

Film Review: Gus Van Sant Turns Death Into Poetry in ‘Restless’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 23, 2011 - 9:08am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Gus Van Sant’s “Restless” is an undeniably twee and hipster film that will annoy some viewers about as much as bad performance art, but I found the film’s commitment to a unique tone and world view refreshing as so few directors even know what those words mean. It may not be grounded enough to be emotionally effective, but another strong performance from the stellar Mia Wasikowska and a consistency to its vision make “Restless” worth a look.

“Restless” is a film about two people facing death. It is not just an unknown quantity in their lives, as it is for so many people. It is something that has forever impacted one of them and will soon take another. In many ways, Jason Lew’s script feels like an attempt to offer a different take on the common love-through-illness tale. It’s like “Dying Young” as remade by The Decemberists.



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “Restless” in our reviews section.](#) [13]

With a striking resemblance to his father Dennis, Henry Hopper plays the poorly-named Enoch, a kid with clear emotional and psychological baggage beyond even the fact that he talks to the ghost of a WWII Kamikaze pilot named Hiroshi (Ryo Kase). In fact, the two even play Battleship together. Enoch was in a horrible car accident that took his parents and sent him to live with his Aunt Mabel (Jane Adams). After the car crash, he was dead for a few minutes and awoke to find his new friend in Hiroshi, although the “ghost” aspect of the character isn’t overplayed. He could just as easily be a figment of Enoch’s imagination.

Enoch also woke up with an obsession with death. He goes to funerals and listens to the eulogies. He wanders graveyards. At one of the memorials, he runs into a sweet girl named Annabel (Wasikowska) who seems to be the first person to have actually seen Enoch in months. The two fall for each other and we soon learn that Annabel has cancer and not long to live. Enoch & Annabel find brief love in the few months she has left in Van Sant’s dreamlike film, one that doesn’t really address the truth of what it’s like to die from cancer as much as it suggests there is still beauty to be found in our final days, even if they come way too soon.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico’s full “Restless” review.](#) [13]

“Restless” stars Mia Wasikowska, Henry Hopper, Ryo Kase, Jane Adams, and Schuyler Fisk. It was written by Jason Lew and directed by Gus Van Sant. It opens in Chicago on September 23rd, 2011.



Restless
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

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