



The Wonders (Le meraviglie)

With a pre-recorded introduction by director Mark Cousins.

Director Alice Rohrwacher on 'The Wonders'

With Nanni Moretti, Paolo Sorrentino and Matteo Garrone still wondering how they managed to return from this year's Cannes Film Festival empty-handed, last year's Cannes Grand Prix winning second feature from Italian filmmaker Alice Rohrwacher finally gets a UK release. *The Wonders* tells of a family of beekeepers (German father, Italian mother, four pre-teen daughters) whose way of life is gradually being eroded. At the centre of the drama is the eldest daughter, 12 year-old Gelsomina (Maria Alexandra Lungu), who longs to escape from her overbearing father Wolfgang (Sam Louwyck). She encourages the family to enter into a glitzy TV competition fronted by the glamorous Milly Catena (Monica Bellucci), which sets up camp in the area purporting to celebrate ancient customs and local produce. Wolfgang initially dismisses the idea before unexpectedly softening his stance.

Featuring tactile photography shot on Super 16, and a textured soundscape, the film echoes the work of Claire Denis and Sandrine Veysset, especially the latter's *Will It Snow for Christmas?* (1996), which was also shot by *The Wonders*' prolific DP Hélène Louvart.

How did the project begin?

It began with my desire to show the changes the Italian landscape has gone through – the transformation of the countryside from a place of work to a theme park celebrating ancient values. When I was abroad, it seemed that the only thing our country invested in was this salute to the past, but I wanted to show how agricultural work in the here and now isn't being safeguarded. The Italian landscape has always been one of the great features of our country so I started from there. I went back to the area I grew up in [Umbria] and carried out lots of interviews.

After Corpo celeste, this is the second film in which you've explored the world of adolescence.

I very much like transitional characters and periods. The character of Gelsomina is very different to that of Marta [Yle Vianello] in *Corpo celeste*. I wanted to take a different kind of approach to representing that particular time in a person's life.

Many critics have talked about the autobiographical aspect of The Wonders. Your father is a beekeeper, like the father in the film.

Yes, he was a great help in terms of the practical side of beekeeping. The story of the film isn't autobiographical, but I know the world in which the film is set very well.

The Wonders is your second collaboration with DP H  l  ne Louvart and the second time you've used Super 16 rather than digital – was there any particular reason behind that?

If they'll let me, I hope to continue shooting on Super 16 because I identify more with this way of working. In terms of the filming itself, it's completely different. It's not a slower process as such, but it's one that has very clear limits and if I don't have limits, I don't know what direction to go in. When we make films, we want to control everything, but I like it when there are small elements that remain alive and unpredictable.

Pale blues and golden yellows dominate the film's visual palette – how did you approach the use of colour?

We wanted to keep the colours as they were and we tried to capture the strong natural light of that area of countryside in the summer. In post-production, we only modified the whites and blacks, as filmmakers shooting on film would have done in the past

The film's sound design is interesting in that you don't use a traditional film score. All the music and sounds we hear are diegetic. There's one song in particular – Ambra Angiolini's 1997 pop hit 'T'appartengo' ['I Belong to You'] – which assumes great importance.

I really like that song – by including it, I wanted to go beyond the stereotype of what people from rural areas are usually said to listen to. For me, it's a song that bridges the gap between city and countryside. I thought that the natural sounds of the location made for a very full soundscape. Besides, I think music is so powerful that I didn't want to go overboard. It's a bit like eating meat; you can have it, but not everyday. I was open to having a score but when my editor and I assembled a cut of the film, we thought that the soundtrack worked well the way it was.

The use of three languages in The Wonders, with characters moving quickly – sometimes mid-sentence – between French, German and Italian, is something you don't see that often.

The way people use language tells you a lot about their character but it also tells you a lot about his/her life experience – it's not just about their nationality. For instance, the way I speak English tells you a lot about my background and so does the way I speak Italian. The way I speak tells you more about me than just where I'm from – you can tell if I've learned the language from books or from the street, if I haven't studied or if I've studied a lot. I did quite a bit of research into how the father might speak – he's someone who never has time to read a book, but then again he knows three languages and has obviously travelled to other countries.

