

# ostře sledované vlaky

Filmový přepis novely Bohumila Hrabala

Scénář: Bohumil Hrabal a Jiří Menzel

Režie: JIŘÍ MENZEL

Kamera: Jaromír Šofr

Hudba: Jiří Šust

V hlavní roli:

VÁCLAV

NECKÁŘ



# Closely Watched Trains

aka "Closely Observed Trains"  
"Ostre sledované vlaky" (original title)



Eden Court Cinema  
Tuesday, 11 August  
2015 at 7.15pm

15 | 93 min | Comedy,  
Drama, War | 18  
November 1966  
(Czechoslovakia)

Director:  
Jirí Menzel

Writers:  
Bohumil Hrabal  
(novel), Bohumil  
Hrabal (screenplay),

Stars:  
Václav Neckár, Josef  
Somr, Vlastimil  
Brodský

I've heard that ignorance is bliss. The inability for one to notice their surroundings, especially when they're right in front of their nose, arguably takes talent or an intense amount of naivety.

*Chris Luedtke*  
*Passport Cinema, April 2008*

However, not being subjected to the things that one should experience and take part in/notice has...questionable side effects. Jirí Menzel's *Closely Watched Trains* plays off of this card miraculously with results that may just have to scrape the viewer from the screen.

Milo Hrma (Václav Neckár) has a family history of psychotic laziness. Both his grandfather and father took pride in their early retirements, and Milo has every intention of following in their footsteps by becoming a train dispatcher in his small village. As Milo spends time at the station, he becomes introduced to a world of sexual intrigue, erotica and self-discovery as he decides that his virginity must go. However, with Milo's quest comes frustrations, inconveniences, and a wry world that's caving in all around him.



My impression of the first ten minutes was that it was going to be a moral story about how having nothing to do sucks; I'm quite glad I was wrong. Having nothing to do does play a major role in the world surrounding the characters, eating away at them to the point of where they do find things to do without sitting around and complaining about how there is nothing to do. The plot of the story flows mostly through the eyes of Milo and his quest. The minute Milo enters the train station, everything becomes different, and we become a part of the character's curiosity and boredom.

His frustration and determined attitude drive us to the point of where we're staring at the screen with our mouths gaping, screaming and hoping that he'll succeed.

A part that impressed me quite a bit was that characters are left to massive interpretation. The character Milo is an oblivious character that is clearly new to the way the world works but is also slightly pathetic, yet at the same time slightly

heroic. As war is breaking out, Milo is more focused on the war within himself and disregards the world around him without even so much as acknowledging it, claiming his life is difficult. Hubicka (Josef Somr) could be considered a slime-ball scum, but he's also got his own code of honor and is probably way too in touch with the world and the way it works. Putting these two together gives us the opposite ends of the spectrum jumbled as one, and the train station becomes anything but boring.

The use of camera in this film was amazing. Shots are generally taken at a wide angle to give us a sense of how small the character is compared to the bigger picture, and yet all we can focus on is the character because that's all we care about in the desert wasteland behind them. Shots such as the one where Milo chases after Masa's (Jitka Bendová) train tell us that Milo is willing to go quite the distance before he's willing to give up but not beyond what's he's comfortable with. Camera symbols are around every corner, and they work beautifully.

Closely Watched Trains is one of the few movies that could pull off excitement while someone sits at their desk reading a newspaper. The lingering mood of something more is ever present, and it seldom fails to deliver. The quest of Milo is epic in even the smallest scale. Those looking for a classic go out and rent/buy this one right now, because this is a train you won't want to miss.



The film is based on a 1965 novel of the same name by the noted Czech author Bohumil Hrabal, whose work Jiří Menzel had already begun to adapt in 1965 in the short *The Death of Mr. Balthazar*, a segment from the anthology film of Hrabal stories *Pearls from the Deep*. Barrandov Studios first offered the film project to the more experienced directors Evald Schorm and Vera Chytilova, neither of whom saw a way to adapt the book to film, before offering it to Menzel as his feature-film debut. Menzel and Hrabal worked together closely on the script, making a number of modifications to the novel.



**Eden Court Cinema**  
 Tuesday 25 August 2015 at  
 7.15pm

Immediately banned by government censors on its 1966 release, Vera Chytilová's story of two teenage girls on a playful, hedonistic rampage through Prague's restaurants, clubs and bars is a "psychedelic, feminist farce". Believing that "the only way to behave in a world as spoiled as ours is to become spoiled too, they disrupt, distort and corrupt every situation they encounter." Using animation, music, stock footage and slapstick humour, *Daisies* is a Surreal cinematic experience unlike any other!

**Our next screening...**  
**Vera Chytilová's**  
***Daisies***

The second film in our  
**Czech Season**



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*Inverness Film Fans (InFiFa) meet fortnightly at Eden Court Cinema for screenings and post-film discussions.*

**[www.invernessfilmfans.org](http://www.invernessfilmfans.org)**