

the rhino's ass | a rock and a hard place



January 21, 2011

Dancing in the shadow of Happy Feet

At 46 years of age my slightly crusty and weathered exterior might suggest that I've been around the block once or twice. I've actually been around three times, and I've enjoyed every trip, but my skin is now thicker for it, and to say the least, I'm a lovely tint of jade. I'm seen things I don't believe and done things I'd never do again, although I'd still suggest you try them at least once. There was a time I'm sure, when I felt like a man living in a man's world. That was likely the height of my angst-filled adolescence. A sad era that provided my first kill of urban wildlife with an absolutely gorgeous .177 Webley Vulcan high velocity air rifle, which I refinished years later and still own today. And yes, it remains an absolutely gorgeous small fry killing machine. One day, at the end of civilization as we know it, I'm confident I could put my Webley to use on such urban

delights, to feed my family. Which reminds me to stock up on pellets.

I'm sure I didn't give a shit about garbage circa 1980. Who did! A serious helping of fish and chips was around \$5, and I took that for granted too. Who didn't! I once took a lot of things for granted — one of the many fringe benefits of being a man at the ass end of the industrial revolution and the dawn of the single largest rising in the history of mankind, of people who simply don't give a !@#\$. Unfortunately they all had kids and gave them cell phones, Disney's Abridged History of the World, white trash reality networks and of course, the 'play by your rules 'cause we're too self-centred to spend the time raising you right' global mantra, aka. 'screw everyone and everything that stands in the way of you too taking it all'.

“The aliens are taking all the fish,” declares Mumble, the Emperor Penguin star of the 2006 animated family film, ‘Happy Feet’. Such followed quickly on the webbed heels of the extremely popular and visually breathtaking 2005 real life family film, ‘March of the Penguins’. Happy Feet was also breathtaking in its own animated way, yet was vastly different in the sense that Morgan Freeman's endless monotone narrative inspired me to tear my ears off, whereas, Mumble's humanity reality check makes me want to tear my heart out. Happy Feet is a sad, sad tale dressed in a pristine white veil of song and dance that at times, somewhat mirrors the survival tactics of flesh and blood Antarctic kin. If you haven't yet seen it, you should. And if Happy Feet doesn't move you in some way, you should kill yourself before you do anymore damage to the universe. Seriously, if this film doesn't leave you feeling just a little naked, you are most definitely part of the problem that Happy Feet attempts in the shallows, to illustrate.

“I will appeal to their good nature,” insists Mumble as his innocent heart compels him to chase an alien fishing vessel into oblivion. How sad is that, to consider that Mumble's character, and almost every innocent thing that ever lived in our time, has no idea of the degree of heartless indifference and carnage mankind is capable of. The alien's better nature threw Mumble into a zoo, where he survived only to lose his dignity and the fire in his eyes.

I'm 46-years-old. I have skin as thick as a Rhinoceros. I cried with tears and a gutted chest when Mumble lost all hope. I felt every blow as he threw his weakening body in vain against the aquarium wall. I was, in a word, ‘ashamed’. I remain ashamed. Months on, many screenings later with my beautiful little girl, I still hurt to my eyeballs though I try my hardest to keep it all down. It is just a movie, right. Mumble's just a character, right. The heartless bastards without any good nature are just aliens, right!

There are other moments in this sublime children's epic that should leave us questioning our collective nature. The movie itself suggests a radical turn of events that seemingly overnight, changed for the better, the fragile Antarctic ecosystem which we and the penguins depend on — A fantasy filled romp of sorts across global consortiums and frenzied media that brings about, in one two-hour movie, something mankind will

never achieve in the real world, in our lifetime and beyond.

Mumble danced. Unlike his fellow penguins, who's traditional seasoned voices harmonized in the thousands to call upon 'the wisdom of the ages', the little penguin that shouldn't have but did, danced his way out of his flock, into an American zoo, and back to his homeland wearing a radio transmitter that signalled the researchers that followed the lead of the networks crying, "What does it all mean," and "Why should we care."

I'm sure I could find millions of people, including the President of the United States of America, who'll insist we should care because their gods wants us to care, but they'd be wrong. I'm pretty sure that if their gods think it's okay for millions of innocent children to be butchered every year around the world, they're not too concerned about some Dodos on an iceberg at the ass end of the planet. The realty here is, if you have to ask the question, "Why should I care," you probably lack the moral fibre, compassion and sense of universal responsibility to truly make a difference, even if you're eventually 'convinced' to give a damn.

This is actually a question of what is inherently, universally right or wrong. This isn't science or religion. This stuff is inside us, imprinted somehow by the great oneness of being that implies that if we are good stewards of our Earth, she will provide. There's no proof of such, of course, beyond the prophecies of the Great Davids, Attenborough and Suzuki. But there is what we feel in our hearts when we make the right choices. It has its own rhythm. It literally moves us. It is fittingly rhythm that Happy Feet employs in its final scenes to drive a sense of heart-felt understanding and respect between penguin and people. Mumble dances and the flock dances too until the beating of flippers and feet sounds like an excellent rock concert and the dude on the hill falls over happy drunk at the awesome sight of thousands literally dancing for their very lives.

Happy Feet ends well. All the fishing boats magically withdraw, the penguins don't starve, there's a big party and Mumble eventually gets the girl if not his singing voice. It's a shame that it's just a movie. A shame that we needed to carry the message through a movie. And that many might not listen or care until such is candy-coated via a blockbuster work of family fiction now available on DVD. It's a shame lastly, that Happy Feet will not be enough to turn the tide, and that men will always be men pretending to live and rule in a man's world, at whatever cost.

I'm 46-years-old and I've seen things you wouldn't believe, and yet I cry every time my daughter watches Happy Feet. It makes my heart hurt. It makes me angry. It makes me feel hopeless, and I'm not ashamed of that.

Chris J. Vaughan Griffiths

COMMENTS | *click here to tell me my head's up my ass... again*

Theo Massop: January 24, 2011

In today's world the myths and fables of the past that were designed to help us cope, adapt and understand the mystery of life are no longer repeated or passed on. Now they are rewritten into palatable Hollywood films which borrow and draw from the myths and legends of the past. An attempt, although some what unconsciously, to explain ever present duality, good vs bad, evil vs benevolence, life and death, in a world that we inherently sense the oneness that is the reality of our circumstance, that all things are connected.

Will mankind find it's way out of this mess? Perhaps, perhaps not. Will consciousness and the universe exist beyond man? Yes it will. The hurt and the happiness makes it all real for us as individuals in this life.

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