

Letter from an Unknown Woman

Audience Reaction

Screened 15 March 2016; Audience 22, 17 Slips returned, rating 8.7 out of 10

17 for discussion. Everyone was thoroughly immersed in the film, praising Joan Fontane's subtly nuanced performance from a 13 year old girl to a mature woman which was central to the audience's emotional investment. The cinematography was striking, beautiful and memorable and Ophul's world of constant movement was stylistically fascinating. One member of the audience remarked that "the camera caresses the characters" and that "affection" and humanity shines through all the director's work, linked to a life constantly fleeing persecution. There is a sense that "if the character's stop, they die." Although there were elements of melodrama it was felt this didn't detract from the film overall and that this heightened sense of Ophul's world and the world of turn of the century Vienna was in keeping with the film's themes. The humour and wry social observation in the film was appreciated and the real exchanges between the two central characters, who never actually connect except in the final letter were poignant and tragic. The audience liked the way that in the film's conclusion the director chooses not to show all or give a typically Hollywood ending. There was an element of Hitchcock in the storytelling in terms of showing the audience what is going to happen and then having them anticipate it which was very effective. Overall it was felt that the season had been a great discovery of this director's work and people felt that it demanded further exploration, through repeated viewings and also by seeking out the director's other films. Audience members also remarked on how good it was to see these films on a big screen and that they dealt with "how people operate" in the world in a way that felt truer than many contemporary mainstream films. Ophul's style, crafting and sensitivity towards humankind, especially through his female characters, has been very much enjoyed throughout the season and we've had really good discussions about these rich and complex

films which people have responded to in a heartfelt and direct way. It's always rewarding when a film or season can do that and I feel that the season has been really successful in fulfilling the groups aims of discovering/ rediscovering and appreciating amazingly neglected works of world Cinema.

Georgina Coburn