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FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA AND TIM ROTH

Experiment Beautifully with *Youth Without Youth*

BY JAMES DUSENBERRY

IT WAS 10 LONG YEARS AGO when film audiences were last graced with the directorial genius of Francis Ford Coppola. Now, Coppola has teamed up with actor Tim Roth to bring us *Youth Without Youth*, a film about one man's journey through old age and his own mind, based on the novella by Mircea Eliade.

The film follows Dominic Matei, a 1940s Romanian intellectual who goes through a near death experience, finding himself with rejuvenated youth and incredible mental abilities – something the Nazis soon discover, endangering Dominic's life. Roth portrays Dominic at different stages in his life and deals with his changing mental

abilities during the performance, something Roth says attracted him to the role.

"When this came along it was unlike anything I had ever done before," Roth says. "Is all of this a dream, is all of this unreal or is this something that's going on in his mind? That element of it, that layer of it, for me was very interesting."

Roth claims that working with Coppola made him care about acting again.

"I was bored ... I was done with it ... I think I had reached the point where I had enough, and there was nothing around that was really interesting to play anymore. Then when this came along, it was a

complete challenge; it was different. Now I'm completely invigorated again, and that's definitely what Francis did."

Though Roth – along with most of the film industry and audience – holds Coppola up as one of the greatest directors, Coppola humbly insists otherwise.

"I absolutely am not a master of film," he explains, "but I don't think anybody is. Film is a medium that's only existed for 100 years."

He explains his personal quest for achievement in film by adding, "I would love to find my place in movies. I don't want to just be a director who directs a movie every year."

In *Youth Without Youth's* tale of altered time and mental queries, Coppola found a story he could use for experimentation in the film medium.

"I was very interested in film, how you express consciousness. There are parts of your life you don't understand like, 'Why are you here? What's going to happen when you die? What's the difference between what you dream about and what you experience?'"

Regarding most movies, Coppola asks, "Why do films have to be of subject matters less fascinating than books can be?"

Ignoring his many awards and accolades, he hopes *Youth Without Youth* will add something to the art



Tim Roth and Francis Ford Coppola on the set of *Youth Without Youth*

of film.

"It could maybe contribute some new ideas to the language of movies. I thought, movies are only 100 years old, why is it that the language isn't evolving as it did under Eisenstein or Pabst or D.W. Griffith? Surely all that was discovered about movies wasn't finished then!"

Having experienced the way history judges films and their directors with his classic *Apocalypse Now* – which did not garner the critical acclaim it has today when it debuted – Coppola's view has changed a bit with age.

After achieving huge success and worldwide fame he says, "Now I'm in it a little more for my own love of it and want to make beautiful things. I hope I have a big audience that will see it, but I know all the kids in

Dayton, Ohio are not going to rush to see my film. But maybe someday they'll see it.

"I didn't want to make a movie that the audience wouldn't enjoy the first time through," he adds, "but I also knew I was making a film that was more adult."

Coppola's passion for the art of film and his desire to bring back the innovation and wondrous curiosity of all the possibilities a film can be – which the aforementioned directors had when they began making their first films – comes out clearly in this beautiful experiment of thought, consciousness, color and sound placed on a reel of film titled *Youth Without Youth*. ■

Youth Without Youth releases in select theaters Dec. 14.