

ID THE REST... By Philip French

211

(15, 18) Directed by Daniel Monzón; starring Carlos Bardem, Luis Tosar, Alberto Fernández, Antonio Resines, Marta Etura

prison genre, known in the trade as the "Big House movie" from the 1930s, has a seminal film of 1930, has been made from Hollywood around the world. This excellent Spanish picture has all the traditional ingredients: a corrupt but weak governor, the warden, the good and bad warders, the charismatic convict leader (a knockout performance from Luis Tosar, previously menacing in Michael Mann's *Heat*), the old lag, the slimy lawyer, the destructive riot, and the war message that the trouble is overcrowding, penny-pinching and the lack of either creative work or serious attempts at rehabilitation. A never twist here (a variation on the opening of the Robert Redford film *Hombre*) is that the sympathetic new prisoner, the 30-year-old Juan Oliver, is eventually stranded inside during a prison tour of the premises when a riot occurs and has to pretend to be a hard-as-nails murderer in order to survive a lynching. A second twist is that the jail is temporary host to four terrorists whose delicate status makes them potential hostages and useful pawns. Best-time director Monzón tightens the screws tightened by the sense, as well as

avoiding conventional rhetoric and sentimentality. Jail pictures are the product of democratic societies, and such a Spanish movie would have been unthinkable under Franco. Oddly, one figure you might have expected in a Big House picture from a Catholic country is missing here – the prison chaplain, famously celebrated in Lenny Bruce's hilarious sketch "Father Flotsky's Triumph".

Bobby Fischer Against the World

(92 mins, 12A) Directed by Liz Garbus; featuring Bobby Fischer, Anthony Saidy, Harry Benson

During the summer of 1972 the world was riveted by the cold war drama of the chess games in Iceland between the Soviet chess master Boris Spassky and his American challenger Bobby Fischer. I remember it well as I produced George Steiner's series of analyses of the contest for BBC Radio 3. Steiner's classic essay on the

affair for the *New Yorker* was published in book form the following year as *The Sport Scene: White Knights of Reykjavik*. Liz Garbus's fascinating but rather low-key documentary traces Fischer's life from childhood prodigy to the burgeoning insanity that culminated in his lonely, isolated death as a paranoid, antisemitic and anti-American Jewish American in 2008. The centre and highpoint of his career is of course that successful challenge to Spassky at the age of 29 from which the madness stems. It is a tragic story, often painful to watch and listen to, with some eloquent, highly sympathetic testimony from other chess players and outstanding photographs of Fischer by his friend, the Scottish-born *Life* photojournalist Harry Benson, but little insight into the game of chess.

Honey

(104 mins, PG) Directed by Semih Kaplanoglu; starring Erdal Besikçioğlu, Bora Altas, Tülin Özcan

AA Milne's Pooh Bear is one of the thickest, most tedious characters in fiction, but elsewhere in the movies apiarists and honey collectors are a mysterious, obsessive collection of individuals. One thinks

Bora Altas as young Yusuf in the award-winning *Honey*.



Hobo with a Shotgun: 'This film belongs at the bottom of a disused coal mine.'

of the taciturn father in Víctor Erice's *Spirit of the Beehive*, Marcello Mastroianni in Theo Angelopoulos's *The Bee Keeper*, Michel Piccoli in Louis Malle's *Milou en mai* and Peter Fonda's Oscar-nominated performance in *Ulee's Gold*. *Honey* (aka *Bal*) is the concluding film in Semih Kaplanoglu's *The Yusuf Trilogy*, about a boy growing up in rural north-eastern Turkey where his father keeps bees in hives at the top of tall trees in the nearby forest and supports his young wife and little son by collecting honey. The six-year-old Yusuf, a serious, introspective boy through whose large, expressive eyes

the world is presented, has a serious stammer that sets him apart from most of those around him, though his teacher and parents are delicately considerate.

A pre-credit sequence establishes the hazardous nature of the father's vocation in tending the hives and collecting the honeycombs, and it hangs over the rest of the films like a sword of Damocles, promising tragedy. Yusuf loves and respects his taciturn father who warns him of the dangers of speaking to people about his dreams, another theme that hovers ominously over this beautiful, contemplative, carefully composed movie. Although the third film in the trilogy, Yusuf is at his youngest here, and *Honey* won the Golden Bear at Berlin last year. The other two pictures, *Milk* and *Egg*, are soon to be shown in this country for the first time.

Hobo with a Shotgun

(82 mins, 18) Directed by Jason Eisener; starring Rutger Hauer, Robb Wells, Pasha Ebrahimi

Clips from non-existent films have been a regular cinematic feature for years, but I'm not sure when the first fake trailer appeared. There were several in John Landis's sketch comedy *The Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977), including a beauty for the enticing "Catholic High School Girls in Trouble", and a couple the following