Mamet's 'Winslow Boy' takes close view of family crisis

BY HUGH GALLAGHER STADY WEITER

David Mamet's film version of Terrence Rattigan's "The Winslow Boy' is a gemlike dissection of upper middle class British life suddenly turned upside down over a fight for justice.

Rattigan's 1946 play was based on a true story. In 1912, a young 13-youn-old endet at the Naval College at Osbourne is accused of stealing a five-shilling postal order. He is expelled from the academy but maintains he is innocent. His proper banker father believes him and risks in mocent. His proper banker father believes him and risks at the mount a defense which eventually becomes a national cause

celebro when the case is taken by a famous barrister.
The play was made into a fine movie in 1949 by British director Anthony Asquith with Robert Donat, Margaret Leighton and Cedric Hardwicke in the lead roles.

oles. If that film was centered more irectly on the central conflict, directly on the central conflict, Mamet's version is centered around the small details of percharacter and motivation. Both films are worth watching for their similarities and differ-

ences.

It is easy to see why Mamet (who directs and wrote the screenplay) was attracted to Rattigan's well-made play. The clipped, emotionless, drily witty

conversations of the British characters match the deliberate pelipped and artificial language of Mamet's plays and yet seem more natural in this context. In addition, the many subtexts, the words not spoken, the repressed emotions revealed by a random look or small gesture are also typical of Mamet's approach. The random dialogue of the opening scene is a wonderful example of Mamet's approach.

scene is a wonderful example of Mamet's approach.

In "The Winslow Boy" we become observers of a family life that seems outwardly content, pleasant, structured but not too stuffy. But, in fact, there is a run-ning tension and repression that gets sorely tested through the course of the legal battle that drains family finances and

threatens family honor. Though Mamet has opened the action to include several sets, the key scense are played off screen—the actual crime, a triumphan Farliamentary speech, the trial, the decision. The important matters are what happens around the central story.

Nigel Hawthorne's father seems warm and jovial. He tries to be firm with his wayward sea to Cofford. He is indulgent of his bright suffragette daughter. He clearly loves and respects his wife but maintains his malu upper hand. He clearly dotes on his younger son, the pride of the family who finds himself in trouble. A thousand emotions seem to be captured in Hawthorne's eyes as he struggles to decide what to do and how far to push it.

what to do and how far to push it.

Jeremy Northam plays the barrister Sir Robert Morton, a seemingly cool, emotionless, wain and opportunistic lawyer-politician. He hides a passion for doing the right thing behind his stiff legal manner. Northam perfectly captures the diffident manner and the man of honor. Northam's performance is very similar to bonat's approach in the Asquith film and both actors found just the right balance.

The strongest character is the boy's suffragette sister, Catherine. The character is interesting because it focuses so intimately on the changing role of women in pre-World War I Britain, espe-

cially women in the comfortable classes who began to assort their right to equal treatment. Rebecca Pidegon, who is married to Mamet, gives a beautiful performance, snapping off the clipped dialogue while her face reveals a myriad of conflicting emotions. Though the publicity for the film suggests some lovo interest, it is as repressed and subliminal as other emotions. Other fine performances come from Gemma Jones as the mother who is finally pushed too far, Matthew Pidgeon as the irresponsible but likeable older son and Colin Stinton as a repressed solicitor hopelessly in love with the determined Catherine. Mamet does a good job of showing the physical look of the period, but he has more successfully captured its emotional tone.



Drama: Jeremy Northam as Sir Robert Morton and Rebecca Pidgeon as Catherine Winslow in "The

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Drama: Held captive in a prison for the criminally insane, primatologist Ethan Powell (Anthony Hopkins, right) who is accused of murder and has not spoken in years, is remanded to psychiatrist Theo Caulder, Cuba Gooding in "Instinct." Strong performers follow

'Instinct' in morality tale

Sy Jon KAT?

Sir Anthony Hopkins is being held in a maximum-security prison. Convicted of horrendous murders, he's unable or unwilling to communicate with his jailings. A sinister smile conceals whatever it is that has driven him to his own personal madness. Perhaps one specially chosen person can get through and unlock the door to release his terrible secret.

From that description, too many of you will either see "Instinct" or avoid it altogether because it certainly sounds like "Silence of the Lambs, Part II." It isn't, and should it be marketed or perceived that way, this elegant morality tale would be dealt as much an injustice as its lead character.

The convict Ethan Powell Honkins is in feet a need pri-

character.

The convict Ethan Powell (Hopkins) is, in fact, a noted primatologist who spent years living among the mountain gorillas of Rwanda. After brutally killing of Kwanda. After britally killing two park rangers who were hunting the docile animals, Pow-ell was extradited to Florida, and remains imprisoned in the psy-chotic "Coo Coo's Nest" ward of a facility that makes Devil's Island

look like Club Med.

His self-imposed silence and simian behavior come to the attention of ambitious hot-shot psychiatrist Theo Calder (Cuba Gooding Jr.), who is given thirty days to evaluate the case for the court. Well again, Gooding's Doctor Calder seems just too close to Jody Foster's Agent Starling. And again, we caution that the similarity stops there.

"It's not the usual therapeutic convironment, Calder tells his mentor, Ben Hillard (Donald Sutherland). Then don't be the usual thorapist, 'Poé actvized.
Through flashbacks, Powell transports Calder and us back to Africa. There, amidst the lush, rolling greenery (actually filmed in Jamsies), we come to understand Powell's attraction to the quite-civilized family of grillas. "I liked them," he admits Slowly is first, he cases into their world." I lived them, 'he admits Slowly is first, he cases into their world. "I lived as man did 10,000 years ago, before the takers."

The takers. "The takers their us, And that pretty much boils "Instinct down to its foundation. We're the guilty ones, don't you see. We've pillaged and plundered and mur-

dered to save our own species. As for the rest of the food chain:

tough.

And when the psychiatrist gets too close to the patient, he's reprimanded, "you're not his defense attorney and you're not his pal."

stterney and you're not his pail."

Hopkins and Gooding have many powerful moments together. They seem to alternately feed off each other dramatically, like two mountain climbers who switch off taking the lead. Sutherland wears the role of yet another pipe-smoking figure of authority like a favorite pair of alippers; perhaps it's better not to get so comfortable that you lose your edge. Maura Tierney ('Primary Colors') is fine as the scientiat's estranged daughter; familiar character actors Georgo Dzundza and John Ashton are strong as, respectfully, the prison psychiatrist and head guard. Ultimately, 'Instinct' breaks no new ground, and the balance of footage is tipped too far away from the fascinating jungle world in favor of repetitive prison scenes of brutal guards and defenseless inmates. We'll paraphrase Gooding's signature line: 'Show us the gorillasi'

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