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Scenes also have been added and much has been taken away. Still, only those intimately familiar with the trilogy as a whole will be able to follow the labyrinthine paths made even more mystifying due to the wholesale editing of the six hours-plus trilogy into a normal feature length. These "Suitcases," therefore, will be lucky to get unpacked at festivals let alone art-house theaters.

Greenaway's personal narrative style has frequently been accused of being incomprehensible. However, the "Tulse Luper" trilogy, with its baroque asides and multi-layered texts and images, isn't actually difficult to follow.

The basic premise — Tulse Luper (played at different ages by JJ Feild, Stephen Billington and Roger Rees) being swept into the ill-fortuned tides of the 20th century and forced to spend his life in a succession of imprisonments — can easily be understood as a parable of fascism's suppression of the individual.

So, too, the suitcases, all 92 of them, are handy encapsulations of a life which, in its wanderings, parallels the increasingly mobile modern condition.

The problem with this new version is that it never shakes the feeling that it is a condensation, destroying any real understanding of Luper's character and obsessions. Those unfamiliar with the story have little to guide them through the currents that wash Luper on shore in places ranging from Utah to the Soviet gulags.

For all its moments of mesmerizing beauty, this new 'Suitcases' presents images with no engagement, which leads to tedium.

The humor, especially apparent in the first two installments, has mostly been chucked overboard.

The greatest number of added scenes fit into the ending of the original part one. Players whose function was only hinted at in the trilogy are given more heft: Luper's relationship with Cissie Colpitts (Valentina Cervi) is expanded, and the fate of Luper's double Floris Creps (also played by Feild) is revealed, making sense of the character's inclusion in the story.

The additions, however, forced much more to be hacked off. For a series that's meant to be expansive (with Web sites, books and exhibitions), Greenaway's decision to shrink its core makes little sense.

In what was the original part three, signs of the helmer's evident boredom are even more apparent than in the trilogy, with animated outlines casually superimposed on images as if he's mindlessly doodling on a text he knows too well.

Greenaway said he conceived of the "Tulse Luper" pics as something to be casually dipped into. But, for all its moments of mesmerizing beauty, this version presents images with no engagement, which leads to inevitable tedium.

Looking for a return to the Greenaway of old is pointless, but looking forward to a Greenaway whose considered engagement with his cinematic projects makes artistic sense shouldn't be too much to ask.

A LIFE IN SUITCASES

(U.K.-SPAIN-LUXEMBOURG-HUNGARY-ITALY-GERMANY-RUSSIA)

VARIETY JUNE 6-12 2005

A Fortissimo Films presentation of a Kees Kasander production, in co-production with A BS Production-Barcelona (Spain)/Delux Prods. S.A. (Luxembourg)/Focus Film (Hungary)/Gam Film srl (Italy)/Net Entertainment A.G. (Germany)/12A Film Studios (Russia). (International sales: Fortissimo Films, Amsterdam.) Produced by Kees Kasander. Co-producers, Victoria Goodall, Eva Baro, Antoni Sole, Jimmy De Brabant, Aron Sipos, Gherardo Pagliei, Elisabetta Riga, Klaus Volkenborn, Sandor Soeth, Alexander Mikhaylov. Executive producers, Carlo Dusi, Wouter Barendrecht, Michael J. Werner.

Directed, written by Peter Greenaway. Camera (color, HD), Reinier van Brummelen; editors, Elmer Leupen, Chris Wyatt; music, Borut Krzisinik, Giovanni Sollima; production designers, Marton Agh, Billy Leliveld, Pirra Lorenzo, Bettina Schmidt, Davide Bassan; costume designers, Andrea Flesch, Beatrice Giannini; sound (Dolby-E surround), Janos Koporosy; line producers, Jet Christiaanse, Edmon Roch; casting, Sharon Howard-Field. **Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (market), May 12, 2005. Running time: 125 MIN.**

With: JJ Feild, Roger Rees, Raymond J. Barry, Stephen Billington, Valentina Cervi, Roberto Citran, Caroline Dhavernas, Porgy Fransen, Debbie Harry, Albert Kitzl, Steven Mackintosh, Jordi Molla, Drew Mulligan, Ornella Muti, Anna Galiena, Franka Potente, Isabella Rossellini, Maria Schrader, Nigel Terry, Ana Torrent, Scot Williams, Yorick van Wageningen, Jack Wouterse.

By JAY WEISSBERG

A Life in Suitcases" is being billed as an edited theatrical release version of writer-director Peter Greenaway's three-part HD "Tulse Luper" opus.