



Fact Sheet

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Media Studies

Film Review: *Into the Blue*

From the time when movies began, the adventure movie has been one of the most popular formats. And rightly so – a good movie can whisk you away from your suburban comfort zone and carry you along into a story offering excitement, thrills and romance. I don't think that any other entertainment medium does this as effectively as a good movie. Especially if you see the movie in the traditional manner – a darkened cinema with good audio equipment. That way you will be able to become completely absorbed by the movie. Nobody will ring your doorbell in the middle of the movie. Your noisy suburban neighbours can scream their heads off and it won't intrude on your concentration. And, if you are polite and sensible and have turned off your mobile, the phone can't distract you either. You just sit back and allow the magic carpet of the movie to carry you off on a wonderful adventure. For my money, if an adventure movie works well, there's nothing that comes close for totally absorbing enjoyment.

And there's one form of the adventure movie that I find works best of all. The search for lost treasure. What better motivation for a storyline than a helter-skelter gallop to be the first to retrieve a mysterious, legendary lost treasure? The story will inevitably carry our hero and heroine into strange and intriguing locations where they will be required to avoid the clutches of the baddies who are always, simultaneously, on the trail of the same treasure. When you think about it that way – and to get very deep and philosophical for one moment – it's pretty much a metaphor for much of what we do in our daily lives. The pursuit of the Grail. I guess that's why the treasure hunt continues to work so well as a theme. But enough with the philosophy.

A long time ago I became hooked on this genre - probably with the 1950 version of the King Solomon's Mines yarn – the one with Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr. I seem to recall that many of the Johnny Weismuller Tarzan flicks also had treasure hunts as a major element of their plots. In more recent years there have been some beauties – the Indiana Jones series; Romancing the Stone and its sequel, Jewel of the Nile; the sharp-edged Gulf War movie called Three Kings starring George Clooney and the very recent Sahara, with Matthew McConaughey and Penelope Cruz – a better movie than most critics allowed which deserved to do better at the box office than it did.

And that brings us right up to date with another good treasure hunt movie - Into the Blue. Some local critics have been somewhat dismissive of this movie – labelling it as a teen flick. It's not and it's rated M which means that it really should not be on the menu for properly guided teenagers anyway. My feeling is that the local critic's attitude to this movie has a lot to do with the required pose of the cynical journalist. To become absorbed by a treasure hunt movie you need to be able to reach inside yourself and unlock elements of your childhood and elements of romance and imagination. I guess daily journalism crushes these elements in some people. I myself worked for a daily newspaper for a while but gave it up and moved on a long time ago.



Into the Blue carries you to the bottom of the sea looking for a legendary pirate treasure and it does so with great style. The underwater photography is superb – amongst the best I have ever seen – and that includes those Imax specials. The images reveal an underwater landscape of white sand and mysterious canyons inhabited by swirling schools of colourful fish, startling camouflaged sting rays and sharks of both passive and threatening varieties. As far as I could tell, most of the imagery was real and refreshingly free of the Computer Generated stuff which nowadays degrades many movies into a kind of X-box experience. Into the Blue is set and shot in the Bahamas and director John Stockwell establishes a very good sense of the warm tropical location.

The hero and heroine of Into the Blue, played with great appeal by Paul Walker and Jessica Alba, have to contend not only with a range of baddies – whose characters are well-written and more multi-dimensional than you would normally expect of baddies in an adventure movie – but also with the lack of moral fibre shown by their friends and, in addition, the corruption of local authorities.

The plot has more twists and turns than a tiger shark preparing to savage its prey but you always have the feeling that, as a viewer, you are not being led by the nose down any pointless blind alleys. There are plenty of surprises but the story is unfolded with a satisfying logic which allows you to relax into becoming absorbed by the adventure. It's a good ride.

At the end of Into the Blue, a serious on-screen caption tells us that Six Billion dollars in treasure still lies beneath the Earth's oceans. Goodness knows how they know these things.

However, if the existence of considerable quantities of lost treasure continues to inspire movie-makers to construct movies like Into the Blue then I'm glad of it. I'm already looking forward with pleasurable expectation to my next escapist trip into the unknown in search of long lost booty.

Now just a quick word about Wolf Creek, the horror movie which has been the subject of a deluge of publicity just lately. I have not seen it and I have no plans to do so. I did see a major sequence from this movie at a production industry trade show in Sydney a few months ago and I thought that, for me, that was enough. The sequence I saw was horrifying – very effective movie-making – but it was, purely and simply, the stuff of nightmares. So, if you want to be shocked and horrified, Wolf Creek will do it for you. But it's not something I want to put myself through so don't expect a review of that movie from me.

So, until next time, happy treasure hunting.

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