



## Review: Matinee

Blue Artichoke Films, dir. Jennifer Lyon Bell

# Intelligent, sensual, and downright sexy. What more can you ask?

By ForTheGirls.com

At the Berlin Porn Film Festival in 2008 I was privileged to meet Jennifer Lyon Bell, an American film director who lives and works in Amsterdam. Jennifer had just wrapped up her first erotic feature film and also attended the workshop about porn for women. Over a number of meals (and plenty of margheritas), Jennifer told me about her vision for female friendly erotic cinema and I was impressed by her passion, professionalism and cheery personality. I was more than happy to accept preview copies of her movies, certain that they would be the kind of film FTG members would like.

The short feature *Matinee* has only just premiered at the Rated X Erotic Film Festival in Amsterdam and it doesn't officially go on sale until April, but I wanted to get the word out about this new and exciting talent in adult film. In essence, *Matinee* is exactly the kind of intelligent, sensual and downright sexy movie that many of us have been looking for and it is, hopefully, a harbinger of a happy marriage between mainstream cinema and erotic film.

*Matinee* tells the story of Mariah and Daniel, two actors struggling to find a spark of chemistry onstage. Their small-time theatre production is getting bad reviews and they both know the love scene needs work. Daniel, a well-known soap star, suggests they improvise, an idea that terrifies classically-trained Mariah.

And then they discover that a big-time agent will be attending the matinee performance. Overcoming her fear, Mariah makes the decision to take the love scene to its natural conclusion, in the name of art and ambition.

It's an intriguing story that hooks the viewer quickly, creating an unusual yet believable set up for the sex scene. The premise is helped enormously by the incredible presence and acting skills of both stars.

Both actors have never performed in an explicit film before. Indeed, Steven McAlister is a trained ballet dancer and was surprisingly cast in the lead role when he accompanied a friend to the audition. He's not a classically handsome man and yet he exudes a certain stylish sexual charm that makes him perfect for the part (and his Scottish accent is very sexy). Alicia Whitover is an English actress with a very naturalistic style, not to mention a voluptuous, un-enhanced body. Both actors interact wonderfully and they do share an onscreen spark that makes their sex scene a joy to watch.

And what a lovely thing to see real, quality acting in this sort of film.

But then that's the sort of thing that really makes *Matinee* stick out: it refuses to be a "porn film" in the traditional sense. There's no compromise on acting or production quality and there's certainly no "let's just get to the sex" mindset driving the show. It's a film that is primarily about sex and wholeheartedly embraces the idea of arousing and explicit moviemaking but at the same time it's a *real movie*. From the opening scene it feels like something you'd see at a suburban cinema. The director is happy to take her time setting up story, tension and emotion before anyone gets even remotely naked and it's not a chore to discover the characters or understand where they're coming from or why they're having sex.

It's often said that women want to see sex within some kind of context. If that's the case, this film is certainly a winner. The onscreen couple might not be in love, but you're given enough reasons to believe that the sex they have is intense and passionate.

This is a gorgeous film to watch. The lighting is superb, creating an atmosphere of lush sensuality and warm flesh. The camera is careful to capture facial expressions during the sex, the vision swapping between Mariah and Daniel as they pleasure each other. There are very few genital close-ups; rather, the

viewer is treated to plenty of “touch” shots, where we see lips and fingertips on skin. It certainly makes a nice change from the usual gynaecological porn obsessions.

And while the introductory scenes make use of original music, the soundtrack focuses solely on the sounds of sex during the love scene. Indeed, this is an important philosophy behind Blue Artichoke Films – the desire to depict the realistic sighs and sounds that occur during lovemaking. As a viewer I can see where they’re coming from. It’s refreshing to watch people getting it on without any distracting boom-chaka-wah-wah music.

At 34 minutes the film is relatively short. Indeed, if I had a complaint about this movie it’s that the set up didn’t go on quite long enough. It would have been nice to find out a bit more about Mariah’s motivations behind her decision. The location of the sex scene also has the potential to strain the credibility of the audience. I found myself wondering whether a real theatre audience would so readily sit through what becomes a 20 minute live sex show. Thankfully the charisma of the stars soon overcomes this concern.

In spite of those small niggles, I thoroughly enjoyed *Matinee*. It comes close to fulfilling a long-held wish of mine to discover a sexy, arousing adult movie made by a Hollywood studio. Sure, this isn’t a high-budget blockbuster starring Brad and Angelina, but it shares the same look and feel, the same commitment to telling a good story and making it look fabulous.

And on top of all that, it’s hot! The sex is lusty, realistic and meaningful. The orgasms are real and the two actors really do have a good time together. There’s even a sexy “putting on a condom” scene. What more can you ask?

It’s early days yet but I predict that *Matinee* will win a bunch of awards and justifiably confirm Jennifer as the rising star in the world of erotic film. And I’m definitely looking forward to her next production.

I recommend *Matinee*.

For The Girls  
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