

## Surviving Life (Theory and Practice)

Spring Season 2012

Release: 2010 Cert (UK): PG

**Runtime:** 104 minutes **Director:** Jan Svankmajer's

Cast: Klara Issova, Vaclav Helsus, Zuzana Kronerova

This film is different; suspend all your expectations.

Peter Bradshaw in the Guardian says of Jan Svankmajer's film "it is an interesting and subversive comic fantasy reminiscent of the work of Terry Gilliam".

He continues "A married middle-aged man has an affair, in his dreams, with a beautiful young mistress; he causes a psychic crisis, and virtually a rip in the reality-dream time-space continuum, by getting this dream-mistress pregnant. He periodically visits an aghast psychoanalyst, on whose study walls are rather unfunny pictures of Freud and Jung, appearing to gasp or heckle or quarrel. But the film interestingly and subversively takes its stand on the idea that dreams are the real thing; waking life is an exotic, strange tissue of unreal diversions."



Jan Švankmajer has been here before, too. He introduces the film with a sardonic apology, claiming that his use of animated photographs and stop motion is the result of a lack of cash, but the rhythmic visual grammar of *Surviving Life* is straight out of his own *Alice* (1988). Anything closer than a mid-shot is rendered in live action, but long shots take place in a two-dimensional world of cut-outs and paper shapes. Flat, frantic depictions of human activity, from sex to suicide, are punctuated with large, unlovely close-ups of the characters' mouths pronouncing dialogue. The effect is much like the moving collages of the Beatles' 1968 film

Yellow Submarine (directed by George Dunning) and Terry Gilliam's cartoons for *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969-74). It feels oddly dated, like a relic from 30 years ago.

"Surviving Life (Theory and Practise)" is weird without being alienating, educated without being haughty and heartfelt without being (too) sentimental, is a psychoanalytically guided tour through the dreams of a distressed individual. At times quite poignant and at times wickedly funny. Hats off to the painstaking animators and to a well-chosen cast who lent themselves to cut-to-paste performances.



Clearly this Sunday we should expect...Something Completely Different...