

Blu-Ray Review: John Malkovich Anchors Excellent 'Disgrace'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 4, 2010 - 10:27pm

- [Anna-Marie Monticelli](#) [2]
- [Antoinette Engel](#) [3]
- [Blu-ray Review](#) [4]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [5]
- [Disgrace](#) [6]
- [Eriq Ebouaney](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [J.M. Coatzee](#) [9]
- [Jessica Haines](#) [10]
- [John Malkovich](#) [11]
- [Steve Jacobs](#) [12]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [13]

CHICAGO – One of our best living actors, John Malkovich, drives the very good drama “Disgrace” with the subtlety of his decisions as an actor reflected back in a complicated script based on the acclaimed, Booker Prize-winning novel by J.M. Coatzee. This is a rare film willing to leave some questions unanswered and to be content with the knowledge that life is full of gray moral areas more often than black and white.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

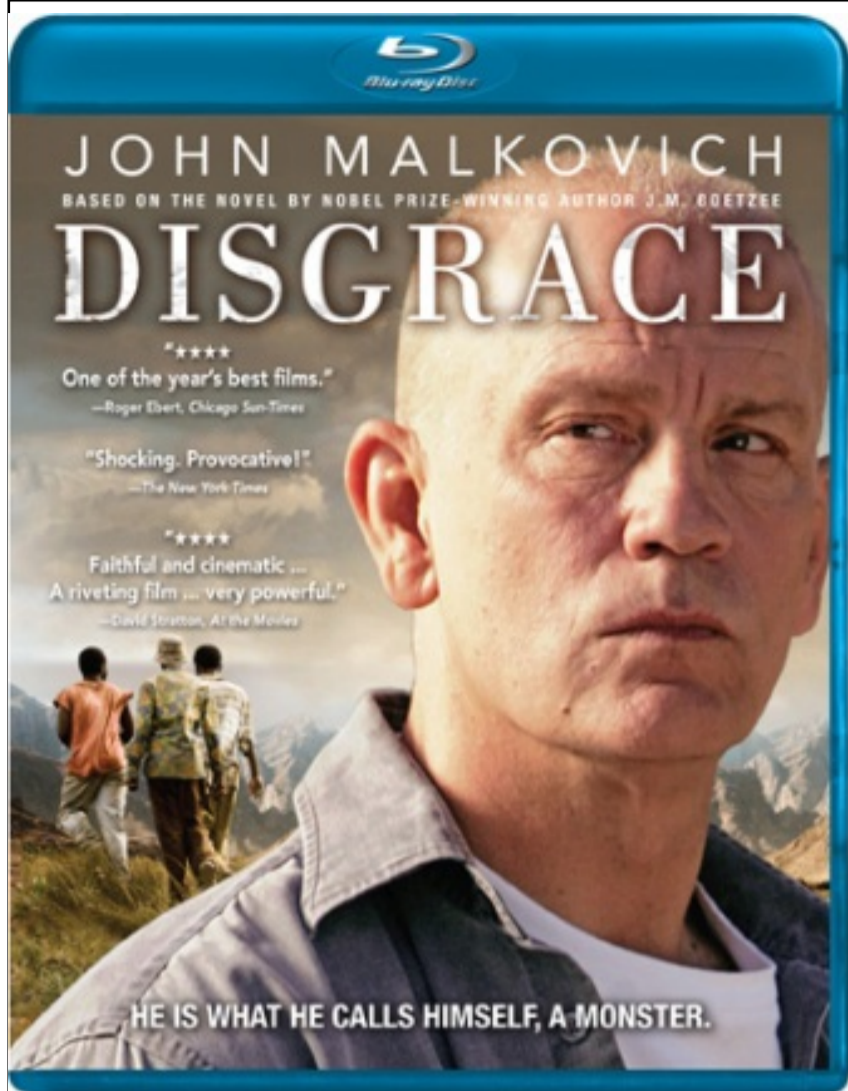
Malkovich plays the supremely cocky David Lurie, a Professor at the University of Cape Town. We meet David sleeping with a prostitute and watch as he later beds a gorgeous student named Melanie (Antoinette Engel), a girl literally less than half his age. David is one of those men almost proud of the fact that he does as he chooses. He doesn't literally rape Melanie, but her reaction to their sex together makes it clear that it's at least something emotionally and psychologically questionable, as it often is when older men use positions of power to seduce younger women.



Disgrace was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 27th, 2010.

Photo credit: Image Entertainment

David is unashamed of his actions, even after he is called in front of the school board and asked to apologize, atone, and resign. He is let go from his position and goes to visit his daughter Lucy (Jessica Haines), a lesbian who lives basically alone on a remote farm and makes a living by breeding dogs and managing a garden. Something absolutely horrible happens to David and Lucy on that farm that I won't spoil here but it calls into question both issues of male dominance and echoes of racial divide in post-apartheid South Africa.



Disgrace was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 27th, 2010.
Photo credit: Image Entertainment

So much of the drama of "Disgrace" is about the details that David misses and how little he understands about not just the changing landscape of his country but the fact that he doesn't always have the answers. He thinks he's done no wrong with Melanie since she was willing. But he misunderstands the impropriety of an older teacher seducing a student. Later, he keeps saying how "he was there" in a certain situation but is reminded that he was not exactly. David is the kind of man who misses the individual trees because he thinks he knows everything about the forest.

And, of course, "Disgrace" is about a change of character for David, but it is a very subtle one. Men like David don't change as drastically as film and television would have you believe. For most people, change of character comes with questioning ones own beliefs and Malkovich completely sells that subtle transitional arc. It's a remarkable performance, one of the most underrated of 2009.

It is difficult to discuss too much of "Disgrace" without spoiling its dramatic twists and turns, but know that this is the kind of film that provokes conversation. It is an incredibly complex piece of work that takes time to dissect and it's one of the best new release dramas currently on Blu-ray.

The Blu-ray of "Disgrace" includes several interviews with the cast and crew along with some standard behind-the-scenes material. The interviews are actually very insightful as to the themes of the film, particularly the ones with writer Anna-Maria Monticelli and director Steve Jacobs.

"Disgrace" was so limited in its U.S. release that it didn't even gross \$75k in theaters. That means you probably haven't seen it. You should.

'Disgrace' is released by Image Entertainment and stars John Malkovich, Jessica Haines, Eriq Ebouaney, and Antoinette Engel. It was written by Anna-Marie Monticelli and directed by Steve Jacobs. The Blu-Ray and DVD were released on April 27th, 2010. It is rated PG-13.



[14]

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- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>
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