

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT...

“Someplace Else”

a BULLETIN Movie Review by Clara Freeman – © 2008

In *Someplace Else*, a disillusioned filmmaker seeks to understand meaning and change in his life after a painful end to a long time relationship. He quits his corporate job to focus upon completing a film project that had begun to take shape from mingling in blues clubs on Chicago's far southside. The Checkerboard Lounge on 43rd- Cottage Grove is where he'd meet a bluesman who'd become his muse for the film.

Vance “guitar” Kelly became a Chicago blues mainstay. A different kind of bluesman who alluded to his music as being more 'funky' than that of BB King or Buddy Guy' he would play venues all over the Chicagoland area, coupled with impromptu visits overseas. Kai du luong, an Asian-American filmmaker, along with his assistant, Avisheh Mohsenin; would focus their camera lens upon this aging bluesman whose oftentimes 'raunchy' lyrics and 'lewd' tongue gyrating stage performances failed to detract from his admirers. *“What makes life fulfilling?”* becomes the question in both men's lives as the film depicts the stark differences in the lifestyles of a thirty- something filmmaker, looking to regain control and an ageing fifty-something blues musician, who at the end of the day just want to make his fans happy and stay true to himself. The testimonials from fans of Vance Kelly are insightful.

To see Chicago life in motion through the lens of great cinema is breathtaking. The wonderful images of everyday people going about their lives is captured, whether enjoying the blues in clubs like Rosa's lounge, Flickr, or, *Someplace Else*, (all known venues for Vance Kelly & his backstreet blues band) or driving in Dan Ryan traffic jams on rain slick expressways.

Fishing at the 'Blues' lake is just one of the pleasures Vance Kelly shares with the filmmaker. His odd love for and collection of cigarette lighters is another. In contrast, the film shows the beautiful, calming waters of Lake Michigan while the crew is on holiday from filming. As dusk settles on the lake, the seemingly serene Chicago City skyline completes a picture-perfect end to a day of relaxation. Filmmaker Kai du luong set out to find meaning in his life. With the completion of *Someplace Else*, the filmmaker begins to get that life is about change and change is what you make it. It seems to work for an ageing bluesman who admits that the life of a musician is not easy, but he's found a way to live out his passion while enjoying life as it comes...

Someplace Else is packed with snippets of great songs and not all blues...There's some soft, melodic verses the filmmaker uses to enhance the film's imagery...loved those! Vance Kelly is a showman, for sure. His rendition of *Soul Heaven* by Otis Clay, *If Jesus Can't Fix It* by The Mighty Clouds of Joy and an old favorite of mine, *Little Bluebird*, attests to the musical catalogue of this Chicago bluesman. This is not a film for young viewers...it is, however, a winner for die-hard blues lovers, or lovers of music.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Clara Freeman is a freelance journalist who can be reached at clarawriter@att.net

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