Alice Rohrwacher interviewed by Pasquale Iannone, *Sight & Sound*, August 2015

THE WONDERS (LE MERAVIGLIE)

Director: Alice Rohrwacher
©: Tempesta srl/Amka Films Productions/Pola Pandora Filmproduktions GmbH/ZDF/RSI Radiotelevisione Svizzera SSG SSR idée suisse
Presented by: Tempesta, Rai Cinema
Production Companies: Tempesta, Carlo Cresto-Dina
Produced with: Rai Cinema
In co-production with: Amka Films Productions, Pola Pandora Filmproduktion, RSI Radiotelevisione Svizzera/SSG SSR, ZDF/Das Kleine Fernsehspiel
In collaboration with: Arte
With the support of: Ufficio Federale della Cultura (UFC) Svizzera, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg
Financed by: Investitionbank des Landes Brandenburg
In collaboration with: Cineteca di Bologna
Made with the participation of: Regione Toscana
In association with: BNL-Gruppo BNP Paribas
Unit Production Manager: Carla Altieri
Casting: Chiara Polizzi, Amel Soudani
Written by: Alice Rohrwacher
Director of Photography: Hélène Louvart
Editor: Marco Spoletini
Production Designer: Erita Frigato
Costume Designer: Loredana Buscemi
Music: Piero Crucitti
Sound: Christophe Giovannoni

Cast:

Maria Alexandra Lungu (*Gelsomina*)
Sam Louwyck (*Wolfgang*)
Alba Rohrwacher (*Angelica*)
Sabine Timoteo (*Cocò*)
Agnese Graziani (*Marinella*)
Luis Huilca Logrono (*Martin*)
Eva Lea Pace Morrow (*Caterina*)
Maris Stella Morrow (*Luna*)
Monica Bellucci (*Milly Catena*)
Carlo Tarmati (*Carlo Portarena*)

Italy/Switzerland/Germany 2014©
111 mins

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The Wonders (Le meraviglie)

+ pre-recorded intro by Mark Cousins
Sat 22 May 15:15; Thu 3 Jun 20:30
Hair + pre-recorded intro by Kleber Mendonça Filho
Sat 22 May 20:30; Fri 28 May 17:45
Magnificent Obsession + **Fear Eats the Soul (Angst essen Seele auf)**
Sun 23 May 15:45 (+ intro by Heather Stewart, BFI Creative Director);
Sun 6 Jun 18:40
Beau Travail + pre-recorded intro by Kirsten Johnson
Sun 23 May 18:40; Sun 30 May 18:20
Mirror (Zerkalo) + pre-recorded intro by Malgorzata Szumowska
Mon 24 May 17:50; Wed 9 Jun 14:30
Syndromes and a Century (Sang sattawat)
+ pre-recorded intro by Chaitanya Tamhane
Mon 24 May 20:30; Sat 19 Jun 17:50
Goodbye, Dragon Inn (Bú sànn)
Wed 26 May 18:10 (+ intro by Peter Strickland); Wed 2 Jun 20:50
The Gleaners & I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse)
+ pre-recorded intro by Zhu Shengze
Thu 27 May 18:15; Fri 26 Jun 14:30
The Seventh Seal (Det sjunde inseglet)
+ pre-recorded intro by Mike Williams, Editor *Sight & Sound*
Fri 28 May 20:50; Wed 30 Jun 14:30
The General
Sat 29 May 12:45

Footloose + pre-recorded intro by Francis Lee
Sat 29 May 18:00
Winner of the Dream Palace Audience Vote: Portrait of a Lady on Fire (Portrait de la jeune fille en feu)
Sun 30 May 12:20
Broadcast News
Sun 30 May 15:40 (+ intro by Sarah Smith); Sat 19 Jun 20:20
Car Wash
Mon 31 May 18:50
Blow Out
Tue 1 Jun 20:40
The Shout + pre-recorded intro by Mark Jenkin
Thu 3 Jun
Black Narcissus
Mon 7 Jun 17:50
David Byrne’s American Utopia
Mon 14 Jun 18:00
The Elephant Man + pre-recorded intro by Prano Bailey-Bond
Tue 15 Jun 17:45; Sat 19 Jun 12:00
The Warriors
Mon 21 Jun 18:00 (+ intro by Asif Kapadia); Mon 28 Jun 14:30
Beginning + pre-recorded intro by Luca Guadagnino
Tue 22 Jun 20:30
The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover
Thu 24 Jun 20:30

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