

Bobby Fischer Against the World

12A, 93 mins

★★★★☆

Bal (Honey)

PG, 104 mins

★★★★☆

Hobo with a Shotgun

18, 90 mins

★★★★☆

For a while, chess grandmaster Bobby Fischer's stony, scowling countenance was one of the most famous faces in the world.

A teenage prodigy who dedicated himself to the game at the expense of stuff like social niceties, friendships and anything resembling happiness, Bobby was briefly the biggest star that chess has produced. But, as this documentary makes very clear, genius of Fischer's ilk walks hand in hand with madness.

With **Bobby Fischer Against the World**, the celebrated American documentary film-maker Liz Garbus has crafted a compelling account of Fischer's troubled psyche, his rise and his dramatic fall. She poses the question, is it the game of chess that is conducive to mental imbalance? Or is the kind of mentality that excels at the game prone to other obsessions that distort the workings of the mind? Whatever the direction of causality, Fischer's deterioration is stark. In early footage, his long arachnid fingers move like spiders over the chess board and a boyish smile of satisfaction plays across his face. Towards the end of a life increasingly entrenched in paranoia and unreasonable hatred, his face, what you can see of it under the dishevelled beard, is carved by sourness. Some of the most redolent imagery is not movie footage at all, but photographs taken by the *Life* magazine photojournalist Harry Benson who, more than anyone, seemed to be able to crack Fischer's abrasive façade and reveal

the flawed man beneath it.

Winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival last year and of the award for most ridiculously cute kid protagonist of the year, **Bal (Honey)** is the third film in a trilogy by the Turkish director Semih Kaplanoglu.

At the heart of the trilogy is Yusuf — here, a six-year-old boy stricken with a shyness that renders him all but mute. The only person with whom Yusuf can communicate is his father, a gentle, taciturn man who scrapes a living in the forest gathering honey. One day, Yusuf's father doesn't return from a hazardous trip into a distant mountain to place his beehives. Dark-eyed and fearful, Yusuf haunts his parent's cabin, peering anxiously out of the window, hoping to hasten his father's return.

Kaplanoglu immerses us in the oppressive peace of the mossy woodland which may have claimed the life of Yusuf's dad. Then, with a jolt, we're deposited in a riotous autumn festival, where the boy and his mother seek news of the missing man. Languidly paced and contemplative, there is a mournful beauty to this final part of the trilogy that makes it the most successful of the three films — it's certainly, thanks to the charismatic performance from Bora Altas as little Yusuf, the most engaging of the trilogy.

Hobo with a Shotgun started out as the winning entry in a competition for a fake movie trailer tied to Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez's *Grindhouse* double bill. So yes, it's the film of the trailer of a non-existent movie. As Tarantino and Rodriguez already demonstrated, you can pay homage to bad cinema as lovingly as you like, but you will still end up with bad cinema. Director Jason Eisener ironically dredges the sewers of bad taste and casts Rutger Hauer as the eponymous bum with a gun. Naked girls beat a human piñata; busloads of kids get torched and a man is decapitated by a razor-wire noose. But the really offensive thing about the film? The complete lack of wit in the writing and execution. **WI**