

Cave of Forgotten Dreams

By Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Society

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Before we get all wrapped up in the high glitz of this summer's Hollywood blockbusters, let's get deep--really deep. In Cave of Forgotten Dreams, we're taken on an exploration of the earliest cave art ever found. These are fascinating works from thousands and thousands of years ago. Werner Herzog is the filmmaker, who is best known for his work in Grizzly Man (2005), another documentary. Here, Herzog is given exclusive (and very rare) access to the Chauvet caves in Southern France. You don't have to be a spelunker to enjoy the caves natural beauty, but when you see the drawings themselves, mostly of bison or horses or rhinos, it is breathtaking.

We have our fair share of artists in Cape May county, right? Well get to know your ancestors a little. These drawings and composites of drawings that are thousands of years in the making are truly remarkable. If the best teacher is history, then the best curator of ancient art are the Chauvet caves. Archeologists, anthropologists, and whole bunch of other "gists" are interviewed in this film. Some of their intellectual themes may stretch somewhat higher than necessary to make a point. In addition, some of the lessons learned are repeated unnecessarily, as the film takes about 20-30 minutes too long to make its point. The narrative was sometimes preachy or (if this is even possible) poetic to a fault.

My last criticism is that of the sin of omission. This film could have explored much more than just the caves and the observations that came from the discovery. There were several insights in the human condition that can be gleaned by this film--namely that the urge to create art is so innate that no formal training or education is needed to fulfill that instinct. But perhaps it is better for the viewer to be creative in their own way of interpreting the lessons from this film by simply hearing the facts and seeing the images. No matter the criticism, there is still much to enjoy about this film--if not simply the opportunity to take a well-needed break from the cornucopia of mind candy that hits theaters this summer.

Don't agree with me about the mind candy? Think there are plenty of good films to see and not just the ones with hangover high-jinx or explosive CGI effects? Well tell me about it. Let me know what you've seen in theaters and what your insights are. We could use them in an upcoming edition of the movie column. Send your comments to capemayfilm@hotmail.com. And don't forget about our Summer Camp June 27 through July 3—slots are filling up fast!