Blu-Ray Review: Amazing ‘Waltz With Bashir’ a Must-See in HD

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on June 25, 2009 - 7:00am

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CHICAGO – Ari Folman’s amazing “Waltz With Bashir” defies easy description. It may sound cliched but it is literally unlike anything you’ve ever seen before. Folman’s amazing film should have won Best Foreign Language Film (it lost the Oscar to the inferior “Departures”) and should have also been nominated for Best Animated Film and Best Documentary. Don’t miss it.

Blu-Ray Rating: 5.0/5.0

Folman knew that a typical non-fiction or narrative structure couldn’t accurately convey what he was trying to say with “Waltz With Bashir”. Consequently, conveying the impact the film is can be equally difficult. Let me just say this. I see hundreds of films a year and “Bashir” is one of the most powerful experiences that I’ve had in a very long time.

“Waltz With Bashir” is an emotional, evocative document of the way that memory works its way back from the repressed regions of the brain back to the conscious. The film starts with a vision by one of the filmmaker’s friends, a fellow soldier in the Israel Defense Forces from 1982 during the Lebanon War. The vision is of the 26 dogs that he shot during the conflict in Beirut.
Waltz With Bashir was released on Blu-Ray on June 23rd, 2009.

Photo credit: New Line

His buddy’s nightmare vision brings memories back to the surface for Folman himself. He starts having a recurring dream in which he and two soldiers are bathing off the coast. They see flares and enter a desolate city where they are overrun by screaming women. The memories clearly have something to do with the massacre of Palestinian women and children at Sabra and Shatila but he can’t put the pieces together about exactly what happened there.

For the rest of the film, Folman conducts interviews with other soldiers in Lebanon, a psychiatrist, and a reporter during the war. Instead of a standard, talking-head approach, Folman went home and animated the conversations, inter-cutting their revelations with dream-like recreations of either what they’re talking about or more visions that have stuck with them for years.

An inaccurate reading of “Waltz With Bashir” might think that Folman is asking for pity or concern about his involvement, however inadvertent, in a horrible genocide. He’s not. At one point he compares his role to that of being around the Nazis when they committed their crimes in World War II. Regret and self-loathing permeate “Waltz With Bashir”. It is about how cultures, not just people, come to terms with their dark pasts - in fragments, slowly, and painfully.

It may be about a 27-year-old genocide, but with the current situation in Iran and the death that continues to be a major part of the fabric of the Middle East in general, “Waltz With Bashir” couldn’t be more resonant today. It’s a must-see in every way.

Sony treats this masterpiece with a reasonable level of respect by giving it a stellar video and audio transfer and a better than average collection of special features. The technical transfer is nearly perfect with vibrant colors and no loss of color detail. The audio mix is similarly better than average. Sony continues to deliver in the world of Blu-Ray.

Special features include a commentary by Folman, “Surreal Soldiers: Making Waltz With Bashir,” a Q & A with Folman, and “Building the Scenes - Animatics”.

‘Waltz With Bashir’ is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and was written and directed by Ari Folman. The Blu-Ray and DVD were released on June 23rd, 2009. It is rated PG.