

**WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL**

***Parting Glances* at the 2008 Wisconsin Film Festival**

Kenneth Burns on Friday 04/04/2008 3:00 pm, (2) Comments, (9) Recommendations

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Thursday night, opening night of the Wisconsin Film Festival, a crowded house at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art warmly greeted Madison actor Richard Ganoung. He was on hand to introduce [Parting Glances](#), the absorbing and sweetly funny 1986 film about gay New Yorkers, in which he starred.

The film is the first to be restored by the Outfest Legacy Project, an effort to preserve queer-themed movies. In *Parting Glances*, which takes place over about 24 hours, Ganoung plays Michael, a book editor torn between a slightly dull boyfriend (John Bolger) and a complicated ex, a rock star dying of AIDS (Steve Buscemi). Meanwhile, Michael is consoled by his coke-sniffing earth-mother friend (Kathy Kinney, later of *The Drew Carey Show*).

This was my second viewing of *Parting Glances*. Watching it Thursday, I recalled the first time I saw it, on DVD. I enjoyed it then, but I found the experience mildly suspenseful. I kept waiting for a kind of indie-film awkwardness to set in, as happens with so many gay-themed movies.

It never did.

Watching *Parting Glances* the second time, I was reminded of just how startlingly calm and forceful the film is in its dry wit, its seemingly nonchalant fearlessness. AIDS haunts the film, but it is no melodrama. In the face of the terrifying plague, the gay men in *Parting Glances* console each other with grim, pointed joshing.

That the film is so crisply assured is a testament to Ganoung and the other performers, and also to its writer and director, Bill Sherwood, who in 1990 died of AIDS at age 37. In remarks after the screening, Ganoung noted that Sherwood was a precise craftsman who storyboarded every shot. "Everything had to be so exact," Ganoung recalled. "And then he'd yell at us because he wanted us to be more spontaneous."

Answering questions, Ganoung also described attending screenings in Los Angeles and New York with other *Parting Glances* cast members. He said he tried to arrange for Kinney and Buscemi to come to the Madison screening -- but not, he joked, too hard: "If they were here tonight, nobody would look at me."

**Comments (2)**

From [Ben Reiser](#) on 04/04/08 at 3:42 pm

loved it, but thought the restored print was ultra grainy and the sound awful. not sure if the sound was the venue's fault or the print, but if it's the print, i'm not all that impressed with the outfest legacy project...

From [Kenneth Burns](#) on 04/04/08 at 5:15 pm

Yeah, that was weird. During the Q&A there was discussion of some of the technical problems related to the projection last night, but not all of them. I'm with you -- I hope what we saw doesn't represent the Legacy Project's best efforts.

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