DVD Review: 'The Limits of Control' Sinks Under Weight of Pretension

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on December 3, 2009 - 5:44pm

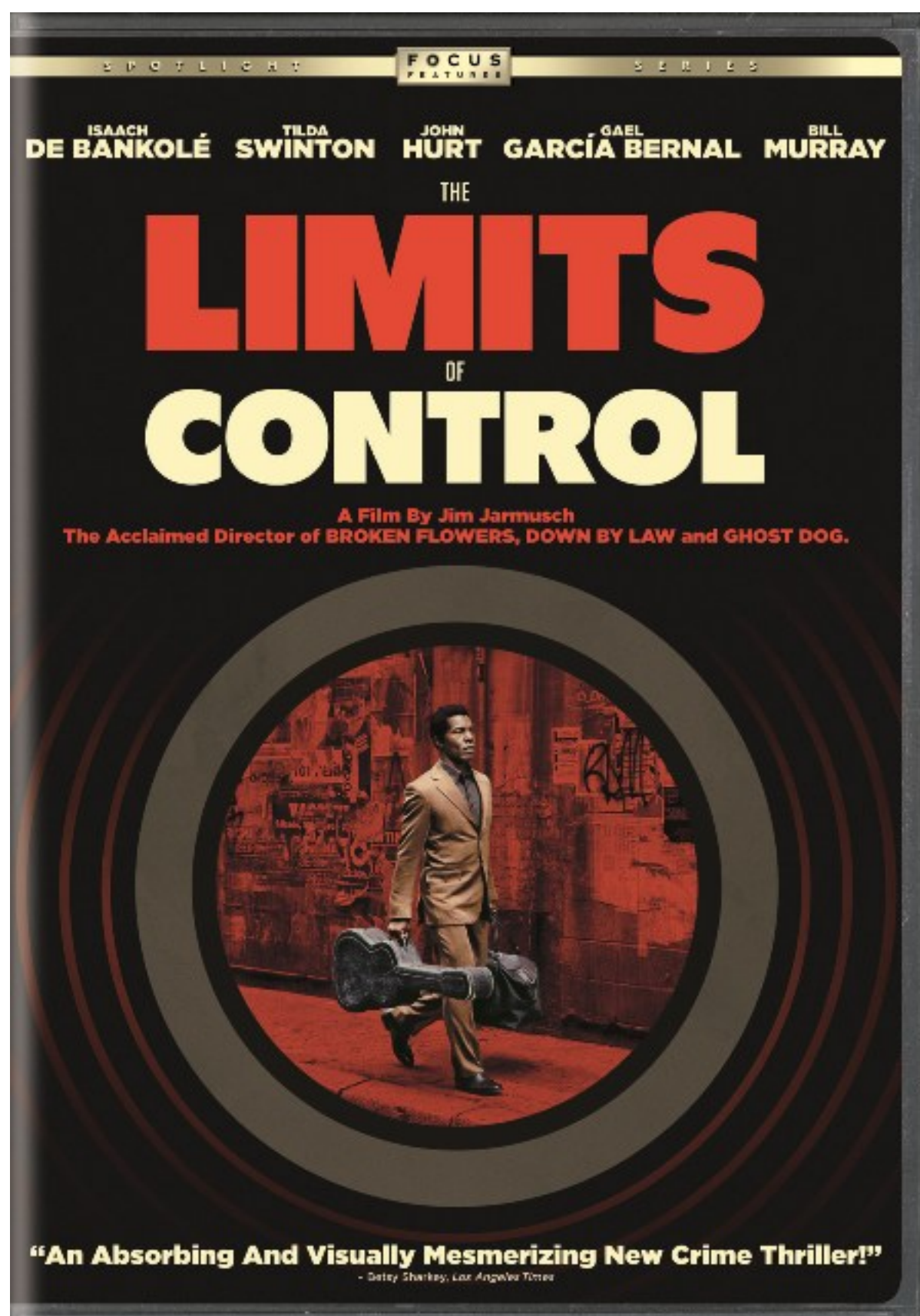- Bill Murray [2]
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CHICAGO – Jim Jarmusch's latest film experiment "The Limits of Control" is another example of a once-intriguing filmmaker becoming bogged down by his own self-aware style, delivering easily the worst film of one of the most important careers in the history of independent film. Jarmusch changed indie cinema in the '80s. Now, he doesn't even seem interested in his own films.

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DVD Rating: **1.0**/**5.0**

The title of "The Limits of Control" is a reference to nothing that happens in the film but feels appropriate for such an overly mannered exercise in directorial power. How far can Jarmusch push the audience? How little plot will they take? What is the limit of pretension? These are the more pertinent questions to "The Limits of Control," a film that seems designed to push audience buttons, something that I have no problem with if there's something worthwhile in return. Nothing but frustration results from "The Limits of Control".

The Limits of Control was released on DVD on November 17th, 2009.
Photo credit: Universal Home Video

Even recapping the plot of "The Limits of Control" is difficult. A largely silent man (Isaach de Bankole) arrives in Spain on a mysterious assignment. He meets up with various strangers, each one slightly illuminating part of his mission but shining more light on Jarmusch's pretension. They all start their conversation asking the man if he speaks Spanish and most are more of a monologue as the man barely speaks or registers any human emotion whatsoever. One, played by Tilda Swinton, even references how she likes it in movies when the characters just sit and don't talk. Then they sit and don't talk.

The man rides around the city, walks to the art museum, converses with a naked woman (Paz de la Huerta), and eventually runs into a cast of familiar faces that includes John Hurt, Bill Murray, Gael Garcia Bernal, and Swinton. All of it falls into that gray area between realism and art known as pretension.

The DVD for "The Limits of Control" includes two featurettes - "Behind Jim Jarmusch" and "Untitled Landscapes".

'The Limits of Control' is released by Universal Home Video and stars Isaach de Bankole, Tilda Swinton, Bill Murray, Gael Garcia Bernal, John Hurt, and Paz de la Huerta. The film was written and directed by Jim Jarmusch and was released on DVD on November 17th, 2009. It is rated R. It runs 116 minutes.

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