotel, French cinema darling Lea Seydoux takes the place of Olivia Colman's character – becoming a feared leader of a group of single escapees. Her purse lipped attitude here is a dimension to Seydoux we haven't seen before, and she adapts to it excellently.

In this situation, the narrator is given a human embodiment – that of Rachel Weisz's 'Short Sighted Woman', named after a trait she shares with David. For Weisz, *The Lobster* marks a return to the screens after a two year absence and the starting point for a series of films released both this year and next. She should have nothing to worry about. Her heartfelt, sombre performance here makes her one of the lead contenders for the Best Actress prize in this year's competition. She is simply sublime.

Lanthimos' humour may be lost on some, but an investment in his vision is wholly rewarding. A film that doesn't strive to exhilarate, *The Lobster* wins you over with its beautiful acceptance of the weird, wonderful and belly-warming laughs.



The Lobster had its world premiere at the 68th Festival de Cannes