

FILM REVIEWS



For the week of April 7-13

BY L.A. WEEKLY FILM CRITICS

GO TIBET: A BUDDHIST TRILOGY Originally shown as three separate films totaling more than four hours, director *Graham Coleman's Tibet: A Buddhist Trilogy* has been largely out of circulation for more than 20 years. Recut and reassembled at just a little over two hours, the new version of the film is a staggering and bracing object, stylistically bold and hypnotically captivating. For all the lip service paid to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan monks — anybody remember them as an opening act on late-'90s alterna-rock tours? — little notice has been given to their actual philosophies and practices, but *Trilogy* delves into their beliefs and ways with curiosity and care. In one early scene, a group of monks debate matters of ethics and metaphysics with a vigor and enthusiasm that borders on ecstatic, adding an edge of excitement and physicality to something that just as easily could come across as eggheaded chin stroking. Following footage of a speech by the Dalai Lama on the anniversary of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the filmmakers switch tactics, dropping their voice-over commentary in favor of a subtitled one, leaving the soundtrack free for nature sounds and the chanting and conversations of the monks themselves. *Tibet: A Buddhist Trilogy* itself becomes an object for contemplation and meditative concentration. One warning, though: In a film filled with silence and the pondering of impermanence, the final section includes footage of a funeral ritual in which a body is burned up. It's horrific and disturbing, but also serves as a reminder of the monks' abilities to turn pain into transcendence. (Westside Pavilion) (Mark Olsen)